

The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Sustainable Development Fund Information & Criteria Sheet

The Quantock Hills AONB has an established grant scheme to help you with projects that will look after the AONB now and for the future.

This briefing sheet explains what the scheme is, what 'sustainable development' is, who can apply for a grant, and how to go about applying.

What is the Sustainable Development Fund?

The Sustainable Development Fund is a grant scheme that has been running since July 2005. It supports projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It aims to develop and test new methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life in this area of great beauty and diversity.

The SDF for 2011/12 has £45,000 to allocate. This will provide grants to organisations, businesses, community groups and individuals who wish to explore and develop practical projects that enhance, conserve and develop the environment, economy and way of life.

As less funding is available this year **the maximum grant available is £10,000.** The SDF Panel will give **priority to projects that demonstrate strong community support and involve volunteers.**

What is Sustainable Development?

Sustainable development will promote and enhance the environmental, economic and community well-being of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. Achieving sustainable development requires working towards four main goals at the same time:

- Social progress which meets the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Ensuring a diverse and prosperous rural economy
- Careful use of natural resources

Individual projects can place particular emphasis on any one of these four goals. Ideally, they should seek to make progress on all of them, but must demonstrate no negative impact on any.

Why the Quantock Hills?

The Quantock Hills is one of 34 AONB's in England. They extend over more than 15% of England's land area and represent some of our finest landscapes. They are statutory designations, set up with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the areas they cover. The Fund seeks to foster projects which are the best of their kind in these outstanding and vulnerable areas.

What kind of project is eligible?

Successful projects must:

- Help deliver the AONB Management Plan (Copies of the AONB Management Plan are available from the AONB office or can be viewed on-line at www.quantockhills.com);
- Further the purposes of the AONB (on-line at www.quantockhills.com)
- Promote sustainable development;
- Have the demonstrable support or involvement of communities;
- Be complementary to key local, regional or national strategies.

Projects will be assessed against the Sustainable Development criteria;

Environmental Criteria - does the project:

- conserve and enhance the built and/or natural environment
- protect or increase bio-diversity
- promote or implement 'reduce; re-use; recycle' principles
- promote the use and/or generation of renewable energy
- reduce the need for car, van and lorry journeys
- minimise pollution of the land, air and water
- promote the use and/or generation of renewable energy

Social Criteria - does the project:

- encourage community engagement, ownership or empowerment
- conserve and support the cultural heritage
- encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the AONB
- combat social exclusion, particularly of young people
- promote local community action
- encourage those involved to engage in a more sustainable lifestyle

Economic Criteria - does the project:

- satisfy local economic needs
- provide long-term economic benefit to the community
- make a contribution to local training and/or employment prospects
- make use of local suppliers of products, services and materials
- demonstrate responsible business practices promote community support for the local economy

Grants can cover the costs of some or all of the following:

- Practical work;
- Feasibility studies or research projects;
- Group or partnership development;
- Awareness raising and training about sustainability;
- Equipment and materials.

Examples of projects could include:

- renewable / green energy schemes;

- sustainable transport;
- environmental building design;
- awareness campaigns;
- innovative products or initiatives;
- community environmental schemes;
- recycling schemes;
- conservation activities;
- promoting local produce.

Who can apply?

Public, private, voluntary sector, individuals, businesses or community groups can apply. Individuals or businesses can only be beneficiaries where the project shows a clear benefit to the wider community. You don't have to live or work within the AONB to apply. You must simply demonstrate that your project will have a positive impact upon the AONB and satisfy the core criteria of the grant.

How we assess your application?

Applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. Before you submit an application, please speak to us! The AONB team can guide and support the development of your application where appropriate.

The decision whether to award a grant is made by the Quantock Hills SDF panel. The panel has representatives from a range of interests, including community, business and environmental management.

Grants

- Grant payment is administered by Somerset County Council on behalf of the Quantock Hills AONB Partnership
- The scheme can provide up to 50% funding to local authority and business projects and 75% funding for not-for-profit and voluntary sector projects.
- In exceptional cases (where there is significant voluntary or "in kind" input) 100% may be provided.
- In all cases, an agreement setting out what is required for satisfactory completion of the project will be signed prior to receipt of grant. There will also be requirements about monitoring and recording the project outputs.

How can we in the AONB team help?

If you would like more information or want to talk through a project idea please contact the AONB office.

**Quantock Hills AONB Service
Fyne Court, Broomfield
Somerset, TA5 2EQ**

**Tel: (01823) 451 884
Email: quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk**