

GRANT FUNDING IN THE SETTING OF THE WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Purpose

To adopt a process for awarding grant funding in the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the approach for allowing grants to projects outside, but within the setting of, the Wye Valley National Landscape based on the Option A principle of 10% reductions per kilometre up to a distance of 5km from the boundary within specified sub-catchments of the River Wye.

Key Issues

- With increased grant allocations on both the English and Welsh sides of the Wye Valley National Landscape, there is a need for a more systematic, evidence-based approach to funding projects outside the Wye Valley National Landscape where they still further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty of the nationally designated protected landscape.
- It is proposed that a graded funding system is adopted, where work inside the National Landscape and within 1 km of its boundary receives full support, while eligible projects up to 5km away within the Wye catchment would receive funding based on a 10% reduction per kilometre distance and consequent diminished likely benefit.
- The process should be reviewed annually and a more generous / less steep gradation (Option B), with 5% reductions per kilometre, could be considered.
- The main considerations are related to habitat connectivity and improvements to water quality or flow within specific sub-catchment of the Wye, following The Lawton Review (2010) principles of 'bigger – better – more joined up'.

Reasons

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team are increasingly receiving requests from landowners outside the boundary of the Wye Valley National Landscape for grant funding to support project work.

Current guidance differs slightly in England and Wales for funding schemes and grant programmes that the Wye Valley National Landscape Team administers:-

- For the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), and subsequently for general Capital budgets from Welsh Government and DEFRA, the 'rule of thumb' adopted with applications & projects outside the boundary is that 'the majority of the benefit must be within the National Landscape'.
- DEFRA Capital funding guidance states that funds may be used for activity outside the boundary of a Protected Landscape, where that activity can demonstrate benefit to the Protected Landscape, or the Protected Landscape organisation's objectives or partnership initiatives.
- Similarly the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme allows the funding of projects outside the National Landscape in England where "it is clear the project will benefit the Protected Landscape, or the Protected Landscape body's objectives or partnership initiatives". No maximum distance from the National Landscape is set.
- Welsh Government's guidance for Ffermio Bros is that "Projects can include holdings outside the Designated Landscape (DL) Boundary, where the project is part of a specific thematic collaborative project in which other holdings sit within the DL, and which is materially enhanced by the inclusion of land outside. Other than in exceptional circumstances (which must be approved by WG and the Programme Manager in advance) all activities must be within 1km of the boundary of the DL."

It is therefore currently a judgement call on a case-by-case basis as to whether to fund works or not in the setting of the National Landscape. With increased interest in National Landscape funding, the Wye Valley National Landscape Team believe there is a need for a more robust and evidence-based approach to the level of support we can offer when granting work outside the National Landscape.

In 2025/26 habitat conservation and enhancement work was funded and delivered on 74 holdings. 78% of these were inside the National Landscape and 14% were within 1km of the boundary. In the wider setting of the National Landscape the remaining 8% (6 holdings) were beyond 1km from the boundary.

Implications

Funding allocations to the Wye Valley National Landscape must support outcomes that further the conservation and enhancement of the outstanding natural beauty of the National Landscape. However, project work does not necessarily have to be confined to within the National Landscape boundary, so long as the benefit to the designated landscape can be demonstrated.

When considering benefit to the National Landscape the primary ways this can be achieved are:

- Bigger, better, more joined up habitat connectivity extending through the National Landscape boundary (as outlined in The Lawton Review 'Making space for nature': a review of England's wildlife and how to protect it, led by Professor Sir John Lawton, published in 2010.)
- Through improvements in water quality &/or quantity, including reducing soil erosion and silting of water courses and tributaries &/or reduced or slower peak flows reaching the National Landscape, including from the tributaries and sub-catchments surrounding the National Landscape.

These benefits tend to reduce with distance from the National Landscape boundary.

To provide clarity to officers and landowners, it is proposed the following parameters be set for Grant Funding in the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape (NB – consideration should be given to the location of the work, not where the landowner / applicant lives):

- Offers of funding made to landowners outside the National Landscape boundary follow a graded approach, with the level of funding decreasing with distance from the boundary.
- A buffer of 1km around the whole of the National Landscape be considered the same as work within the boundary, as work here can demonstrate direct benefit both through habitat connectivity and water quality.
- Beyond the 1km buffer, only projects in the Wye catchment are considered suitable for funding, based on the benefit the work can provide in terms of water quality and quantity.
- To reflect the gradual reduction in benefit, the further away from a tributary's confluence with the River Wye in the National Landscape that the works are proposed, funding offers decrease with every further 1km from the National Landscape boundary up the Wye and respective tributaries and their sub-catchments.
- To reflect the importance of working on some tributaries and their catchments where significant benefits can be achieved for the River Wye and the National Landscape, the whole of these sub-catchments are included in the outermost buffer, for example the Garren and Gamber sub-catchment.
- Where projected work straddles a buffer boundary, the higher rate is to be used.
- Where a landholding has a number of activities which fall into 2 or more buffer bands, each activity is considered within the buffer in which it is located.

These parameters can be seen visually on the Setting Grant Funding Guide 2026 map below.

The process should be kept under annual review. An alternative 'Option B' could be considered, with a more generous / less steep gradation, with 5% reductions per kilometre. This would result in an offer of 95% between 1 and 2km, 90% between 2 and 3km and so on down to 80% from 4 to 5km from the National Landscape.

The initial / steeper Option A would most likely lead to a lower uptake from landowners outside the boundary, leading to more money being invested closer to and within the National Landscape. However this may mean losing some highly beneficial work slightly further afield and more importantly losing the goodwill of landowners which may need to be nurtured for future wider project involvement.

Option B would be a more gradual approach, offering the opportunity to 'test the water' in relation to this new approach, secure wider landowner engagement, spend the Capital

grants budget more easily and deliver more biodiversity enhancement projects, albeit potentially in the wider setting of the National Landscape.

To provide consistency with other schemes, beyond 1km from the National Landscape (the 100% rate), grant offers would be for a proportionately reduced quantity if using standard rates or offer the reduced % of bespoke items associated with each zone.

The proposal is to establish a clearer, evidence-based approach for awarding grants to projects outside, but within the setting of, the Wye Valley National Landscape. The key criteria is that funding must support the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape, but some beneficial work may occur beyond its boundary.

The Wye Valley National Landscape covers 328 km² and the wider eligible area would increase the fundable area to 725 km².

Wye Valley National Landscape Team have developed the proposed methodology using the various grant guidance criteria above as a foundation for based on these principles and in discussion with the Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP), the FiPL Local Assessment Panel and Herefordshire Council's Natural Environment Team.

Background

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team administer a number of grants and funding programmes for DEFRA and Welsh Government. These include:-

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme – for farmers and land managers in the English part of the National Landscape with a focus on Nature, Climate, People & Place,
- The Ffermio Bro programme – for farmers and land managers to collaborate on nature recovery and farm sustainability in the Welsh part of the National Landscape,
- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) – for community projects and initiatives in the Welsh part of the National Landscape, with a predominant focus on nature recovery and decarbonisation,
- The Wye Valley National Landscapes Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) – for small projects anywhere in the National Landscape,
- The Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programme, from Welsh Government, focusing on nature recovery and decarbonisation projects,
- DEFRA Access for All funding.
- DEFRA Wildlife Rich Habitat Fund,
- DEFRA and Welsh Government general Capital funding,
- Natural Resources Wales Strategic Allocated Funding.

Grants and projects are funded where work specifically benefits the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty of the nationally designated protected landscape. The Wye Valley National Landscapes Team also provides advice on other funding and grants that may be available.



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Wye Valley
National Landscape

Setting Grant Funding Guide 2026

