



COTSWOLD
District Council

Annex A -

Cotswold Beechwoods SAC - Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund

Guidance notes for submitting an expression of interest form

1. Introduction

The CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund is available to projects which encourage new and existing residents and visitors to visit other greenspace sites, rather than the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC. This should ensure that recreational pressures and ecological damage are minimised at the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC.

2. Background

Residents and visitors of new developments within the District have the potential to impact on internationally important biodiversity sites, in particular the [Cotswold Beechwoods SAC](#). The SAC has been designated because it supports wildlife that is valuable on an international scale. Unfortunately, the site is being damaged by the very people that go there to enjoy it – walking, biking, exercising their dogs etc. and that damage will increase as more houses and holiday accommodation are built, leading to more visitors.

Cotswold District Council, as a “competent authority”, is legally obliged under the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#) (as amended) to consider whether a project or proposal, including planning applications would affect the



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biodiversity of any SAC. This consideration is undertaken by a process called Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

To assist planning applicants to progress their applications and to ensure that there is a strategic approach to delivering mitigation for recreational impacts at the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, the Local Authorities in the area and Natural England have worked together to prepare a recreation mitigation strategy for the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC (Footprint 2022). This strategy details mitigation measures along with costings for these measures. A calculation has then been made to assess what level of financial mitigation contribution is required from planning applicants within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the Cotswold Beechwoods.

The financial mitigation contributions will be used to fund -

- On-site measures, e.g. rangers, signage, and notice boards.
- Off-site measures – the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

To enable effective delivery of SANGs through a wide range of partners, Cotswold District Council has set up the CDC Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund. This Fund, made up of the SANG component of the financial mitigation contributions from planning applicants, is available to support projects that meet the relevant criteria.

It is important that the Fund delivers SANGs and other infrastructure that provide realistic alternatives which new residents and visitors are likely to use in preference to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, i.e. that will reduce recreational pressures on the biodiversity of the SAC. These SANGs are likely to be within the District but could potentially also be within other nearby Districts. The Council is working in partnership with other neighbouring Councils and Natural England and will consult them on project proposals.

The type of projects that might be eligible for this Fund include provision of –

- A new country park or similar.
- Large scale dog walking sites.



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- Dedicated cycle routes or linking up existing cycle routes.
- Dedicated cycling facilities, particularly for mountain bikes.
- Dedicated walking routes or linking up of existing walking routes, particularly if these attract walkers away from footpaths (including the Cotswold Way) within the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC.
- Improvements to existing parks and other green infrastructure, such as footpaths (including changes to parking, signposts, promotion of existing greenspace sites etc.) that would decrease usage of the Cotswold Beechwoods.

3. Who Can Apply To The Fund?

The fund is not open to private individuals or organisations/companies operating for profit. The types of organisations that would be eligible include –

- Charities
- Not for profit organisations
- Parish and Town Councils
- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Cotswold District Council
- Other Local Authorities

Any organisation applying must have a constitution or equivalent and been in existence for at least 6 months prior to the application and to have a good track record in delivering ecologically based projects.

4. Criteria For Applications

Applications should be for bids between £5,000 and £50,000.

All applications should meet all or most of the following criteria and demonstrate how. There is some overlap between these criteria.

All bids received will be scored against the criteria set out in this guidance note. Bids that score over 75 will be taken to Cabinet to make a final decision, a scoring matrix for the relevant funds can be found in the criteria tables in this guidance. Please note that depending on the amount involved, approval from Full Council might also be required.



Essential Criteria	
(Maximum score 80) 60	
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>How to demonstrate?</i>
Bids that score 0 for any of the essential criteria will be rejected regardless of their total score.	
Lead bid partner must have a constitution or equivalent; been in existence for at least 6 months prior to the application; have a good track record of delivering relevant projects. Maximum score -10	Provide information on constitution of lead partner and examples of previous successful projects. <i>The National Trust was founded in 1895 and therefore has been established for more than six months and has a proven track record of successfully securing and delivering external funding projects. Previous SANG funded schemes have been approved and implemented in accordance with the approved proposals, demonstrating effective project management, governance, and delivery. The organisation operates under an established constitution and has the experience, capacity, and financial controls necessary to manage funding and deliver the proposed project successfully.</i> <i>Score: 10/10</i>
The project must be deliverable within the submitted time frame. Maximum score -10	Set out the time frame for your project and provide evidence your project is deliverable within this time frame. Demonstrate your project has a clear



	delivery programme and is financially viable. <i>The project has a clear and achievable delivery programme and is financially viable. Due to delays in the funding application process, works have already commenced, providing strong evidence that the project is deliverable within the required timeframe. The remaining works will be completed upon receipt of funding, ensuring the project can be delivered promptly and efficiently.</i> <i>The National Trust, as the landowner, fully supports the project and has confirmed the site's suitability for SANG funding. The project benefits from established project management arrangements, and a clear scope of works, providing confidence that the scheme will be completed as proposed.</i> <i>Score: 10/10</i>
Deliver the requirements of the Cotswold Beechwoods Recreation Mitigation Strategy. Maximum score - 30	Provide information on how the project delivers the mitigation strategy, including data on predicted visitor number increases at your site. <i>The project supports the objectives of the Cotswold Beechwoods Recreation Mitigation Strategy by improving the quality, accessibility, and usability of an alternative recreational site. The replacement of the existing woodchip path with a durable, fully accessible gravel surface will provide a safer and</i>



	<i>more attractive route for visitors, encouraging greater use of the site by a wider range of people, including those with mobility impairments, families with pushchairs, and dog walkers. Project delivers the mitigation strategy, improvements across the site – change of materials etc., satisfied actions within the ecological emergency action plan.</i> <i>The scheme represents a tangible enhancement to the visitor experience and will help increase the site's capacity to accommodate recreational use. In addition, the project contributes to the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan by delivering sustainable infrastructure improvements that reduce long-term maintenance requirements and improve accessibility to greenspace. While the proposal involves improvement of an existing route rather than the creation of a new path, it will significantly enhance the quality, longevity, and inclusivity of the site's recreational offer, helping to meet the aims of the mitigation strategy.</i> <i>Score: 20/30</i>
Lead to a reduction in the number of visitors to the Cotswold Beechwoods, particularly those visitors that originate from within the 15.4km ZoI.	Data on existing and predicted visitor numbers at your site. Analysis of types of visitors and their point of origin. <i>The project will contribute to reducing recreational pressure on the Cotswold</i>



Maximum score - 30	<i>Beechwoods by improving the accessibility and quality of an alternative greenspace within the Zone of Influence (ZoI).</i> <i>While the project is an upgrade to an existing route rather than the creation of a new recreational infrastructure, it will improve the site's capacity and usability, helping to retain and attract local visitors who might otherwise visit the Cotswold Beechwoods.</i> <i>Score: 20/20</i>
Desirable Criteria (Maximum score 25) 26	
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>How to demonstrate?</i>
Deliver on the actions in the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan Maximum score -10	Provide information on how the project would meet all or some of the actions. <i>The project supports a number of actions within the Ecological Emergency Action Plan, particularly in relation to improving accessibility to greenspaces and promoting health and wellbeing. By upgrading the existing path to a durable, fully accessible surface, this enables a wide range of users to safely access and enjoy the natural environment.</i> <i>The proposal aligns with the overarching aims of the plan by enhancing green infrastructure and</i>



	<i>reducing long-term maintenance impacts. While the Ecological Emergency Action Plan is due for update, the project remains consistent with its key principles and objectives.</i> <i>Score: 7/10</i>
Support and contribute to the deliver of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (in the Cotswold District area). Maximum score - 10	Illustrate what habitats are going to be created and where and how that fits in with the potential measures of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. <i>The project supports the aim of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy by improving access to and engagement with the natural environment. While the proposal does not create new habitats, it enhances existing green infrastructure, making the site more accessible to a wide range of users. Improved access encourages responsible use of natural spaces and greater awareness and appreciate of local habitats, supporting the strategy's objectives around connecting people with nature.</i> <i>The scheme complements the wider ambitions of the strategy by ensure that green spaces are inclusive, usable, and valued by the community, which is an important component of long-term nature recovery.</i> <i>GLNRS – Accessibility is important for nature.</i>



	Score: 7/10
Deliver the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and/or Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan, where projects are located within the Cotswold National Landscape or the Cotswold Water Park. Maximum score 5	Provide information on how the project would meet all or some of the actions in the plans. <i>The project supports the objectives of the Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan by enhancing access to and enjoyment of the Cotswold National Landscape. By improving the condition and accessibility of an existing path, the scheme enables a wide range of users to experience and engage with the landscape in a sustainable way, promoting appreciation and stewardship of the natural environment.</i> <i>While the proposal does not directly create new habitats, it contributes to the plan's broader aims of connecting people with nature and improving the quality and usability of key green infrastructure within the designated landscape.</i> Score: 4/5
Deliver other benefits – for example ecosystems services or natural capital benefits; climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits; community benefits.	Describe the multiple benefits that your project would bring to the wider environment and to the community. <i>The project will deliver a range of wider environmental and community</i>



Maximum score - 5	<i>benefits. By replacing the existing woodchip surface with a durable, all-weather path, it will improve year-round accessibility and usability, particularly during wetter periods when the current route can become difficult to use. This supports increased access to green space, encouraging physical activity, wellbeing, and community use.</i> <i>From a climate perspective, the scheme reduces the need for frequent material replacement and associated maintenance, lowering long-term emissions and resource use. The improved surface also supports climate adaptation by providing a more resilient route that can withstand changing weather conditions.</i> <i>Score: 3/5</i>
Deliver the Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Strategic Framework for Green Infrastructure in Gloucestershire. Maximum score - 5	Describe how your project would help deliver these strategies. <i>The project supports these strategies by improving accessibility to an alternative greenspace and enhancing existing green infrastructure. The upgraded path will make the site more inclusive and attractive to a wider range of users, helping to encourage greater use of local natural areas and supporting the wider green infrastructure network.</i> <i>Score: 4/5</i>



Secure match funding to increase potential outputs from the project. Maximum score - 10	Provide evidence of match funding and whether it is dependent on a successful bid to this Fund. <i>A small amount of match funding has been identifies; however, this is limited in comparison to the overall funding request and is dependent on a successful SANG bid. As such, the level of secured match funding is currently low.</i> Score: 1/10
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Total: 86/100