South Cambridgeshire District Council

Nature Recovery Grant

Application Guidance

About the Grant

Grant overview table

Applications are invited from	Informal community groups, non-profits and CICs, parish / town councils, South Cambridgeshire schools
Total available	£25,000
Theme 1 – Ecological Survey Grant	Up to £2,000
Theme 2 – Nature Recovery Project	£1,000 - £5,000
Grant scheme open	23 November 2026
Application deadline	25 January 2027

The Nature Recovery Grant supports parish/town councils, community groups and other eligible organisations to improve nature and biodiversity across South Cambridgeshire.

The grant aims to:

- Restore and enhance habitats for wildlife to increase biodiversity.
- Improve people's access to nature.
- Help communities take practical action for nature, regardless of where they are on their nature recovery journey.
- Increase resilience to climate change through nature improvements.
- Make more habitats for nature, or make them bigger, better, and more joined-up across the district.
- Support delivery of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and SCDC Climate and Nature Strategy.

Grant timeline

Applications open: 23 November 2026 – 25 January 2027
Application scoring: January / February 2027
Funding Decision: February 2027
Project implementation: March 2027 – March 2028

Ecological survey and 'next steps' submitted by March 2028.

Implementation theme: End of project report due May 2028.

What funding is available?

Projects may apply under one of two themes: Ecological Surveys or Nature Recovery Projects.

1. Ecological Surveys

Up to £2,000

Funding to help communities understand the wildlife and habitats, and potential for future nature projects in specific areas.

Surveys can help:

- Identify existing habitats and species.
- Highlight opportunities for enhancement.
- Provide recommendations for future projects.
- Identify climate risks and nature-based solutions to mitigate risks.
- Support development of a Community Nature Recovery Plan.
- Support development of a nature working group or eco club.

Examples:

- Ecological site survey.
- Habitat assessment / mapping.
- Hydrological or geological assessment.
- Biodiversity baseline survey.
- Species-specific survey.

2. Nature Recovery Projects

£1,000 to £5,000

Funding for well-developed nature recovery projects that are ready to be delivered. Projects must provide clear biodiversity benefits and support nature recovery priorities as set out in the *Local Nature Recovery Strategy* and SCDC's *Climate and Environment Strategy (2026-2030)*. Multi-parish or landscape-scale projects may be eligible for

higher combined funding where appropriate. All projects must obtain landowner permission and other permissions as required.

Examples:

- Creating wildflower meadow and grassland to support pollinators and other invertebrates.
- Creating or restoring ponds/wetlands to support aquatic species and mitigate flood risks.
- Habitat creation, restoration or conservation programmes for priority species (e.g. toad patrol, hedgehog highways, species monitoring)
- Habitat connectivity projects – linking fragmented wildlife sites.
- Woodland and hedgerow management.
- Community orchards or food forests.
- Nature-based solutions to climate risks (e.g. planting shading species, flood mitigation with SuDs, water retention with ponds, food forests, green infrastructure such as pocket parks, green roofs and walls, regenerative land management).
- Water conservation and flood management.

What can be funded?

- Survey Route: Surveys completed by accredited professionals.
- Project Route: Capital costs including materials (such as seeds, saplings, plants, bird/bat boxes, trellis…etc), tools and equipment needed for the nature project and contractor and construction costs, consultant costs.
- Maintenance costs (only if outside of parish/town council remit).
- 'Start-up' costs including training of volunteers

What cannot be funded?

- Staff or volunteer salaries.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisals for purposes such as development.
- Projects with little or no biodiversity benefit.
- Work previously completed.
- Projects on privately owned land that is not publicly accessible.
- Projects outside of South Cambridgeshire.

Who can apply?

The Nature Recovery grant aims to support people at different stages of the nature recovery journey. Eligible applicants include:

- informal community groups,
- non-profit organisations (including faith charities), and CICs
- parish/town councils in South Cambridgeshire
- South Cambridgeshire schools

Grant recipients must have:

- a bank account able to receive online payments,
- a written constitution or mission statement,
- a safeguarding policy, and
- an elected committee or steering group.

Individuals and informal groups are encouraged to apply with parish/town councils or other non-profit community groups that already have these in place. If you are starting a new group, Support Cambridgeshire can help you with setting up a bank account, constitution/mission statement, safeguarding policy, and governance arrangements.

To maximise nature benefits, collaboration between different groups, organisations and parish councils is highly encouraged – higher funding amounts may be considered in joint proposals, where appropriate.

Please note: applicants are responsible for securing all applicable landowner permissions, planning permission and any other regulatory approvals or consents as required. Climate and Environment team cannot obtain permissions on behalf of applicants.

How do I apply?

Eligible applicants can apply by filling out the Webform on the grant webpage

What information will you need to provide in the application?

You will need to provide information about your group/organisation, including

- a description of your organisation
- contact details
- bank details
- financial accounts
- constitution or mission statement
- safeguarding policy
- insurance (i.e. Public Liability Insurance) details

Along with information about your group/organisation, you will need to tell us:

For **ecological surveys:**

- What nature recovery projects (if any) has your community been involved in?
- Has your organisation received a grant from SCDC before? If so, which grant(s)?
- Description and location of the proposed site(s) (use What 3 Words to provide an accurate location).
- Why have you chosen this area to investigate?
- Evidence of landowner permission and public access arrangements.
- What are your desired outcomes?
- Which of the LNRS and Climate and Nature strategy priorities will your survey help with? Please see the *Nature Recovery Grant Priorities Summary* document to see what applies to your proposed area.
- How do you plan to utilise the ecological survey results?
- Survey cost and funding requested; 3x quotes; any match funding?
- Does your project contribute additional value and co-benefits?
- How could potential future nature recovery projects be funded?
- Delivery timeline.

For **shovel-ready nature recovery projects:**

- Location and project description (use What 3 Words to provide an accurate location).
- Evidence that the project has been thoroughly developed, options have been explored, and that the proposed option is ecologically sound.
- Expected biodiversity and climate benefits (e.g. species benefitted, habitats created, access to nature, carbon capture, climate adaptation).
- Which of the LNRS and Climate and Nature strategy priorities will your project help with? Please see the *Nature Recovery Grant Priorities Summary* document to see what applies to your proposed project.
- Project costs and funding requested; quotes (if applicable); any match funding.
- Does your project contribute additional value and co-benefits?
- Delivery timeline.
- Evidence of landowner permission and public access arrangements.
- Do you have support from all parish/town Councillors for your project?

What will we prioritise?

This grant aims to deliver biodiversity impacts, improve climate resilience with nature-based solutions, and balance community needs and benefits. Grants will be allocated to ensure a wide geographic spread and alignment with the LNRS and SCDC Climate

and Nature Strategy. Please see the ***Scoring Criteria and Weighting*** document for details about how your application will be assessed.

How will awards be decided?

The application window is from 23 November 2026 to 25 January 2027 – all applications will be assessed together. Please see *Scoring Criteria and Weighting* for how your application will be scored.

Applications will be assessed by a panel of Council officers against the grant criteria. Recommendations will be considered by the Grants Advisory Committee, with final decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities.

Monitoring requirements

Successful applicants of the ecological survey grant will need to submit their completed professional ecological survey report to SCDC, and a plan outlining their 'next steps' based on the findings from the report.

Recipients of the implementation funding will need to complete their proposed project within one year of funding allocation and submit an end-of-project report to SCDC no later than 3 months after the project is completed. The report should include images of the project and photo consents for SCDC to use the photos in its publications. Nature improvements must be actively maintained for at least 3 years, or as appropriate for the project.

Organisations that have previously received grant funding from the Council must have submitted all required monitoring and evaluation reports relating to earlier awards, and these reports must be deemed satisfactory by Council officers, before any new grant application will be considered by the Grants Advisory Committee (GAC).

Applicants must return all unused funds to SCDC.

Need help with your application?

First time applying for a grant from SCDC? Have questions or concerns about how to apply? We can help - contact us at climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk and an officer from the team will get in touch with you.


Nature Recovery Grant
Helping nature thrive across South Cambridgeshire