



The Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund

Grant Guidelines for Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund

Why has the Fund been established?

Suffolk Secrets has been raising money to support the conservation and enhancement of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for over ten years. This includes support of a large scale project to enhance the Sailors Path, a footpath between Snape and Aldeburgh.

Suffolk Secrets has continued to raise money, with the support of its loyal customers and staff, and is now seeking local community and conservation projects to support through a grant fund for projects on the Suffolk Coast.

Purpose of the Fund:

The Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund has been set up to support a range of activities that reflect the interests of Suffolk Secrets and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, such as:

- Conservation of landscape features and enhance the distinctive character of the AONB
- Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and lessen fragmentation of habitats
- Conservation of the historic assets of the area including landscapes, archaeological features and the built environment
- Conservation and enhancement of the geodiversity of the area
- Provision and enhance of access and informal recreation provision
- Provision of interpretation that improves understanding, guides appropriate behaviour and helps people enjoy the AONB
- Events and activities –where aimed at family or encouraging low-season tourism
- Education activities that support the objectives of the AONB
- Activities that support local food producers and develop Suffolk's reputation as a culinary tourism destination

The Fund and Its Management

The fund panel will be made up of members of the Suffolk Secrets management, the AONB and other professionals, and will be advised by the AONB.

The administrators of the fund will be the AONB.

The fund will be available in 2017 and 2018 (two years), with one round of application in each year. There will be approximately up to £15k available in 2017 and £10k in 2018, a total of £25k. Any unspent fund from the first round will roll-over to the following year

The geographical area of the fund will primarily be the AONB boundary (map available) but where projects have a particular relevance to the objectives of the fund and the AONB and fall to the East of the main train line from Lowestoft to Felixstowe (including

Lowestoft, Beccles, Halesworth, Saxmundham and Felixstowe) funding will be considered.

Projects will be expected to deliver and complete projects by end December each year (one year from award).

Grants can be for up to 100% of the cost of the project.

There is no lower limit to the grant award, but the upper limit is likely to be in the region of £3000.

Fund Objectives:

The fund objectives are primarily those of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, as outlined in its Management Plan, with additional objectives specifically about encouraging out of season family events and activities that support the AONB objectives and support local food producers. Suffolk Secrets supports the AONB in its conservation and enhancement of the area of the Suffolk coast.

The statutory purpose of AONBs is:

- To conserve and enhance natural beauty

They also have secondary objectives related to recreation, local communities and sustainable development – full information available in the AONB Management Plan on www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/about-us

The fund is looking to support:

- Projects that improve the environment, natural character and/or sense of place of the area, and people's understanding of its importance
- Projects that improve the visual appearance of the area and thereby increase the enjoyment and experience of the AONB for residents and visitors.
- Projects that conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty (the principal statutory purpose of the AONB's designation).
- Projects that encourage families to enjoy the Suffolk landscape
- Projects that support our local food producers and promote Suffolk as a culinary tourism destination.
- Projects that reduce the impact of tourism on the environment.

The panel will also want to know if your project (some or all as relevant): helps the local economy; safeguards employment; supports or involves a local community; is a partnership of more than one organisation/individual; provides training or offers education opportunities; helps protect natural resources; helps biodiversity; involves reducing, recycling or reusing materials; minimise adverse transport aspects; and uses volunteers for any part of the activity.

Application process

The first round of applications will open on Saturday 24 September 2016 – with a launch at the Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival (where the AONB will be represented).

The deadline for applications will be end of day Thur 10 November 2016, with a panel meeting being held early December. This will mean that applicants will know of the success of their funding before Christmas, and can carry out their projects in the full calendar year of 2017.

The Fund is open to organisations or groups from the public, private or voluntary sectors from within or outside the AONB. Whilst applications from individuals are not precluded, there needs to be wider public benefit and it is expected that in most cases applications will be submitted on behalf of organisations or groups of people. Applicants need not necessarily come from, or be based in, the AONB/east Suffolk. However, projects must further the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the area.

Applications will be acknowledged within five working days, and applicants will be informed of the date on which the Panel will consider their application. Applicants may in some instances be asked to provide further information to allow a decision to be taken.

The AONB Advisor will undertake a simple eligibility assessment and could come back to applicants if there is missing information or they feel the project is not eligible. However, it is the responsibility of the applicants, not the AONB Advisor, to see that they have supplied all the required information.

Applications will be discussed and agreed by the Grant Panel. They will look at the above criteria and judge how well the project meets those aspirations. As it is likely that the Fund will be over-subscribed, the Panel will favour projects that really demonstrate how they are trying to meet the criteria and priorities of the Fund. The Panel may advise that an offer is made for less than the full amount requested. They may also give guidance to the AONB Advisor to discuss certain aspects of the project with the applicant to clarify details before they give their final advice. The Panel is authorised to deal with all applications, and the fund scheme is overseen by the AONB Manager and AONB Chair, who report to the AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

It is very important for the Grant Panel to see the financial details of your project. Therefore, please enter onto the application form a detailed breakdown of the expenditure and income of the project. It is important for the Panel to see how the money is likely to be spent. The Panel appreciates that some elements may be hard to cost but it is important that expenditure is not lumped together under large general headings or that guesses are made about costs. This is to everyone's benefit as it would be sad to find there is not enough money to complete the project when the Panel would have been willing to offer more funding to a well thought out application. If estimates have to be made, please indicate this on the form.

Applicants will be informed within five working days of the Panel meeting whether their application has been successful, and if so the amount of grant they have been awarded. This will be followed up by written confirmation and a formal offer of a grant for successful applicants. This offer will normally include certain conditions regarding

- What the grant aid is supporting
- Accepting the offer of grant within a certain period
- The evidence required to prove the project has been completed that will need to accompany the claim for the grant aid

Grant Payments

Once funding is agreed and the letter of agreement returned, a grant can be paid in three instalments, on provision of an invoice to the AONB administration:

1. Applicants can claim up to 50% of the grant up-front if required to help with cash flow

2. When at least half of the project has been delivered you can claim 50% of your grant (if not previously claimed) and up to a further 40% if required (the fund managers will expect certain criteria to be met).
3. The final 10% of your grant (or 50% if not previously claimed) will be paid when you have finished your project and sent us a final completion report.

We will ask to see evidence in the form of receipts and invoices.

What is expected of the applicant?

Applicants must return:

- A signed letter of agreement
- A mid-year update on project progress (due June)
- An end of year report, including photos and copies of receipts, due by end December. This report should be approximately one page and include an overview of the project achievements, lessons learnt/difficulties encountered and how the terms and conditions were met.

Publicity:

Applicants are expected to promote their project as widely as possible.

The fund must be acknowledged on all completed projects and mentioned in all press releases and publicity material relating to projects.

The AONB Advisor expects to see and agree any wording used in print, and will provide logos to use.

The AONB reserve the right to use any material submitted for publicity purposes.

The AONB and Suffolk Secrets will also promote the fund, and will use examples of the awarded projects as much as possible.

Where appropriate, Suffolk Secrets will request publicity to reflect their involvement in the project. This will be discussed on a case by case basis.

Background on Suffolk Secrets and their fund raising for the AONB

As the leading holiday cottage letting agency in the county, Suffolk Secrets is responsible for bringing over 50,000 visitors to Suffolk each year and recognises its duty of care to protect what makes this wonderful county so special. Suffolk Secrets has long been an AONB Supporter and over the last two years has contributed £30,000 to the development of the Sailors Path, an important walking route from Snape Maltings to Aldeburgh popular with tourists and local residents alike.

Background on the AONB, the funds it manages and projects supported

As the name suggests, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is an outstanding landscape of 155 square miles. Extending from the Stour estuary in the south to Kessingland in the north, it is a low-lying coastal area of astonishing variety and subtle contrasts – the mix of shingle beaches, crumbling cliffs, marshes, estuaries, heathland, forests and farmland that makes the AONB so special.

An AONB Partnership of 26 organisations work together to care for the area, coordinated by the AONB team. One of the team functions is to administer and award grant funding to local communities and organisations, to carry out projects to protect and enhance the landscape, to the benefit of people, place and wildlife. Including this one there are five funds, some of the money is from the AONB and some from local organisations. In 2016 the AONB (to date) has awarded over £78,000 to 32 projects.