

NATIONAL TRAILS.UK

1) Coastal Wildbelt – Test and Trial Grant Guidance Notes

Coastal Wildbelt is a national voice championing both nature and people—advocating for a joined-up, impact-driven approach that gives equal weight to thriving habitats and thriving lives along England’s coast.

We exist to unlock the potential of the land that stretches around our coastline—linking our King Charles III England Coast Path, with the land down to the sea at low tide, and the spaces beyond.

We believe that nature and people are deeply connected, and that joyful, meaningful experiences with the coast—as a place for leisure, arts, heritage, work, and wellbeing—can sit alongside and support flourishing ecosystems and prosperous communities.

By bringing together national ambition and local insight, we support collaboration, build capacity, and enable work that improves lives, connects communities, and enhances nature across England’s coast.

Coastal Wildbelt is more than a programme—it is a unifying idea, a national voice, and a growing movement that reflects the coast’s challenges and potential. We convene partners, amplify shared learning, and create opportunities for people and organisations to protect, enjoy, and shape the coast for the long term.

What is the Coastal Wildbelt – 2025-26 Grant?

Building on the success of our 2024 pilot, Coastal Wildbelt will provide organisations the opportunity to test and trial ideas and/or bring best practice to new parts of our English coastline, so that people and nature can thrive together.

We provide a simple and accessible source of money for local projects, focussed on delivering outcomes that bring together our key aims of:

- **Joyful coastal experiences**
 - Creating, strengthening and enhancing opportunities so that anyone can experience our amazing coastal path(s) and the spaces beyond.
- **Healthy coastal habitats**
 - Creating, strengthening and enhancing opportunities for nature to thrive and survive in the face of a changing coastline
- **Building coastal resilience**
 - Creating, strengthening and enhancing opportunities for communities to flourish in the face of environmental and social challenges



Coastal Wildbelt is about thinking bigger and delivering on much larger scale than we've seen before. We're interested in funding projects which actively look to deliver on all our key aims, working in partnership to deliver outcomes for people and nature, together.

We do not have set requirements for 'what' projects should look like, as each stretch of coast has different needs and opportunities - however as a minimum, all successful proposals must include aspects which deliver outcomes for **both** people and nature.

Anyone involved in directly delivering outcomes for people and nature on the English coastline can apply to our Coastal Wildbelt 2025-26 Grant, however we require that if the project is not led by a National Trail Officer (NTO), that the local NTO to your coastal stretch **must** be engaged in the development and delivery in your proposal.

If you're not sure who your local NTO is, reach out to Kate Jury – Coastal Wildbelt Programme Manager on kate@nationaltrails.uk in advance of applying.

Funding Criteria

The application will be assessed on how it meets the following criteria:

Does the project:

- Include the local National Trail Officer as part of project and/or partnership?
- Include opportunities **on**, or **for** users of, the open sections of King Charles III England Coast Path or existing coastal National Trails to engage with or benefit from your project?
- Deliver **outcomes for people and nature**, through our key aims of: **Joyful coastal experiences**, **Healthy coastal habitats** and/or **Building coastal resilience**?
- Build in **legacy**? This might be in terms of maintenance plans, knowledge sharing or aspirations for building on this pilot project in the future.
- Provide key **learning** opportunities for other parts of the English coastline or the wider National Trails network?
- Have the resource and capacity to be **delivered by 31st March 2026**?

How much can you apply for?

The total grant pot for 2025-26 will be **£35,000**.

There is no set minimum amount, but a maximum of **£10,000** per application. Should you have an idea that exceeds £10,000 that you think delivers on the Coastal Wildbelt ambition, please contact Kate directly to discuss.

To ensure we can support projects all around our English coastline, we will initially only accept **one** application per King Charles III England Coast Path partnership or coastal National Trail.

If you're unsure of your local KCIIIIECP partnership, please check [here](#), searching under one of the five regions.



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

Funding requests can only be made for **capital costs** (Defra CDEL definition) that are not considered Business As Usual. This can include funding towards an existing staff member's time, providing it is clearly shown how this work contributed to the overall project outcome.

This fund can be used to cover 100% of a project's cost or used in conjunction with match funding. This can be sourced from other grant programmes, private finance or from 'in kind' contributions.

Please note: The Coastal Wildbelt 2025-26 Grant **cannot** contribute towards the 25% match funding for Trail Partnerships.

What we won't fund

- Projects outside of England - whilst NTUK supports National Trails across England, Scotland and Wales, as this funding is through the Defra-funded Protected Landscapes Partnership it can only be directed towards **England** projects
- Applications where the National Trail Officer has not been engaged
- Applications which only deliver for people **or** nature.
- Where a National Trail, or a project that falls on a stretch of King Charles III England Coast Path that has already received funding through this fund. If by October 2025 there is remaining funding, the Coastal Wildbelt Programme Manager may allow for additional funding towards National Trails or stretches of coast that have already been successful.
- Projects that have received funding from the Nature Recovery 2025-26 Test and Trial Grant.
- Fixed-term project officers employed solely for the purpose of delivering the proposed project
- The purchase of land or buildings
- Ongoing revenue costs for established projects, events or enterprises
- Retrospective applications or items where costs have already been incurred



The process

Want to apply but don't know where to start?

1. If you're not a National Trail Officer, find out who your local one is and talk to them about your idea(s).
2. Reach out to your existing partnership(s) and beyond to identify potential delivery partners, e.g. your local Wildlife Trust, large landowners, Protected Landscapes
3. Refer to your Local Nature Recovery Strategy (if published, or in consultation)
5. Or if you want a further chat or request a presentation at your partnership meeting, contact Kate Jury – Coastal Wildbelt Programme Manager on kate@nationaltrails.uk

Ready to apply?

1. If your project is estimated to be >£10,000 please contact kate@nationaltrails.uk before applying
2. If your project is eligible, the next stage is to submit your Application **HERE**.
3. For projects of £5,000 or less we generally require no further information, provided the project is clearly described and justified. For requests above £5,000, we may need additional information and will arrange a call to discuss further.

There is **no fixed deadline** for applying, however the project funding will be assessed and allocated on a **first come first served basis**.

We aim to let you know whether your application is successful within **4 weeks** of submission. If your application is not successful, we will provide feedback and where applicable, will allow a resubmission. Just to note, whilst funding for this Test & Trial is from Defra, there are no additional review steps beyond those described here.

Once the £35,000 has been allocated, we will announce that **the pot is closed**.

Should you wish to apply but are concerned with capacity - do reach out to Kate (kate@nationaltrails.uk) to see how we can best support you.

As noted, if you have a project proposal more than £10,000, please reach out to Kate to discuss in advance of applying

If you are successful in obtaining a grant, you must be willing to sign up to our grant conditions. These will typically cover items such as the need to credit the Coastal Wildbelt project when publicising and reporting outcomes of the project.

Grant payments are normally made in arrears, so you will need to claim the grant after expenditure has been incurred. We will aim to pay valid claims within four weeks of receipt and payments can be phased flexibly in accordance with project needs. We are happy to discuss this further with successful applicants if more support is required.



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

We expect all projects to be completed by **Tuesday 31st March 2026**. There is flexibility of project deliverables to be realised after this date, and we can speak with successful applicants further to this. It is therefore preferred that all necessary consents have been obtained prior to the submission of an application, so that there are no delays in commencing the project.

Any further questions, or clarifications, please reach out to Kate Jury, Coastal Wildbelt Programme Manager at kate@nationaltrails.uk



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

NATIONAL TRAILS.UK

2. National Trails Nature Recovery Programme – Test and Trial Grant Guidance Notes

The National Trails Nature Recovery Programme aims to support National Trails to be nature-rich corridors for people and nature. One of the identified barriers to delivering nature-rich National Trails is funding. This is one tool in the Nature Recovery Programme toolbox that provides a flexible way of accessing capital funding, with a simple application process and no strict application deadline.

We are looking for applications that improve green and blue spaces along a National Trail, that connect people with these spaces and that can be used as case studies for the wider network.

Anyone involved in directly delivering outcomes for people and nature along the National Trails can apply, however if the project is not led by a National Trail Officer, we do require for them to be engaged in the development and delivery of your proposal.

We do ask that coastal National Trails/sections of trails apply to the Coastal Wildbelt pot.

If you're not sure who your local National Trail Officer is or have any further questions, please reach out to NTUK's Nature Recovery Programme Manager at hannah@nationaltrails.uk in advance of applying.

Funding criteria

The application will be assessed on how it meets the following criteria.

Does the project:

- Include the local National Trail Officer as part of project and/or partnership?
- Deliver either within ~10 metres of a National Trail or clearly identifies ways in which the National Trail and its users would benefit from the project.
- Contribute to an identified priority area or measure in your Local Nature Recovery Strategy, if it is published or in consultation (if it does not, don't worry, your project may still be granted funding)
- Deliver **outcomes for people and nature**, through our aims of delivering nature-rich National Trail corridors and connecting National Trail users with nature.
- Build in **legacy**? This might be in terms of maintenance plans, knowledge sharing or aspirations for building on this pilot project in the future.
- Provide key **learning** opportunities for other parts of the wider National Trail network?
- Have the resource and capacity to be **delivered by 31st March 2026**?



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

Examples of what could be funded, but not limited to:

- Wildflower verges with interpretation
- Sustainable drainage systems e.g. swales or natural flood management with interpretation
- Planter boxes (pollinator friendly species) that the local community are involved in maintaining
- Convening partners to develop a nature recovery action plan for your trail
- An app to engage users with the unique species along the National Trail
- Development of a nature-friendly maintenance curriculum for volunteers or apprenticeships

How much can you apply for?

The total Nature Recovery Programme Test & Trial Grant pot for 2025-26 will be **£35,000**.

There is no set minimum amount, but a maximum of **£10,000** per application. Should you have an idea that exceeds £10,000 that you think delivers on the grant's outcomes, please contact the NTUK Nature Recovery Programme Manager to discuss.

To ensure we can support projects across our National Trails, we will initially only accept **one** application per National Trail/partnership.

Funding requests can only be made for **capital costs** (Defra CDEL definition) that are not considered Business As Usual. This can include funding towards an existing staff member's time, providing it is clearly shown how this work contributed to the overall project outcome.

This fund can be used to cover 100% of a project's cost or used in conjunction with match funding. This can be sourced from other grant programmes, private finance or from 'in kind' contributions.

Please note: The Nature Recovery Programme 2025-26 Test & Trial Grant cannot contribute towards the 25% match funding for Trail Partnerships.

What we won't fund

- Projects outside of England, whilst NTUK supports National Trails across England, Scotland and Wales, as this funding is through the Defra-funded Protected Landscapes Partnership it can only be directed towards **England** projects
- Applications where the National Trail Officer has not been engaged
- Applications that are not supporting outcomes on, or for users of the National Trails.
- Applications which only deliver for people or nature.
- Where a National Trail has already received funding through this fund. If by October 2025 there is remaining funding, the Nature Recovery Programme Manager may allow for additional funding towards an applicant that has already been successful.
- Projects that have received funding from the Coastal Wildbelt Test & Trial Grant.
- Fixed-term project officers employed solely for the purpose of delivering the proposed Project
- The purchase of land or buildings
- Ongoing revenue costs for established projects, events or enterprises



- Retrospective applications or items where costs have already been incurred

The process

Want to apply but don't know where to start?

1. If you're not a National Trail Officer, find out who your local one is and talk to them about your idea(s).
2. Reach out to your existing partnership(s) and beyond to identify potential delivery partners, e.g. your local Wildlife Trusts, large landowners, Protected Landscapes
3. Look to the [National Trail Nature Recovery Toolkit](#) for inspiration or ideas on what you could deliver and who you can partner with
4. Refer to your Local Nature Recovery Strategy (if published or in consultation) for where you could focus your project
5. If you would like some support or to request a presentation at your organisation/partnership meeting, contact NTUK's Nature Recovery Programme Manager at hannah@nationaltrails.uk

Ready to apply?

1. If your project is estimated to be >£10,000 please contact NTUK's Nature Recovery Programme Manager before applying
2. If your project is eligible, the next stage is to submit your Application [HERE](#).
3. For projects of £5,000 or less we generally require no further information, provided the project is clearly described and justified. For requests above £5,000, we may need additional information and will arrange a call to discuss further.

There is **no fixed deadline** for applying, however the project funding will be assessed and allocated on a **first come first served basis**.

We aim to let you know whether your application is successful within **4 weeks** of submission. If your application is not successful, we will provide feedback and where applicable, will allow a resubmission. Just to note, whilst funding for this Test & Trial is from Defra, there are no additional review steps beyond those described here.

Once the £35,000 has been allocated, we will announce that **the pot is closed**.

Should you wish to apply but are concerned with capacity - do reach out to NTUK's Nature Recovery Programme Manager to see how we can best support you.

If you are successful in obtaining a grant, you must be willing to sign up to our grant conditions. These will typically cover items such as the need to credit the NTUK Nature Recovery Programme & the Protected Landscapes Partnership when publicising and reporting outcomes of the project and presenting the project at a future National Trails Nature Recovery Special Interest Group meeting.

Grant payments are normally made in arrears, so you will need to claim the grant after



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

expenditure has been incurred. We will aim to pay valid claims within four weeks of receipt and payments can be phased flexibly in accordance with project needs. We are happy to discuss this further with successful applicants if more support is required.

We expect all projects to be completed by **Tuesday 31 March 2026**. There is flexibility of project deliverables to be realised after this date following a discussion with the NTUK Nature Recovery Programme Manager. It is therefore preferred that all necessary consents have been obtained prior to the submission of an application, so that there are no delays in commencing the project.

Any further questions, or clarifications, please reach out to Hannah Brightley, National Trails UK Nature Recovery Programme Manager at hannah@nationaltrails.uk



Protected
Landscapes
Partnership

Application Questions (both programmes)

Section 1: About you

- What is your name
- Your email address
- Are you a National Trail Officer?
 - o If so: Which National Trail do you manage?
 - o If not: What is your position, organisation and which National Trail Officer have you engaged with?

Section 2: Project Snapshot

- Project Name
- Project Location
- Project Summary (2-3 sentences max to describe your project)
- Project Costs (including, where possible, a cost breakdown)
- Estimated Completion Date
- Who else will be involved with your project (in addition to yourself and/or National Trail Officer)
- A question if your project requires landowner permission
- A question if your project involves working with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults if you have the appropriate written safeguarding policy in place

Section 3: Tell us about your project

- Project Description
 - o *We are interested to hear the following:*
 - *What you want to do*
 - *How you will do it*
 - *What are the expected deliverables/outputs*
 - *What are the desired outcomes for people and nature*
 - *How the project will be managed and maintained*
 - *What the legacy of the project will be*
- Which funding pot you'll be applying to: Coastal Wildbelt or Nature Recovery Programme
- Does your project deliver outcomes for both people and nature? (Yes/No/Not sure)
- Your project must be focused on a National Trail and/or enable users of National Trails to benefit from your project. Please confirm below that your project meets this criteria (Yes/No/Not Sure)

