

South Oxfordshire Nature and Climate Action Fund

2026/27

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

South Oxfordshire District Council has a budget of £100,000 to award to projects across South Oxfordshire which support communities to take action to address and adapt to climate change and support nature recovery.

We recognise the importance of our shared responsibility to protect the planet. Our [Council](#) and [Nature and Climate Action](#) Plans detail our aims and targets to help the district thrive and take action on climate change and nature recovery. We want to inspire and enable our communities to do the same and have developed this fund to enable groups across South Oxfordshire to do so.

Projects could focus on areas such as:

- Energy
- Waste and consumption
- Transport and travel
- Adaptation
- Nature recovery
- Community access to nature

You don't have to be an expert on these areas to apply, we are just as keen to hear from groups who are at the beginning of their journey to take action, as we are to hear from more established groups.

Basic Rules of the Scheme:

- Projects must take place within the South Oxfordshire district for the benefit of South Oxfordshire residents
- The minimum grant you can apply for is £250 and the maximum is £10,000
- You can apply for capital items and revenue costs (excluding recurring revenue costs)
- We can fund up to 100 per cent of the total cost of a project (budget permitting)
- The project must complete within 12 months of the award decision
- Usually, the scheme will be open for one round of applications per financial year
- For the funding round 2026/27 there will be an approximate 50:50 total funding split between climate and nature projects, with £50,000 to allocate to

climate mitigation and adaptation projects, and £50,000 to allocate to nature recovery and community access to nature projects

- A decision will be made within approximately ten weeks of the scheme closing date

Who is eligible?

- Town/parish councils and parish meetings
- Local 'not for profit' organisations, (this can include a company limited by guarantee which does not distribute any surplus it makes to its members), whose primary purpose is to benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire
- N.B. Town/parish councils can also collaborate with local unconstituted groups and apply on their behalf

Organisations must be able to:

- Provide with their application a copy of a recent bank statement in the name of the organisation applying (no more than two months old)
- Provide on request a copy of the organisation's detailed financial records e.g., income/expenditure/reserves for the most recent complete financial year– or projections for new organisations
- Provide on request a copy of their governing document (like a constitution, set of rules, articles of association etc) that demonstrates they are a 'not for profit organisation' and the project they are applying for matches the organisation objectives. *Please note parish meetings are eligible to apply but we would not request a copy of the governing document.*
- Confirm their organisation has named officers, members, or trustees on a management committee/board.

To mitigate against any misuse of a grant or to the council's reputation from this relaxed criterion to apply for a grant, officers will request the governance and financial documents mentioned above for every fifth application, and any organisations who have not received council funding in the last 12 months.

Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies (for example other district councils, NHS trusts). *Please note Town/Parish councils and parish meetings are eligible to apply*
- Schools, colleges, universities (please note however, eligible organisations can involve school groups and education settings in their projects)
- Groups who raise funds on behalf of or will improve/create facilities that will predominately benefit an ineligible organisation, for example Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)
- Individuals (this includes making any payments to individuals on behalf of community groups)

- Profit-based businesses (private businesses)
- Political and lobbying groups
- Organisations who operate a grant scheme of their own or who budget for giving grants/donations in their annual budget will be considered on a case-by-case basis. *Please note Town/Parish councils and parish meetings are eligible to apply*
- Nationwide organisations (except where they have a local constitution and/or local bank account. We may also make exceptions if a project clearly relates to a local hub/branch of the organisation)

What type of projects can we fund?

We will fund projects which take action to:

- Address climate change and avoid or reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (mitigation projects) or,
- Adjust to the current and future effects of climate change (adaptation projects)
- Support nature recovery and biodiversity

We score each application on the extent of the climate and/or biodiversity credentials of the project and the potential impact of the actions taken, **alongside the following criteria:**

- The extent of potential learnings for others and how knowledge of climate change and/or nature is shared amongst the community
- How the project engages and inspires the community to take action
- The extent of the community benefits and need
- How the project embraces working in partnership
- How the project contributes to the achievement of the council's Council Plan 2025-29 priorities: Action on climate change and nature recovery and thriving, healthy and inclusive communities

Appropriate projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Installing an electric vehicle charging point for community use to support the transition to low emission vehicles
- Organising a community repair café, clothes/toy/household items swap and/or loan scheme to support waste minimisation
- Linking to the [Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) and using this to inform a nature recovery project which supports the identified biodiversity, species and habitat priorities
- Undertaking an energy audit and implementing the recommended energy efficiency measures, alongside sharing your findings with the community
- Building a community wildflower garden and holding workshops which offer ideas for increasing biodiversity within residents' own gardens/spaces

- Organising and hosting a community learning event on renewable energy options such as solar panels and air source heat pumps
- Creating and delivering a plan to restore a community woodland, alongside increasing community access and encouraging more visitors
- Creating and restoring natural habitats such as floodplain meadows, or tree planting to mitigate against the effects of drought and flooding
- Developing a community emergency plan or building awareness of flood preparation and response strategies to help increase your community's resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Putting in cycle racks by the local shops/amenities alongside enhancing wayfinding in a local community to encourage walking and cycling as alternative modes of transport

For more ideas and resources to help develop a community climate action project, please see [the Nature and Climate Action Fund webpage](#) and have a look through [our action on climate and nature webpages](#).

What we will not fund:

- Retrospective funding for work/projects that will complete before our decision is made (we will consider projects that have started; however, we will not be able to fund any retrospective costs)
- Projects that do not demonstrate a clear benefit to the community in which they are taking place
- Statutory activities/requirements that either the council or another public-sector organisation is responsible for delivering, such as schools, public highways, public rights of way and road safety measures. We will consider activities that a parish council has the powers to deliver, but not a statutory duty to provide
- Projects where the carbon emissions released through delivery of the project, would outweigh the potential benefit of the project implementation
- Energy efficiency measures for buildings that are not used by groups within the community
- Litter picking activities
- Recurring revenue costs, like salaries, rent, rates and maintenance (like the maintenance and serving of an electric vehicle charging point). We will consider salaries for a one-off project – lasting no longer than six months. We will also consider room hire for the period of the project, to hold regular climate action group events or meetings.
- Costs that relate to other council services e.g., planning applications or building regulation fees. (We will consider requests for plants or equipment for planting on council owned land if the appropriate permissions are in place – please see our webpage on [using council land for nature recovery projects](#)).

- Requests for refreshment funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Refreshments where possible must be from local food surplus organisations, and/or support the principals of the [Oxfordshire Food Strategy](#). We will not fund alcoholic refreshments.
- Clothing such as uniforms. We will consider safety kit such as high-visibility clothing
- Equipment which could be rented or borrowed (to avoid buying new)
- Projects that specifically benefit private businesses
- Political activities, lobbying or campaigning
- Projects that don't align with the council's equalities objectives and/or the Equality Act 2010

Opening and closing dates

The scheme will be open for eight weeks. We will publicise the dates on our website, in our newsletters and through our social media platforms.

Application and Award Process

1. Organisations apply using the council's online grants management system ('the system'), accessible from [the grants page of our website](#). Applicants should read the guidance notes on our website before completing an application.
2. We'll usually make our decision within ten weeks of the scheme closing date.
3. Council officers will check the eligibility of the application (including the additional checks if required) and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility.

If eligible, officers will prepare a short summary of the application including key information from the application, merits, concerns and recommended scoring to the relevant director of service.

4. The relevant director of service will then make award decisions in consultation with the relevant cabinet member. Their decisions are final and aren't subject to appeal or call-in.
5. Once the community enablement team receive the award decision, they will save it on the grants system, publish the decision on the council's website (in summary, once the scheme closes) and either;
 - a. send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions, the applicant will then decline or accept the grant award, confirming they will meet the conditions via the online grants management system.

- b. inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful
6. On receipt of the notification of acceptance the community enablement team will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter, following agreement from the relevant director of service. **All payments must be made by BACs to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.**

Standard conditions

- The organisation must spend the grant on the project listed in their application and within 12 months from the decision to award a grant or they will return the funding
- If requested, the organisation will return a proportionate amount of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding towards the project. The minimum request will be £50.
- The funding is non-transferrable unless agreed by the council in writing in advance of any spending. Any unspent funds will be returned to the council upon request. The minimum request will be £50.
- The organisation will comply with all relevant statutes and regulations related to its status, objectives and delivery of its core activities
- The organisation must have appropriate policies in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, and comply with equalities, GDPR, and any other relevant legislation.
- The organisation must consult the climate and biodiversity team before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant. Minor revisions will be approved at the discretion of officers, major revisions will need to be approved by the Service Manager.
- The organisation will acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project.
- The organisation acknowledges the council accepts no responsibility or liability for this project or the facilities it provides now or in the future.

Monitoring the grants

- The grants system will record all applications, decisions and remaining balances. We will publish grants awarded on the council's website.
- The community enablement team will monitor every grant awarded to ensure spending is appropriate.
- If the awarded project has not started by the expiry date (12 months from the award date) and is unlikely to do so in the next three months, the organisation must repay the grant in full to the council.

- If the project has started but experiences delays, officers at their discretion, can allow a single, six-month extension to the grant. Time period extensions of over six months will need to be approved by the Service Manager
- All grant repayments will return to the council's general reserves.
- Any Nature and Climate Action Fund budget not awarded by 31 March 2027 will return to the council's general reserves as carry forwards will not be allowed.
- If repayments are necessary, the community enablement team will liaise with the organisation to recover the funds, keeping the relevant member(s) informed.

Contact Details

For more information about the scheme, advice on a potential project or other possible funding sources, organisations are encouraged to contact grants@southandvale.gov.uk or climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Alternative Formats

Please do not hesitate to contact the above teams if you would like this policy and guidance in an alternative format, such as large print, Braille, audio, or easy read.