Nature Fund
How to Apply

June 2014

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Introduction

1. This document aims to help all interested parties develop proposals to be submitted to the Nature Fund, ‘the Fund’, for financial support. It builds on the details set out in the Written Statement made by Alun Davies, Minister for Natural Resources and Food on 14 May 2014, and explains what applicants need to include in their proposals. The statement can be found here: http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2014/naturefund/?lang=en

2. In addition to using this document, you should also discuss your ideas with Welsh Government before finalising your proposal.

Background

3. Last year Alun Davies, the Minister for Natural Resources & Food, announced a £6m Nature Fund to help tackle the continued decline in biodiversity across Wales as highlighted by the State of Nature Report.

4. Through his Written Statement on 14 May the Minister set out the key activities in which he wants to invest this Fund. The focus is on taking action to deliver real change for biodiversity by recognising the crucial relationship between our natural environment, our communities and local economies across Wales. This approach recognises that increasing our biodiversity and improving our natural assets is as essential for the long term resilience of our agriculture, upland communities, and wider economy as it is for our natural environment.

5. The principal focus of the Fund will be investment in seven Nature Action Zones. The zones reflect the areas where the submissions received to our ‘call for ideas’ clustered, thereby demonstrating that there was already a wealth of innovative landscape scale actions ready to be delivered.

6. The Nature Action Zones are:
   - Brecon Beacons
   - Cambrian Mountains
   - Conwy Valley
   - Pembrokeshire coast
   - South Wales Valleys
   - Berwyn and Migneint
   - Llŷn Peninsula
7. Within these Nature Action Zones, the focus is on funding practical actions on the ground through projects which can demonstrate innovation, collaboration and good practice. The priority for investment is on the five key actions below. The specific activities listed under each heading are illustrative and are not intended to be exhaustive:

**Action to improve river catchments**
Action in river catchments to improve hedgerow and woodland planting, coupled with good livestock and nutrient management to deliver improved water quality and biodiversity, safeguard soil value and reduce flood risk;

**Action on marine ecosystems**
Action to improve fisheries management and marine ecosystems combined with reducing the spread of invasive non-native species, improving biosecurity, and working with partners will deliver improvements in marine biodiversity and sustain local businesses;

**Action for local environment**
Action to enhance natural green spaces and harness their biodiversity potential will deliver improved local environmental quality and improve biodiversity and connectivity;

**Action to realise the potential in our upland areas**
Action to realise the potential in our uplands taking forward grip-blocking and improved farm management will improve both water storage and biodiversity while also supporting farm diversification;

**Action to stimulate innovation**
Action to further develop the interest in payment for ecosystem services, as demonstrated by the innovative work in our uplands working with land managers, will increase the potential for alternative incomes and greater diversification.
Eligibility for Funding

8. We are looking for proposals to deliver collaborative action that will benefit our natural environment and our communities and local economies. Due to the innovative nature of the funding, we recognise that some will be able to deliver on the ground immediately, whereas others may need development funding to support longer term delivery. Please talk to us as early as possible to discuss the compatibility of your proposal for support through the fund.

9. All proposals should:
   - take forward one or more of the priority actions
   - demonstrate collaborative and partnership working
   - demonstrate relevant community and economic benefits
   - take forward action in one or more of the seven Nature Action Zones¹

10. All interested parties should contact Welsh Government to discuss potential ideas prior to submission for funding. Details on how to contact us are given at the end of this document.

When can funding be requested?

11. Proposals can now be submitted for funding. We encourage early submission of proposals and each will be assessed as they are received. We will not consider proposals submitted after 1 November 2014.

Funding limits

12. In order to deliver on the aims of the fund, we are looking to fund proposals in excess of £50,000. If your proposal is to deliver action that is below this amount you should seek to collaborate with other partners to develop a proposal that will scale up your action. There is no limit to the number of proposals submitted by a lead organisation. Each proposal will be assessed on its own merits.

13. We are allocating resources from the fund in this financial year 2014/15. However, we recognise that some proposals will include costs that may run over into future years. If this applies to your proposal please clearly indicate where this additional financial support will be necessary to deliver the proposal.

¹ Proposals outside the Nature Action Zones will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where they strongly demonstrate and meet all the other criteria. Please contact us prior to any preparatory work to discuss potential proposals outside these areas.
14. Where a proposal is based over a number of years we will work with successful proposals to help identify relevant funding and advice for the duration of the proposal. As the fund is intended to support innovative delivery, the nature of each individual proposal will vary and, as a consequence, it is likely that the most relevant long term funding route will vary as well. However, our intention is that most of the funding for successful proposals in future years will be met from the Rural Development Programme where eligible.

What should proposals include?

15. Your proposal will need to include the following information:

- name of requestor/lead partner and your credentials for undertaking the work
- details of other partners and their roles
- description of the project, including what it intends to achieve and key milestones
- where action will take place
- timescales for the project including delivering of actions
- a breakdown of the actions and costs for the life of the project and what funding you are seeking in this year 2014/15
- how your proposal could be prioritised should the full amount requested not be available
- details of other sources of funding contributing to the project or being sought for later delivery of the project
- how the project will be monitored and evaluated
- how the project will deliver social and economic benefits
- how the benefits of the project will be sustained in the future
Assessment and allocation of funds

16. Your proposal will be assessed against the criteria set out in the Minister’s Written Statement, that is:

- proposals that take forward one or more of the five identified priority actions
- proposals that can demonstrate collaborative and partnership working
- proposals that can demonstrate community and economic benefits
- proposal that take forward action in one or more of the seven Nature Action Zones

17. Proposals will be subject to a quality assurance for:

- the likelihood of the proposed action delivering the claimed benefits
- The deliverability of the proposed action within the timescales set out in the proposal

18. A Welsh Government official may contact the assigned lead organisation to clarify any aspects of the proposal as part of the assessment process.

19. We will let you know the result of our assessment within four weeks of your submission and, where you have been successful; we will give you a conditional funding agreement based on the assessment.

Where to get further help

20. Should you have any further queries or require further information we encourage you to discuss your proposal with us as early as possible. This can be done at the events which will be arranged in each of the seven Nature Action Zones or alternatively we would be happy to arrange meetings and provide information by email or telephone.

21. Please e-mail naturalresourcemanagement@wales.gsi.gov.uk
    Telephone 029 2082 1721 / 0300 061 5883 / 029 2080 1241
    or write to:

    Natural Resource Management Programme
    Department for Natural Resources and Food
    Welsh Government
    1st Floor, East Wing J08
    Cathays Park
    Cardiff, CF10 3NQ