

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GREEN SHOOTS FUND – PHASE 2 - 2022

Please read this information carefully. It will help you to apply successfully to the WCC Green Shoots Scheme.

Round 2 deadline for applications: 19 September 2022

The Warwickshire County Council Green Shoots Fund provides grant funding to community projects to mitigate against, and adapt to, the impact of climate change. It is aimed at community and voluntary organisations.

While the Fund is open to applications from anywhere in Warwickshire, we are particularly keen to fund projects that will benefit the Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire areas. These boroughs were under-represented in the previous round of funding and so applications from groups based in these areas, or for projects that will directly benefit communities in those areas, are especially welcomed.

Who can apply?

1. Constituted 'not-for-profit' community organisations in Warwickshire
2. Non-constituted or new 'not-for-profit' groups working in Warwickshire that can be supported by a constituted mainstream service, District or Borough Council, Town or Parish Council or community group willing to administer the funds through an organisational bank account
3. Warwickshire Town and Parish Councils
4. Schools, if applying as a PTA or 'Friends of' group excluding fee-paying schools.

Who cannot apply?

- ✗ Party Political/lobby groups
- ✗ Individuals
- ✗ Any businesses
- ✗ Fee-paying (i.e., not state) schools
- ✗ It is unlikely that applications from statutory organisations will be supported, except for applications from town and parish councils, or Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council (given that there are no town and parish councils in the borough).

What will not be funded by the grant fund?

- ✗ Projects that promote religious or party-political beliefs
- ✗ Projects for personal profit or personal gain
- ✗ Costs relating to items purchased or work already carried out before the grant has been awarded
- ✗ Loan or debt repayments
- ✗ Activities that are part of statutory obligations
- ✗ Running costs of an established group or activities which are that group's main service
- ✗ Existing contractual arrangements with WCC
- ✗ Feasibility studies

All projects must follow national legislation, guidance and good practice in relation to: equality and diversity; health and safety; the environment; and safeguarding.

Timings and Key Dates

Applications for funding are to be submitted between **17 June and 19 September 2022**.

The Fund aims to award grants by **31 October 2022**, and successful applicants will be asked to return grant offer letters within two weeks

Scheme objectives and Selection Criteria

As a continuation of the previous Green Shoots Scheme, the principal aims of the Fund are the same. The scheme has been set up to achieve the following:

- Increase the adaptability and resilience of Warwickshire to the effects of climate change
- Reduce impacts on the environment, particularly regarding climate change
- Ensure funded projects benefit the wider Warwickshire community.

However, this round of funding will be used to address the unequal allocation of funding in the first phase, due to fewer applications being submitted from some areas. While the Fund is open to applications from anywhere in Warwickshire, the hope is that this round of funding from the Fund will benefit the areas contained within Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) & North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) the most. Successful projects may focus entirely on these areas or could work across districts and boroughs and provide benefit to these areas as part of the project.

Project applications will be assessed by subject matter experts, and each will be judged on its merits. Projects that are particularly strong but confer little benefit to the areas within NBBC and / or NWBC may still receive some funding. Projects benefiting these two areas are welcomed from any group, regardless of their base/location.

The fund is open to applications for projects which require investment of up to a maximum of £25,000. There is no minimum application value.

Applicants are not restricted to making only one application, but any one applicant will only be granted funding across all projects submitted up to a total maximum of £25,000 per application window. If you received funding from phase one of Green Shoots, you are eligible to apply for up to £25,000 in the second phase.

Additional funding can be used to top up the grant provided by this scheme e.g., by matched funding, or from other sources.

Like any grant funding, there are certain criteria which this fund seeks to support. Projects should:

1. Provide **cost-effective environmental benefits**, like mitigating against climate change, increasing biodiversity, or reducing carbon emissions.
2. **Benefit the local community and be accessible and free to all**,
3. Be **deliverable**. There should be clear identification of project risks and mitigation steps to ensure the project is a success,
4. Provide **legacy value** and have potential for replication, and
5. Provide a **plan and resource to assess post-project benefits**.

These are the criteria that your application will be assessed against. On the application form, it will be clear which question relates to each criterion. Please give full answers to each question and its related criteria, providing clear and concise evidence and reasoning for why your project meets the criteria and should receive funding.

Below is some specific guidance on each of these criteria to help you understand what we are looking for, and how you can tailor your answer to ensure we understand how your project will meet each criterion.

Cost-effective environmental benefits:

The Green Shoots Fund is looking to support projects that make a difference to the environment, specifically through reducing emissions that impact on climate change (mitigation) and increasing adaptability or resilience of Warwickshire to climate change. You should make sure your project tackles these issues in some way and explain how the project will benefit the environment and reduce the impact of climate change.

It is also important that the project is good value for money. The Fund aims to provide as much of a benefit as possible with the money available so please try to describe how the value of project creates cost-effective environmental benefits. It is important that you describe how the costs of the project create benefits for the environment, and that you explain these in your answers.

You should consider these questions before you submit your application:

1. What are the impacts of the project?
1. What will be its outcomes?
2. What sort of benefits will the project provide? Are they quantitative or qualitative? (e.g., carbon savings vs awareness)
4. Why is your project necessary?
5. Would it happen without the grant?

We are happy to part fund projects, either when the additional money comes from the group or another grant source. Our review will be based on what the Green Shoots grant will be used for. As far as possible, please specify what element of the project relates to the Green Shoots application in the funding section.

There are certain costs we are not prepared to fund. These include costs for feasibility studies and for permanently employed staff. We will remove these costs when making our assessment of cost-effective benefits and should your application be successful, make an offer for a lower amount than that applied for. Costs for labour and consultants can be funded, as can expenses for project staff including volunteers. We understand that projects require staff but hope that as these projects are community-focussed, that they will attract as many volunteers as possible. The more community engagement, the better. In some circumstances, specialist skills may be required, and we therefore may be able to fund these. A lot of this turns on the value and environmental benefits the project provides.

At least one quotation should be provided for each element of goods, labour and services over £10,000. An example of an element would be a combined quotation for capital costs and installation costs when sourced from one supplier for an energy efficiency project. In any case, please break down costs as far as possible in the area provided on the application form.

All applications will be assessed by the appropriate subject area expert at the County Council and be judged on their own merit.

Community benefits, accessible, and free to all:

It is important that Green Shoots projects provide a community benefit to those in Warwickshire and the surrounding area. To ensure this is the case, we would like applications to demonstrate how the projects will be accessible and free for all to use.

One important consideration in thinking about community is how you are assessing who will benefit from the project. While there may be cases where specific groups may benefit from the funding as a community, the wider you can evidence the community benefit your project will have, the better. As an example, consider a local allotment looking to buy large rotating compost bins. While the allotment holders would benefit directly from its use, this alone might not constitute a community benefit. To be successful, you would need to demonstrate that your project would create a wider community benefit. One way of doing this could be to give the rest of the community access to the allotment to use the composter, promoted through local newsletters etc. You could also organise visits for local children to learn about the benefits of local food production and give them an opportunity to learn about how food is grown and how compost is made. It is important that you take the time in your application to explain how you will widen the community of people and how they will each benefit from the grant funding.

Some questions that are worth considering when thinking about this criterion include:

- Are there volunteers involved?
- Has there been / will there be community engagement as part of the project? Where's the evidence of community support?
- Is it free to access?
- Are there any obvious restrictions on residents or communities from accessing the benefits that the project will provide?

Answering these for yourself will help you argue why your project does meet this criterion and will make it more likely for your project to receive funding.

Deliverable:

The Fund wants to support projects that will deliver the result they set out to achieve. This means that the project is managed by competent people, project finances are well managed, risks are considered and managed, and timelines for delivery are manageable. It's important that project plans should be easy to understand, clear in describing what you will need to do, and how you will be able to do it.

Some questions that are worth considering when thinking about this criterion include:

- How can you demonstrate with confidence that the project will be managed appropriately proportionate to its scale?
- What sort of team experience does your project have? Are there clearly defined roles?
- What sort of dependencies, risks, mitigation steps do you have in delivering this project? You might want to include a separate risk register to aid description and provide clarity.
- Can this project be executed within the budget?
- What is a realistic and appropriate timescale for the project?
- Do you need permissions? Are these permissions already obtained or are they planned? Some solar projects and heat pump projects may well need permissions from the distribution network operator (in this case Western Power). Some tree planting and ecology projects may need landowner permissions, whilst others need to be subject to planning review.

We will want to see evidence of some form of delivery plan. For projects over £5,000 we would like to see a Gantt chart or similar. This should be included as a separate document to the application form. For projects under £5,000 please complete the relevant questions on the application form.

Spending time thinking about these questions will help you to ensure your project is deliverable. You will need to demonstrate how your project is deliverable to receive funding from Green Shoots, and better explanation of how you will deliver the project will make it more likely that your project receives funding.

Legacy value, and potential for replication:

It is important that your project provides some sort of legacy value. This is flexible and will mean different things for different projects. The Fund hopes to support projects that, once established, will continue to contribute to improving the environment, mitigating against climate change, or improving biodiversity.

Some questions that are worth considering when thinking about this criterion include:

- Will the benefits continue after conclusion of the project?
- What sort of ongoing maintenance will be needed once the project is complete?
- Is this maintenance costed in? e.g., maintenance of a heating system.
- How will the maintenance be resourced? e.g., management of planted trees after the project has finished.
- What sort of provision do you have for handover, if applicable? This might mean ensuring that the user of an electric vehicle charging point knows how to charge.
- How will you showcase your project and is it suitable for replication elsewhere?
- How will it benefit the community and the environment a year from now?
- What will the project have provided when we look back in five years?

A plan and resource to assess post-project benefits:

Finally, your application needs to be clear on how you will assess your project's success. You need to describe your plan for assessing your success, as well as describe how you will resource the project for reporting on post-project benefits.

Some questions that are worth considering when thinking about this criterion include:

- How will you monitor against stated impacts during the project?
- How will you report on the progress of your project?
- Are there clear outputs or measures of success? You should have thought about this when developing the answers for environmental and community benefits. We will require a simple completion report. How will you evidence performance against the success metrics you have developed?
- Is there a clear mechanism that we could use for post project evaluation as in many cases, the benefits of a project will start accruing in the months and years after completion? Will you be assessing this and how would you resource this?

These criteria are those upon which your application will be considered. To increase the likelihood of receiving Green Shoots grant funding, please ensure your application reflects how your project meets each of the criteria. The detail of the answers should be proportionate to the scale of the project, however in all cases, the answers should be clear.

Application Process

- a. Applications should be submitted using the online application form found on our webpage: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/greenshootsfund>
- b. Please fill in the application form carefully, bearing in mind the following:
- Pay careful attention to the questions that are being asked and provide clear evidence where required.
 - There will be a question related to each of the assessment criteria we are using. Make sure that you focus each answer on the relevant criteria. This will give your project the best chance of receiving funding as you can explain how it will meet our goals.
 - Applicants should submit a breakdown of costs, and quotations where applicable.
 - For applications of £5,000 or less, a project timeframe is required. For project applications of greater than £5,000, a more detailed project plan is required.
 - Applicants are free to submit any additional information they wish in support of their application including for example case studies or product information. Please email this to greenshoots@warwickshire.gov.uk with the name of your project as the title.
 - Schemes will be looked upon favourably if they have wider community benefits.
 - For renewable energy and electric vehicle charging schemes we require an understanding and good evidence of:
 - the viability and feasibility of the scheme
 - Why the proposed project is a good fit for the building(s) concerned
 - Any assessments that have been carried out prior to application
 - Who will pay for the electricity used (for electric vehicle charging only)
 - Is there a back-office function to collect the data (for electric vehicle charging only)
 - We will not fund electric or hybrid vehicles unless they will be made available for wider community use.
 - Particularly for renewable energy schemes we will need you consider if you have costed in income from the feed in tariff. This will benefit your assessment of cost effectiveness. Battery storage can be funded, although you should consider if this makes the application more appealing or less attractive from a financial point of view.
 - Right sizing of low carbon technologies and renewables should be 'right sized', and you should provide some form of evidence that the technology proposed is neither under nor oversized for the building requirements.
 - Applicants are required to submit their governing document as part of their application (electronically if possible, or as hard copy where this cannot be done)
- c. Applications must be submitted by **the deadline date as detailed above**. Application forms can be submitted at any time, but funding decisions will only be made following the deadline date. We may contact you before the closing date if we require any further information, so early submission is advantageous.
- d. You will receive an automatic acknowledgement of your application – please also check your email spam folder. **This is your copy of the application form so please remember to save it.**
- e. We will endeavour to inform all applicants of the outcome of their application within approximately 6 weeks of the deadline date.
- f. We do not normally pay grant money to successful applicants until at least part of the work has been completed as evidenced by an invoice. We provide a quick turn-around service for this scheme when provided with the right documentation. This should mean that the grant will have been paid to you before you need to pay the invoices. Exceptions can be granted on a case-by-case basis by writing to greenshoots@warwickshire.gov.uk.

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

Monitoring

Monitoring is the collection and analysis of information about a project, undertaken while the project is ongoing.

- a. For applications for funding of amounts greater than £5,000, WCC reserves the right to conduct visits from a WCC representative (or other specialist officer) prior to the project commencing and at agreed times throughout the lifetime of the project
- b. For grants of any level, there will be an expectation that periodic progress reporting will be required
- c. Report of expenditure and budget monitoring provided to WCC at agreed intervals
- d. Monitoring should be proportionate to the funding applied for and therefore the number and frequency of progress reports required will vary with the size of your project and will be agreed at the time by the grant offer
- e. Completion of a final report at the end of the project detailing activities, outcomes and lessons learned will also be required.

Evaluation

Progress and final reporting should include periodic and retrospective assessment of the project benefits.

Generally, we will expect to see the results relating to:

- Measurement of the impact against the project targets and success measures set out in the original project application
- An assessment of what has changed (both intended and unintended)
- An understanding of the reasons for changes - i.e., what factors/organisations/individuals have facilitated/constrained change (including your contribution)
- Your interpretation of the changes i.e., people's perceptions and experiences of change

Help and Support

For help with completing your application form, applicants are encouraged to contact Warwickshire County Council via email at greenshoots@warwickshire.gov.uk or tracy@wcava.org.uk

Summary Conditions of the Grant

Payment of Grant

The Recipient agrees and accepts that the payment of the Grant can only be made to the extent that the Council has available funds. The Grant will not be paid unless and until the Council is satisfied that such payment will be used for proper expenditure in the delivery of the Project and the Recipient has provided all required supporting documentation. The Grant must be used for the purpose set out in the grant offer letter. If the Grant is used for purposes other than those set out in the grant offer letter, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the Grant at any time.

Full terms and conditions are available separately on our website at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/greenshootsfund>