Nature Restoration Fund Application Advice Form

General Tips

- Please read this advice form before completing an application.
- For your application, please provide complete information in each section.
- Be concise but thorough in your responses, providing enough detail to demonstrate the project's viability and alignment with NRF criteria.
- If you would like to check that your application meets the essential criteria, please complete our enquiry form.
- If you have any questions or need clarification, don't hesitate to reach out to naturefund@pkc.gov.uk for assistance.

Who is Eligible for Funding?

Applications are invited from:

1. Constituted organisations
    - Registered charities and trusts
    - Constituted community groups
2. Private individuals and companies - where public benefit will be demonstrated.
3. Partnerships and organisations working collaboratively with others.

Background

Funded by the Scottish Government, the Nature Restoration Fund is focused on action at scale to protect and restore Scotland's biodiversity on land and sea, addressing the main drivers of the decline in biodiversity. The Council received notice in July 2024 of the 24-25 funding of £175,000. Part of this funding is being made available to community groups or organisations for projects that enhance biodiversity and align with local priorities. The minimum grant amount is £1000.

Projects are expected to meet at least one of the following strategic themes:

- Habitat restoration – management for enhancement and connectivity
- Freshwater restoration, including hydrological change
- Eradication of invasive non-native species impacting on nature
- Coastal and marine management to promote restoration and resilience
- Urban - enhancing and connecting nature across, and between, towns and cities.

Nature Networks

Projects that contribute to Nature Networks are encouraged. A minimum of 50% of overall funding received by the Council is required to be spent on projects that contribute to the development of Nature

Networks. This may include enhancing a protected area (SPA, SAC, SSSI), a Local Biodiversity Site or other nature rich area or providing connectivity between them.

For an application, please identify if your project contributes towards the delivery of nature networks across Perth and Kinross. A Nature Network connects areas protected for biodiversity, and other nature-rich sites through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors and stepping-stones. Please see our map of nature rich areas within Perth and Kinross.

Examples of nature network projects that enhance or connect nature rich areas include:

- Enhancing the condition of protected sites. For example, controlling invasive non-native species such as Japanese knotweed along the Tay Special Area of Conservation.
- Creating wildlife corridors between nature rich areas to connect fragmented habitats and facilitate movement of species between protected sites.
- Restoring riparian zones along rivers and burns to improve water quality, enhance habitat diversity, and connect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- Connecting native woodland habitats through planting of native hedgerows and trees.
- Designing green infrastructure projects, such as green roofs, green walls, or rain gardens, to increase connectivity for urban biodiversity through a town or village
- Restoring wildflower-rich meadows that create stepping-stone habitats between nature rich areas or through a town or village.

Fund Guidelines

- Costs must be for capital spend only. Capital spend is spend directly related to the project only. Administration costs associated with the grant are not recoverable. Capital spend includes improvement to land or assets such as tree planting or peatland restoration, but not annual maintenance. They should result in a long-term improvement to a site or location.
- Design costs directly related to the capital spend are included. Applicant staff costs are not eligible for the grant and will not be paid. Project works carried out by a contractor must be clearly identified and will be considered when assessing a projects value for money.
- Projects must be fully costed at application.
- All trees and shrubs planted must be native to Scotland unless part of a pollinator corridor. All other plants must be native where possible and if not then on the RHS Plants for Pollinators list.
- Projects must be deliverable, value for money and provide a long term enhancement
- Projects must be on land accessible to the public or designated for its biodiversity e.g. SSSI
- To ensure a spread of projects, an organisation can only deliver one project in each location.
- Projects are encouraged to deliver benefit for communities. This includes projects that deliver positive outcomes for community health and wellbeing, education, communities of varying needs.
- Projects are encouraged that deliver actions in the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Organisations may be asked for proof of constituted status and/or proof of 12 months activity.
- Maintenance plans should cover the 10-year post grant compliance period.
- Organisations must have written landowner permission for the project and future maintenance agreed prior to any grant award.
- **All projects or project phases must be completed and funds spent by 31 March 2025.**

Application and Grant Process

July-September 2024 – Application submissions, ratings, and grant awards.

1. Applications are open from 10 July 2024. Applications are to be sent to naturefund@pkc.gov.uk with a deadline of 18 August 2024.
2. An Enquiry Form is available from 10 July 2024 to 5 August 2024 on the PKC Nature Restoration webpage www.pkc.gov.uk/naturefund for those who are unsure of whether their project meets the essential criteria.
3. Once applications are received, an email acknowledging the receipt of applications will be sent, informing applicants about the expected timeline for reviews and decisions. Applications will be assigned an NRF24 project number, and any additional information will be requested.
4. Applications will be assessed by the working group against set scoring criteria. Once the application deadline has passed, the working group will review the most highly scored applications and recommend these projects to the Strategic Lead of Environment and Infrastructure to approve or decline the application, under their delegated authority.
5. Following approval from the Strategic Lead of Environment and Infrastructure, grants will be awarded to all successful applicants. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the reasons why their application was unsuccessful. Applicants will be advised of success in September.
6. Successful applicants are sent a grant letter, acceptance template, and a template for claiming funds against invoices. Applicants must return grant acceptance forms within 2 weeks of the grant advice.

September 2024-April 2025: Project completion, reimbursement, and reporting requirements.

7. The Grant is claimed through submission of copies of invoices, proof of payment (e.g. bank statement), and a claim form, for project works that have been completed. Invoices must be scanned or photographed and emailed to naturefund@pkc.gov.uk along with the claim form and proof of payment. Note that the grant is paid in arrears on receipt of paid invoices only. The project must be completed by 31 March 2025, and final invoices, proof of payment, and claim forms received by 7 April 2025.
8. Successful applicants will be required to provide an interim progress report by 31 January 2025 detailing work that has been completed and a timeline for completion of the remainder of the project and identifying any barriers to completion or work that may not be completed. Any anticipated changes to the items or the total cost of the application should be reported.
9. A final project report must be completed by 30 April 2025 including photographs demonstrating that the project has been delivered. This will detail how the project met its intended outcomes, including the benefit for biodiversity and the area of project supported (in hectares). It will address any notable challenges encountered during the project and the actions taken to address them. Furthermore, the report will outline the maintenance plans in place to secure the enhancement/restoration works.

Previous Projects Supported

Habitat and Species Restoration:

- Native tree planting to create woodland habitat.
- Establishment of pollinator hedgerows to support pollinator populations.
- Creation of pollinator banks to provide additional foraging resources.
- Planting hedging and native trees to create linear habitat corridors between existing areas of native woodland.
- Riparian planting along watercourses to improve water quality and habitat diversity.
- Removal of non-native trees to restore native woodland.
- Creation of species-rich grassland.
- Purchase of machinery for meadow creation to enhance grassland habitats.
- Extension of community orchards and planting for pollinators.
- Restoration of heathland habitats through the removal of scrub and trees.
- Restoration of meadow habitats by clearing scrub.

Freshwater Restoration:

- Creation of scrapes, wildlife ponds, and wetlands.
- Enhancement of ponds and wetlands.
- Implementation of riparian buffer zones to reduce nutrient runoff and improve water quality.

Invasive Non-Native Species Control:

- Landscape-scale control of giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, and American skunk cabbage.
- Large-scale removal of rhododendron ponticum.

Urban Restoration:

- Rewilding school grounds by creating pollinator-friendly hedgerows, wildflower meadows, ponds, bee banks, and native woodland areas.
- Conversion of sections of greenspace into biodiverse meadows and wetland habitats.
- Planting pollinator-friendly native fruit and nut-bearing trees in urban areas.
- Creation of large wildlife ponds, bog gardens, and pollinator highways through sowing native wildflower seeds.

What Can and Cannot be Funded

Costs that can be funded:

- Contractor costs to undertake detailed design or groundworks.
- Capital equipment, resources and materials (e.g. fencing, plants) that will deliver on the ground nature restoration as part of the overall project.
- Costs associated with training and skills development such as training providers, and PPE.
- Irrecoverable VAT relating to project costs and activities.

Costs that cannot be funded:

- Ongoing maintenance of any site.
- Activities which are a condition of planning or statutory obligations.

- Creating infrastructure where there is no biodiversity enhancement, such as a wooden bridge over a small stream or a bench in a nature reserve.
- Projects that do not seek to transform land/sites to an improved, sustainable, nature-rich state.
- Costs for delivering community engagement activities.
- Interpretation materials apart from warning signs for the public where activity is taking place.
- Surveys, monitoring, data analysis or research where collation of data is the primary purpose (surveys as part of project design or monitoring and evaluation are eligible).
- Single use plastics, for example for tree protection. Biodegradable or re-usable materials should be sourced.
- Contingency costs.
- Staff time and management fees.
- Feasibility studies that do not lead directly to practical nature restoration delivery during the proposed project.
- Applicants cannot contract their own company for works.
- Projects that can be funded through the Forestry Grant Scheme.
- Projects that are already receiving or have the potential to receive funding from agri-environment schemes may not be eligible. Applications should explain how NRF will enable the project to progress further or achieve outcomes that would not be possible with funding from agri-environment schemes alone.

Invasive Non-Native Species Projects

INNS projects must deliver the following:

- Achieve comprehensive control of INNS infestations.
- Demonstrate an understanding and coordination of a top-down approach to tackle and eradicate INNS, except in cases where spot treatment suffices.
- Be sustainable beyond the funding period (for example, by eradicating populations or establishing costed sustainable control plans covering a 10-year maintenance period).

Scoring Criteria

The Council's internal NRF working group will review all applications against set scoring criteria and select the highest scoring, best value for nature restoration projects for funding.

Essential Criteria	Points considered to determine the projects value for each criterion
Biodiversity (6)	• How well does the project align with strategic themes? • What measurable benefits does the project provide for biodiversity? This could include increases in species diversity, habitat quality, or ecosystem resilience. • Does the project have the potential to deliver a transformational impact on biodiversity, such as restoring degraded ecosystems or creating habitat connectivity at a landscape scale?

	• Does the project directly contribute to biodiversity enhancement, or are the benefits more indirect or secondary? • How well does the project consider ecological principles and best practices in its design and implementation? Consider habitat suitability, species requirements, and ecosystem function.
Value for money (2)	• Are the proposed project costs reasonable and proportionate? • Is there clear and transparent justification provided, demonstrating how costs contribute to achieving project objectives? • Do project costs align with market rates to ensure they represent good value for money? • Are project costs supported by evidence, such as quotations, tenders, market research, or previous experience? • Has effort been made to identify potential cost-saving measures without compromising project quality or outcomes? • Does the project demonstrate efficient use of resources, including contractors, materials, and equipment?
Maintenance (2)	• Is there a clear plan for delivering maintenance activities beyond the initial project period? • Is the duration and scope of the maintenance plan sufficient to ensure long-term sustainability? • Does the maintenance plan cover all necessary activities to sustain project outcomes? • Are maintenance activities clearly defined, including frequency, methods, and responsible parties?
Non-essential Criteria	**Points considered to determine the projects value for each criterion**
Nature Networks (2)	• Does the project help make or strengthen strategic connections between protected or nature-rich habitats? • Does the project protect, enhance, or expand existing protected or nature-rich areas? • Will the project enhance biodiversity in the local area, including creating habitat corridors or stepping-stones?
Legacy (2)	• Does the project provide opportunities for community engagement and enhance community well-being by providing access to nature or green spaces? • Does the project contribute to other environmental objectives or priorities, such as flood risk mitigation? • Does the project facilitate collaboration across different sectors and stakeholders?

	• Does the project create employment opportunities, particularly in the green sector, and contribute to the development of a sustainable economy? • Will the project lead to improvements in air and water quality, contributing to a healthier environment for the local community? • Does the project include provisions for educational initiatives?
Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2)	• Does the project directly align with and support the objectives outlined in the Tayside LBAP? • Does the project address specific actions outlined in the Tayside LBAP? Example Tayside LBAP actions include: • Improve the biodiversity quality of greenspace and green networks (Urban). • Support the creation, restoration or enhancement of ponds across Tayside to provide connectivity of this habitat across the region (Water and Wetlands). • Reduce the direct pressures on montane and upland heath biodiversity by enhancing ecosystem health (Upland). • Endeavour to reduce the direct pressures on riverine and wetland biodiversity and ecosystem health from invasive nonnative species (Water and Wetlands). • Protect and expand Tayside's forests and woodlands, increasing their value to society and the environment (Woodland). • Reduce the direct pressures on farmland biodiversity by enhancing ecosystem health (Farmland). • Encourage community groups to manage local areas for biodiversity (People and Communications). To see the full action plan, please visit taysidebiodiversity.co.uk
Community Engagement and Support (2)	• Is there evidence of community involvement in project planning, decision-making, and implementation processes? • Are local stakeholders, including community members, organisations, and leaders, actively participating in project activities? • Has the project sought input, feedback, or collaboration from the community? • Are there mechanisms in place to ensure ongoing communication, consultation, and collaboration with the community? • Does the project demonstrate a commitment to building trust, fostering partnerships, and empowering the local community to take ownership of the project?

Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation (1)	• Does the project enhance carbon sequestration, such as through restoring natural habitats to absorb carbon from the atmosphere? • Does the project contribute towards climate-resilience, such as through establishing urban forests to mitigate heat island effects, or planting vegetation for riverbank stabilisation?
Multi-year Project (1)	• Is the project planning to span more than one year? • Will the multi-year project build upon previous efforts and cumulative impacts to achieve more significant biodiversity outcomes over time?