

Northern Forest Partnership Innovation Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

Before you get started...

These FAQ's are to be used in conjunction with the Expression of Interest and Full Application forms for the Partnership Innovation Fund.

They provide, amongst other information, details about:

- the purpose of the Partnership Innovation Fund
- the eligibility criteria
- what it can pay towards
- additional information to help you answer key questions in the application forms.

If, after reading these FAQ's, you are still unsure on whether your project could be eligible or how to best answer any of the questions in the application forms, please do not hesitate to contact the Woodland Trust at NorthernForest@woodlandtrust.org.uk who will be able to provide you with further support.

A) The Northern Forest Partnership Innovation Fund

The £2.1 million Partnership Innovation Fund is resourced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and managed by the Woodland Trust. The Fund is available to support the creation of new woodland in the Northern Forest by the planting of 1 million trees by the end of March 2022.

The primary purpose of the Fund is to deliver large scale woodland creation in the Northern Forest through innovative models and mechanisms.

1) Key eligibility checklist

The Fund can provide up to 50% of eligible costs for projects that meet the key eligibility criteria i.e. £1 of funding for every £1 of secure match funding provided by the applicant.

Any project seeking a grant award from the Partnership Innovation Fund must:

- be within the Northern Forest boundary
<https://thenorthernforest.org.uk/location/>
(including the halo)
- lead to the creation of at least 3 hectares of woodland by the end of March 2022
- demonstrate true innovation, especially financial or enhanced mechanisms/models that can deliver woodland creation at scale
- provide match funding of at least 50% from another source i.e. the Partnership Innovation Fund can only contribute up to 50% of eligible costs.

In addition:

- Projects must not be co-funded by the Defra's other tree planting programmes like the Countryside Stewardship Scheme for example.
- Woodland created through the Partnership Innovation Fund should meet the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard.
- Applicants can seek funding for multiple small woodlands (that add up to at least 3 hectares) across their land holding particularly where wider objectives can be secure such as natural flood management, management of diffuse pollution into watercourses.
- You must be the landowner of the project area and have control of all the land and all the activities needed to deliver and maintain your planned project.
- If you are not the landowner and do not have management control, you must get the written consent of all other parties who have management control for the entire period of the grant agreement, and submit this with your completed application form.

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- If you are a tenant, you will also need to provide written consent of all other parties who have management control, and have security of tenure for the full period of the grant agreement.

2) Desirable criteria

- Projects should seek to maximise other public benefits including opening new opportunities for public access.
- Applicants should be open to sharing and promoting the learning that flows from the innovation within their project.

3) What can the Partnership Innovation Fund support?

The Fund can pay directly for:

- trees (preferably UK sourced and grown) and tree planting
- tree protection (shelters, ties, stakes, fencing to exclude stock). The reduction in the use of plastic or ideally plastic free proposals is encouraged.

A modest proportion of grant funding requested *may* contribute towards:

- infrastructure that can be demonstrably linked to unlocking access to woodland creation opportunities, for example access tracks, bridges, culverts;
- work to facilitate woodland creation including landowner engagement, scheme design, ecological, landscape and archaeological assessments to support Environmental Impact Assessment determinations;
- ground preparation/treatment prior to planting.

4) What definitely can't it support?

The Fund cannot be used to:

- purchase of land or buildings
- maintain the trees post planting
- tree replacement losses due to drought, predation, disease etc.

5) When will we know if our full application has been successful or not?

- By the end of September 2019 at the latest for planting in the 2019/20 planting season.
- In future years the application window will remain open all of the year, or until all available monies have been allocated.

6) What length of contract will it be?

- The contract will last for 15 years after completion of the project supported by the Partnership Innovation Fund.

7) What kinds of conditions will you be placing in the grant contract?

A grant contract will be required, and will include a range of criteria including that:

- The woodland must remain in situ for at least 15 years.
- The owner must maintain the trees and ensure adequate stocking density (as outlined and agreed in the grant contract) is achieved at year 5. A stocking density of at least 1100 trees per hectare is much preferred. However, if a robust case for less can be made, this may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- The Northern Forest Partnership will wish to use projects supported by the Partnership Innovation Fund to promote its work to others.
- A grant contract will not be approved until the WT has received three written quotes for all project items of £5,000 or more in value (excluding VAT).
- Any project over-spend will be the responsibility of the applicant to finance; any under-spend in the grant awarded will be returned to the WT and directed towards other Partnership Innovation Fund projects.

8) What type of match-funding is eligible?

Match funding should primarily be monies secured by the applicant.

However, in some instances other forms of match funding will be considered (for example, infrastructure to unlock access to land parcels, fencing to exclude stock etc.). Applicants must show the breakdown of their match funding in their application.

Funding in the form of monies from Defra's other tree planting programmes like the Countryside Stewardship Scheme for example, are not eligible as match funding for the Partnership Innovation Fund.

9) How will you be comparing my application to others?

We have a set of criteria that includes an assessment of the following outcomes:

- quality and depth of innovation
- level and security of match funding/gearing to increase return on investment from the grant requested
- return on investment on the grant requested in terms of the number of trees planted
- sustainability in delivery
- long term management of the resource created
- geographic spread across the Northern Forest
- management of risk i.e. how the applicant has sought to manage and mitigates risks related to the planned project
- scalability and wider application of the model.

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10). How will the grant be paid?

- Payment will be BACS.
- Payments will only be made once a successful applicant has signed an associated Partnership Innovation Fund grant agreement with the Woodland Trust.
- Once a grant agreement has been signed, 50% of the grant awarded will be paid in advance to the successful applicant.
- On receipt of a report (template to be provided; frequency of claims to be confirmed) evidencing that the first 50% of the grant has been expended on the work approved in the grant agreement, for example through a budget table and copies of invoices, a further 40% of the grant award will be released.
- A second report will be required to evidence that 40% of grant has been appropriately expended as above (frequency of claims to be confirmed).
- The final 10% will be released on project completion, including receipt of a final report (template to be provided) and proof of spend.
- You must be in a position to manage your own cash-flow, as your final grant payment will only be made after a satisfactory project completion report, and proof of spend.

B) Completing the Expression of Interest and Full Application Forms

Expression of Interest Form

We hope the Expression of Interest Form is self-explanatory, but if you have any questions please contact the Woodland Trust at NorthernForest@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Full Application Form

We hope that the majority of the Full Application form is self-explanatory. However, we have provided further explanation on the following sections:

Section 5.10 – Please attach a planting / design map to your application

Planting / Design maps must provide the following minimum information:

- Maps should be based on OS based maps and/or Geographical Information System (GIS)-generated digital maps.
- Maps must be based on a scale of 1:2500 or 1:5000 or for large schemes 1:10000.
- Any proposed areas of open space within the proposed planting areas must be shown.
- Fence lines should be indicated.
- Include the location of any capital works proposed for funding.
- Indicate the planting design, including species.
- Indicate water courses and open water.
- Indicate access tracks to be created and maintained.
- Indicate open ground - showing and identifying features that justify/support internal open space e.g. Public Right of Way, rides/tracks, wayleaves etc.

6.2 Complete and submit a project milestones plan (Appendix 1) as part of your application, to provide us with further information on what your project will do and when

For this section, we want to know the key project stages / interim targets you want to hit and when during your project delivery. This will not only help us see how you are going to structure your project activities and timetable, but it will also help you plan to achieve the project aims and SMART objectives you stated in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

The list of milestones will also help us understand your project in more detail.

If you have any further questions about completing the full application form, please contact the Woodland Trust at NorthernForest@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Before you submit your application

This section of the application form is to help you check you have all the relevant documentation ready for completing and sending off your application.

Use the tick boxes provided to make sure you have completed each action required.

