

# **Guidance for Applicants to the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

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## **What is the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme?**

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been created by Defra and it forms part of the Government's Agricultural Transition Plan (ATP).

It will provide funds to allow farmers and land managers to work with Protected Landscape organisations (National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty teams) to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places. The programme will run from mid-2021 to April 2024.

### **A more detailed overview of the programme**

Our Protected Landscapes (PLs) – our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) - are special and unique and need to be managed, enhanced and protected while also supporting the farmers<sup>1</sup> and communities who work within them and the wider local economy.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which will operate in England, will provide additional investment in these places to allow farmers to work in partnership with Protected Landscape bodies to deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment for people and for the place.

Protected Landscapes can make an important contribution to:

- **Climate** – delivering net zero with nature and nature-based solutions to help communities adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change;
- **Nature** – playing a leading role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and achieving the PMs commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030;
- **People** – providing a natural health service that will improve the nation's public health and wellbeing through increased access to nature across all parts of society, as part of our green recovery;
- **Place** – creating centres of excellence and green innovation that are flourishing places to live and work, each with a strong identity and cultural heritage, and high recognition as attractive visitor destinations

As part of the Agricultural Transition Plan, the government has committed to help farmers and land managers deliver against these four areas, in a holistic way - in order to meet the requirements of individual Protected Landscapes, helping strengthen their special importance and enhance their environments and accessibility.

The programme will be delivered by farmers, working in partnership with Protected Landscape teams – Protected Landscape teams and farmers living and working in these areas know the opportunities and challenges facing their landscapes and communities the best. This is an opportunity for Protected Landscapes, farmers and others within these areas to work better together, leading work at an individual landscape level, building on existing relationships.

The programme will be project based and take a bottom up approach - this means that funding will support individual projects proposed by farmers, and approved by Local Assessment Panels, which will support Protected Landscapes' local priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Farmers' - refers to both farmers and other land managers in the private public and charity sectors.

This is a time limited programme (2021-2024) to provide additional investment in our most special places - it will work alongside – not in competition with - existing schemes and add value where it is most needed. Over the longer term, Defra would envision the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Local Nature Recovery scheme and the Landscape Recovery scheme playing a specific part across these landscapes, with farmers who lead on Farming in Protected Landscape projects taking part in one of these schemes.

## **Who can apply?**

Applications will be accepted from farmers and land managers within an AONB or National Park in England, or the Norfolk Broads. The programme may also support activity on other land where that activity can demonstrate benefit to the Protected Landscape, or the Protected Landscape organisation's objectives or partnership initiatives. Your Farming in Protected Landscape officer can advise on whether your land / project is eligible.

You can check if your land is within the boundaries of a protected landscape on the [MAGIC mapping website](#). Follow these steps:

1. select Designations
2. select Land-based designations
3. select Statutory
4. untick all boxes apart from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England) and National Parks (England).

This programme does not support works on domestic property.

You can receive funding through the programme for work in the above places if you:

- Are a farmer or land manager (including individuals, charities and some public bodies)
- Are collaborating with an eligible farmer / land manager (or a group of farmers/land managers) to deliver an eligible project
- Own, or have management control of, all the land affected by the project, or have the formal consent of the person who does.

Common land is eligible for support through the Programme. You can apply as a landowner with sole rights, or as a group of commoners acting together.

Applications will also be accepted from organisations and individuals delivering projects which are in support of the programme outcomes and the relevant Protected Landscape Management Plan/Priorities, as long as they are applying in collaboration with a farmer or land manager.

A summary of bodies/organisations who are directly eligible is set out below:

<b>Body/Organisation</b>	<b>Can I apply?</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Government departments, executive agencies and NDPBs (for example, Ministry of Defence, Forestry Commission), with exception of the bodies listed below in this table:	No	None
Natural England	Yes	For work on the National Nature Reserves which goes beyond other legal obligations
Other public bodies (including National Park Authorities, The Broads Authority, Conservation Boards and AONB Partnerships through their accountable bodies)	Yes	Provided the work goes beyond the duty of regard and other legal obligations
County, Unitary, District, Parish Council and former college farms	Yes	None
Tenants of eligible public bodies	Yes	Ineligible where the work is already a requirement of the tenancy agreement. The public body must countersign the application if the tenant does not have security of tenure for the full term of the agreement.
Tenants of ineligible public bodies	Yes	Ineligible where the work is already a requirement of the tenancy agreement. Tenants must have security of tenure for the full term of the agreement, as the public body cannot countersign the application.
Other organisations and individuals	Yes	Where the proposed activity or works is in support of programme aims

## Tenancy

If you are including land in an application that you occupy under a tenancy, including under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 (a Farm Business Tenancy) or equivalent, you must have:

- management control of this land for the duration of any commitments
- control of all the activities needed to deliver the project,
- the consent of the landlord as required.

## Landlords

If you are a landlord and can show that you have management control over land which has been let to a tenant, and the activities, you can include that land in an application.

## Common land, shared grazing and other collaborative projects

If the application is made by the landowner who owns the whole common and has sole use and rights to the land, the common can be entered as the landowner's holding.

Protected Landscape organisations and other bodies may be able to facilitate collaborative projects as a lead or responsible partner. Regardless of who applies, if the application is made by someone who does not have sole use of all the land and where there will be two or more beneficiaries to the agreement:

- an internal agreement must be established, signed by all the parties to the application, specifying the obligations placed on each person and the payments they may expect to receive
- a copy of this internal agreement will need to be submitted before the agreement can commence and may, during the agreement period, need to be supplemented by formal evidence that the internal agreement operates effectively e.g. minutes of recent meetings.
- in all cases where there are 5 or more parties benefiting from or contributing to the delivery of the agreement on common land, a more formal commons association must be established with officers to manage the association.

## Collaborative Farmer groups

You can apply to the programme as part of a collaborative farmer group. You can choose out of the below three options how you and your collaborative farmer group would like to apply.

You can:

- apply through a lead applicant, who takes on the task of distributing resources to the group, managing the application process and reporting on the progress of the project.
- apply through a third party that is not part of the collaborative farmer group but acting on the behalf of the collaborative farmer group (e.g. an environmental charity). The third party will distribute the resources to the group, manage the application process and report on the progress of the project.
- apply through your Protected Landscape body who may have experience of working with the whole group or some its members (this would be subject to a panel decision like all other applications). Your Protected Landscape can make

individual payments to farmers in the collaborative farmer group or pay for necessary works and activities directly. Your Protected Landscape body will distribute the resources to the group, manage the application process and report on the progress of the project.

You will need to have partnership agreements between the participants and the lead applicant / applicant body. Your Protected Landscape team can support you to develop these.

## **What can I apply for?**

You will need to demonstrate how your project:

- (1) Delivers against at least one of the Programme outcomes and to provide the details of any partners with whom you have chosen to work. There are four themes in which the programme outcomes are defined by; Climate, Nature, People and Place.
- (2) Connects to the priorities of your Protected Landscape's management plan, as laid out by your local Protected Landscape team

The outcomes, of which you will need to demonstrate that your project delivers against at least one, are listed below under four key themes:

### Climate

- 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

### Nature

- 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

### People

- There are more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There are more opportunities for more diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There is greater public engagement in land management, for example through volunteering

### Place

- 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

Examples of the types of work or projects that are relevant to the outcomes of this programme could include:

- Restoring a poor quality chalk stream for the water quality, biodiversity and natural flood management benefits this can bring.
- Creating, restoring, extending, managing, buffering and/or connecting locally characteristic habitats, including species-rich chalk grassland, arable field margins, wet pasture, remnant heathland and common land, and wood pasture.
- Replacing stiles with gates on public footpaths to promote easier access.
- Creating ponds to support a variety of wildlife.
- Restoring and maintaining wildlife corridors through the landscapes.
- Catchment-sensitive farming measures to reduce run-off and diffuse pollution and improve water quality.
- Creating and promoting a series of farm walks across a cluster of farms, providing new or improved access opportunities, links to the rights of way network and interpretation of farming and of the natural and historic features on the land.
- Conserving historic features on a farm, such as prehistoric barrows, hillforts or more recent historic structures.
- Habitat creation, restoration or enhancement to improve species' resilience in the face of climate change.
- A pop-up camping facility, alongside the provision of new walking trails and on-site activities, including e.g. stargazing and dawn chorus walks.
- Action to improve soil health for water quality, flood prevention, biodiversity and carbon sequestration benefits.
- Action to reduce carbon emissions on a farm.
- Wildlife-friendly management of public open spaces, including recreation and sports grounds, parks, playgrounds, greens, allotments, community orchards and commons.
- Whole-farm planning for conservation, energy efficiency and economic resilience, including in farmer clusters.
- Gathering data and evidence to help inform conservation and farming practice.
- Working with new audiences to enable them to experience, appreciate and care for the Protected Landscape

You will also need to ensure that your project delivers the management plan/priorities of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The North Wessex Downs AONB priorities and helpful information can be found in the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/publications-resources/aonb-management-plan.html>

Key priorities are:

- Support a landscape-scale approach to restoring, managing, buffering, extending and connecting currently fragmented, locally characteristic habitats. These include species-rich chalk grassland, arable field margins, wet pasture and native riparian woodland in river valleys, remnant heathland and common land, chalk rivers and streams and wood pasture.
- Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management, sympathetic woodland management and protection from livestock damage as necessary
- Adopt catchment-sensitive farming techniques across chalk river and stream catchments to reduce both diffuse and point-source pollution, minimise sediment runoff into watercourses and improve water quality
- Restore and maintain a coherent network of habitat corridors through sympathetic management of, in particular the huge ecological resource represented by road verges and banks, public rights of way and national trails across the AONB, harnessing their potential to form links between wildlife sites and other important habitat patches.
- Facilitate responsible public access to the landscape in places and in ways that are compatible with maintaining the special qualities of the AONB.
- Encourage and support more wildlife friendly management of public and private (but not domestic) open spaces, including recreation, sports and school grounds, parks, playgrounds, greens, allotments and commons.
- 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.

For further advice on the types of projects that this programme can deliver please speak to your Protected Landscape team.

## **What costs can I apply for?**

### **Maximum grant allowance**

The maximum grant you can apply for through this programme is currently £250,000, however this would only be for very exceptional projects, delivering substantial benefits and scoring very highly. It is expected that most applications will be below £50k. The maximum grant permitted may be changed to reflect the priorities and needs advised by the Local Assessment Panel, once it is established.



### Minimum grant allowance

The minimum grant you can apply for through this programme is £2,500. However, the minimum grant permitted may be changed to reflect the priorities and needs advised by the Local Assessment Panel, once it is established.

### Capital and Revenue Spend

You can apply for both capital and revenue spend.

Revenue spend is where funding is provided to support management actions which deliver Farming in Protected Landscape objectives.

Capital spend is where funding is provided to purchase or invest in a physical asset (capital item) to achieve a stated outcome, for example increased business prosperity or improvements to the environment. Capital items can be natural landscape features (such as trees, hedgerows and ponds) or built (such as fencing, water, infrastructure, buildings, machinery and equipment).

### Payment and Intervention Rates

The purpose of the programme is to enable additional support where it is most needed for farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes – and delivering for climate, nature, people, and place. As with Countryside Stewardship, some projects that achieve these ends will inevitably have a commercial dimension, and this factor is reflected accordingly in the payment rates.

You should be aware that the programme does not exist to support ordinary private sector interests. Project proposals will undergo a thorough assessment process, coordinated by Protected Landscapes' staff and Local Assessment Panels, to ensure that only proposals in the spirit of the programme are taken forward. Other sorts of proposals would be better suited to alternative programmes. For any further queries on this matter, please contact your Protected Landscape team.

Where there is a Countryside Stewardship rate for the work you want to do, that rate will also be used in the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Where you are applying to fund an activity for which there is no standard Countryside Stewardship rate, you will need to be able show that the associated costs represent value for money - this is based on getting quotes for the work. Your Protected landscape team can advise you on this.

Where there is no obvious commercial benefit to doing the work (e.g. it may be solely focused on nature recovery) you can be paid 100% of the eligible costs. Where the work generates commercial benefit to the applicant, generally this will either be 40% or 80% of eligible costs.

Please speak to your Farming in Protected Landscape officer for advice on payment rates and intervention rates. You may have different payment and intervention rates for the different activities that make up your project.

You may also want to be paid to do the work yourself rather than through a contractor. This is possible providing it represents a reasonable rate for the job, benchmarked against known costs locally or standard costs.

## **When can I apply?**

For the first year of funding, you can apply from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. You can submit your application at any time during this window, though as funding is limited early applications are encouraged.

## **The application process**

You can find the application form on the website of your local AONB or National Park from the 1 July 2021.

Before you apply:

1. Contact Henry Oliver email [HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk](mailto:HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk) or tel: 01488 685440 for advice on the programme including to discuss your ideas, the payment rates and intervention rates for your project. Ideally, a Farming in Protected Landscapes project officer will visit your potential project location or meet you to discuss your ideas before you complete your application.
2. Check that you are eligible to apply.
3. Read the application questions and guidance. Make sure you keep within the word limit where asked in the application form and answer all the questions.
4. Have your supporting documents ready to submit with the application form.

How you apply

1. Once you have spoken to the North Wessex Downs AONB and you have been told that the project you are proposing is eligible, you will be sent a copy of the application form.

Once you have applied

- You should expect to hear back from your Protected Landscape team within 10 working days of your application being submitted

## **How will my application be assessed?**

All projects will be scored using a common scoring system. You will be scored against the following categories which will be weighted differently for your final score:

- Project outcomes - this includes deliver under the four themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place and also fit with the Protected Landscape Management Plan (40%)
- Value for Money (20%) – this includes demonstrating an efficient use of resources and cost-reasonableness
- Sustainability / legacy of projects (20%) – this includes demonstrating that benefits could be maintained once the programme funding concludes, and may include the likelihood of behaviour change and increased capacity, as well as more tangible measures.

- Ability to deliver (20%) – this includes demonstrating the capability to deliver in the timelines required

There are a number of requirements you must meet for your application to progress and these will be made clear in the application template. Your Protected Landscape will consider whether you meet the essential criteria for the programme (see under 'who can apply'). If you do not meet the essential criteria, your Protected Landscape will not assess your application further.

#### For projects with a total project cost of over £5,000

Your application will be assessed by a Local Assessment Panel made up of experts from across your Protected Landscape, including from the farming and land management community, where your project will be given a score using a common scoring system.

#### For projects with a total project cost of under £5,000

Your application will be assessed by a senior member from your Protected Landscape team who has not been involved in providing advice or guidance to your application. They will assess your application using the common scoring system giving you a score for your project. If you submit more than two applications for projects under £5,000 over the course of the programme, the third and any further applications will be assessed at the Local Assessment Panel whatever their value.

### **What kinds of agreements will be needed?**

You will not need to maintain any natural, cultural and access activities you deliver as part of the programme after your agreement period ends.

You must maintain capital infrastructure such as fences, gates or restored buildings for 5 years from the completion date.

You must maintain machinery assets such as brush harvesters for grassland restoration for 5 years from the purchase date.

### **What happens if my holding crosses the boundary of two Protected Landscapes?**

If your farm holding crosses the boundary of more than one Protected Landscape and you are interested in applying to the Farming in Protected Landscape programme please speak to an officer in either of the Protected Landscapes in which your holding lies. They will be best placed to advise which Protected Landscape body you should apply to.

### **Will my project be evaluated?**

Defra are funding an external contractor to review the effectiveness of the programme and show what Protected Landscapes bodies can deliver in partnership with farmers and land managers. Successful applicants will need to commit to participating in the programme evaluation; the input expected will be proportionate to the level of funding received.

## **How does the programme fit in with other Government support for farming?**

It's important to note that the programme isn't an agri-environment scheme – it's a programme supporting individual projects, enabling additional investment where it is most useful.

Being in an agri-environment scheme isn't a barrier to receiving project funding through the programme as long as you're not paid twice for the same work.

Your Protected Landscape team will be able to provide you with more details, and guide you through the application process.

## **Will receiving this funding stop me entering into new environmental land management schemes?**

Participants part of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme should be well placed to enter into environmental land management schemes once the programme ends. Participants will not automatically roll into environmental land management scheme agreements from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Over the longer term, Defra would envision the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Local Nature Recovery scheme and the Landscape Recovery scheme playing a specific part across these our Protected Landscapes, with farmers who lead on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme projects taking part in one of these schemes.

## **Making an appeal**

We understand that you may be disappointed with a decision. If you would like appeal to the decision made you should make an appeal to your Protected Landscape by contacting Henry Oliver [HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk](mailto:HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk).

You can only query a funding decision if you think that the Protected Landscape has:

- Made a mistake with the application
- Made a processing error
- Got the law wrong

You must set out to the Protected Landscape team the reason for your appeal under one (or more) of these three criteria.

Appeals will be dealt with by your Protected Landscape team and if necessary escalated to Defra.

## **Where can I go for more information?**

Main contact : [HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk](mailto:HenryOliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk)

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan:

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/publications-resources/aonb-management-plan.html>

North Wessex Downs AONB website: <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/>