

Cambridgeshire Agricultural and Horticultural Water Resilience Grant Scheme Application Guidance & Scheme Rules

Contents

1.	Submission guidance.....	1
2.	Grant summary.....	2
3.	Funding available	3
4.	Who can apply	3
5.	Who cannot apply	3
6.	When to apply.....	3
7.	What the grant can pay for	4
8.	How much funding can be applied for	4
9.	Funding limits and legal compliance	5
10.	How to apply for a Cambridgeshire Water Resilience Grant	5
11.	How will applications be assessed?.....	7
12.	Monitoring water savings	7
13.	Changes to your project or circumstances.....	8
14.	When you can claim payment.....	8
15.	Processing and payment of claims	8
16.	Checking your use of grant	8
17.	What the grant cannot pay for	8
18.	Further information	10

1. Submission guidance

This document provides guidance for applicants and is not intended to cover every possible circumstance. WRE and Cambridgeshire County Council reserve the right to seek further information and exercise reasonable discretion when determining eligibility and assessing applications.

We recommend reviewing all questions before completing the form. Unfortunately, the form cannot be saved and returned to later (unless you have a Microsoft Account), so you may wish to gather required information (e.g. costs, water use) in advance.

While you cannot make submissions using the Word document, there is a [Word version](#) of the application form on the grant webpage, which you may wish to use to plan out your answers and then copy them across.

Please note that when you submit the online application form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself in the designated sections.

Please also note that submission of the application form does not guarantee funding.

2. Grant summary

WRE is working with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to offer grants of up to £50,000 to businesses in the agricultural and horticultural sectors, including garden centres and plant nurseries, to help reduce their use of abstracted water and consumption of public water supplies ('mains water'). The funding has been made available by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of a range of measures being taken to support sustainable economic growth and environmental recovery in the Greater Cambridge region.

You can apply for a grant for:

- Capital items to improve the efficient use of water for irrigation, crop spraying, animal husbandry, cleaning and other appropriate on-site use
- Capital items that harvest and store rainwater, or similar local water capture and reuse systems including stormwater attenuation, to displace use of other water sources
- Sensors, telemetry and pump control systems that support smart agri-abstraction techniques and enable sustainable water capture
- Bespoke projects that have a clear benefit for water resource resilience. This could include collaborative projects that:
 - Improve local irrigation networks to allow for water sharing.
 - Work in partnership with the local Internal Drainage Board to divert flow within a drainage network for the purpose of improving water resources for agriculture. Note this option would need Land Drainage Consent from the IDB.

We will prioritise projects for funding that:

- reduce abstraction of water from boreholes and other groundwater source
- reduce the need to abstract from surface water sources during the spring and summer month
- reduce your consumption of mains water.
- reduce water flowing through the catchment during flood events.
- will encourage efficient long-term use of water and enable businesses to be more resilient to water stress.
- are well thought out and well-planned and can realistically be delivered within the 2026/27 financial year

This is a competitive grant so therefore the more your project meets these funding priorities, the higher your application will score.

3. Funding available

- 50% funding
- Maximum grant £50,000 (for projects of up to £100,000)
- Minimum grant of £2,000 (i.e. for projects of at least £4,000)
- The total sum available for grants is £1,300,000.

4. Who can apply

You can apply for a grant if you're an agricultural or horticultural business including garden centres and plant nurseries. Evidence will be required to demonstrate that the business has been trading for at least one year.

The land upon which the project benefits will be achieved must:

- be located in Cambridgeshire; and
- be owned by the applicant business; or
- have a tenancy agreement between the applicant business and the landowner in place until 5 years after the project is completed. Signed landowner approval for the project must also be provided with the application.

As this is publicly funded grant support, applicants must confirm that receiving the grant will not exceed the relevant Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) limits. This will be checked as part of the application process.

5. Who cannot apply

The following groups are not eligible for a grant:

- public organisations, including Crown bodies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs).
- local authorities (though tenants on county-owned farmland are eligible)
- members of Producer Organisations under the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme if they have funding for the same project through their operational programme

6. When to apply

The first application window opens on 20th July 2026. The proposed windows run consecutively.

Applications will be reviewed at up to three intervals, based on applications received before midnight on:

1. Sunday 27th September 2026
2. Sunday 29th November 2026
3. Sunday 17th January 2027 (not guaranteed – dependent on funding remaining)

Note that while you can submit an application at any time, it may be beneficial to consider aligning your submission with one of these dates. If your application is, for example,

received on Monday 28th September, you may not hear the decision on your application until after 29th November deadline.

It is expected that this fund will close for applications at midnight on 17th January 2027. However, please note that depending on demand in the first and second rounds the last round may be cancelled.

WRE's website will keep you informed as to how much funding is left in the pot after each round.

7. What the grant can pay for

Grants are available for new capital items and projects which will improve water use efficiency and water resilience within your business.

Eligible capital items include equipment to:

- introduce more efficient water application and use, for example by changing from rain gun application to trickle or boom application, or using weather station data and soil sensors to improve the efficiency of irrigation and crop spraying
- secure water supplies through local capture and reuse or more sustainable abstraction practices, for example by moving away from groundwater sources and summer abstraction to rainwater harvesting

Second hand items are not eligible for this grant.

We have tried to keep the list of eligible items as broad as possible to encourage innovative options to come forward. Examples of eligible projects could include drip or micro-sprinkler irrigation systems, irrigation booms, soil moisture sensors, weather stations, smart water meters, pump controls, rainwater harvesting systems, water storage infrastructure and water reuse systems. These examples are illustrative only and other projects may be considered where they improve water resilience, reduce demand or make better use of available water resources.

We welcome bespoke and collaborative projects. If your project has the potential to reduce use of abstracted and/or mains water in Cambridgeshire and you have questions, then please contact grants@wre.org.uk.

Please also review section 15: [What the grant cannot pay for](#) before developing your application.

8. How much funding can be applied for

The minimum grant you can apply for is £2,000 (50% toward projects valued at £4,000 or greater). The maximum grant is £50,000 per project (50% toward projects valued at £100,000 or more).

Grants can cover up to a maximum rate of 50% of the eligible costs of a project. At least 50% of the project costs must be paid for with money from private sources like savings, an overdraft facility or a bank loan.

You cannot use other sources of public funding (such as other government or local authority grant schemes) towards the project costs. You also cannot use this grant to carry out capital works required under other agreements.

VAT can only be claimed where it is genuinely irrecoverable by your business. VAT-registered businesses will not be able to claim VAT through this grant.

Design and installation costs may be treated as eligible capital expenditure where they can be evidenced to form part of the project and are directly related to the assets being purchased. Where applicants undertake work themselves, any claim for labour or machinery costs would need to be clearly evidenced, for example, through time records and a transparent basis for the cost.

9. Funding limits and legal compliance

This grant is subject to the Subsidy Control Act 2022. You cannot receive grant funding if doing so will cause your business to exceed the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) threshold of £315,000 from government and public sources between April 2024 and March 2027 inclusive. Only funding where you have been specifically notified via an MFA letter will count towards this allowance.

Funding from the Sustainable Farming Incentive and other agri-environment schemes are compliant with the Subsidy Control Act and therefore do not count toward your allowance.

10. How to apply for a Cambridgeshire Water Resilience Grant

The Cambridgeshire Agricultural Water Resilience Grant is a competitive programme. Submission of an application does not guarantee that funding will be awarded.

Applicants must not commence any project activity until a funding agreement has been signed by both parties and the project start date specified within the agreement has been reached.

Prior to this date, applicants must not:

- place orders for goods, services or equipment;
- enter into any contractual commitments;
- commence any works or project activities;
- pay deposits or incur any project-related expenditure.

Any project costs incurred prior to this may make your application ineligible, as the project could be considered as already started.

The application process

To apply to the Agri Water Resilience Grant Scheme, fill in the online application form with the below details about your business, the project and how it will improve water resource resilience for Cambridgeshire. You should also read sections [7. What the grant can fund](#) and [15. What the grant cannot pay for](#) in this guidance.

APPLY HERE - APPLICATION FORM LINK

If you would like advice related to your application, please contact grants@wre.org.uk.

We can answer questions about the application process, eligibility requirements and how to complete the application form. However, because WRE is responsible for reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Council, we cannot provide detailed one-to-one advice on how to design, improve or develop individual projects.

We would be happy to meet with groups or associations wishing to learn more about the grant and to discuss broad approaches to improving water resilience through this scheme.

Once your application has been made, WRE will review it and request any further information, if required.

Following the application review dates and request for additional information, WRE will inform you of the result of your application. If successful, you will receive the Council's grant agreement to sign and a bank form to complete. Both must be returned to the Council. Once you have received a counter-signed agreement you may begin work.

What information you need to provide

You will need to answer questions about your business so that we can check you are eligible to apply, including:

- Farm or business details and main project contact
- SBI number or company number
- The location of your project within Cambridgeshire
- The source of water you currently use
- What this water is currently used for on site
- Whether the planned project is on owned or tenanted land
- Whether you or family members have any relationship with elected representatives in Cambridgeshire or with senior council officers.

You will then need to tell us:

- The nature of the project you seek grant funding toward
- The expected impact your project will have on your farm resilience and water use, both for abstracted water and mains water
- What grant funded items are required for your project, together with estimated costs
- How you plan to maintain the items.
- When you plan to deliver the project - all projects should aim to be completed and claimed for by the end of March 2027.
- How you intend to fund the remainder of the project - an accountant's letter may be requested.

Depending on your project we may also require:

- Quotes
- Maps/plans
- Land ownership or tenancy evidence
- Landowner consent
- Match funding evidence
- Abstraction licence details
- Photos
- Technical specifications

Successful applicants will be required to complete a grant funding declaration confirming the level of public funding received.

It is the applicant's responsibility to:

- obtain all permissions, licences and consents required for the projects
- ensure that the delivered project does not breach their abstraction licence, and compliance is maintained at all times.

Submission of application(s)

Applicants may submit multiple project proposals. However, each application must relate to a standalone project that can be delivered independently and achieve its intended outcomes without reliance on funding being awarded to any other application or applicant. Projects must not be split across multiple applications in order to seek additional grant funding.

If the scheme is oversubscribed, WRE reserves the right to limit funding to one project per applicant, so it is advisable to submit your 'best' project first.

By submitting an application, you consent to WRE reviewing the information you provide which may be shared in accordance with the GDPR Privacy Notice on the [Agricultural Water Resilience Grant](#) webpage

11. How will applications be assessed?

This is a competitive scheme. Meeting the eligibility requirements does not guarantee that grant funding will be awarded. Applications will be assessed against:

- Ability for the project to make your business more water resilient
- Expected reduction in abstracted and/or mains water use
- Project viability and deliverability
- Readiness to proceed and likelihood of delivering before the end of March 2027
- Value for money
- Other benefits

12. Monitoring water savings

For those projects that offer substantial savings of water, we would recommend including monitoring in your project to enable a better understanding of your business water use. If monitoring is not included in the project costs, WRE may request that a grantee does include monitoring.

13. Changes to your project or circumstances

If your circumstances change or you need to make changes to the approved project, you must contact WRE as soon as possible and obtain written approval for any changes before proceeding. There is no guarantee that a change will be accepted after your project has been approved. If the change means the project is a different one from the option that was assessed, you may be asked to withdraw and apply with the new project in the next round.

14. When you can claim payment

Grants are paid in arrears. You can only claim after the work being claimed for has been ordered, installed, and paid for. The entire grant value needs to be claimed at once in a single payment. You will need to submit evidence of your costs, such as receipts, as well as evidence of project completion, such as photographs of installed equipment.

If you buy an item for the project using lease purchase or hire purchase, you need to own it outright before you can claim any grant money towards it. If you don't own it outright, you will not be able to include these costs in your claim.

This means that before you claim the grant, you need to:

- pay all the instalments
- show that the title has passed to you

15. Processing and payment of claims

Once you have submitted your claim form and other supporting documents to WRE to evidence completion, WRE will confirm if a site visit is needed to review the project. Once this is complete, WRE will make a recommendation to the Council to make the payment to you, and you can invoice them directly. Overall, we aim to have payment with you within two months of receiving your valid claim and the required documented evidence.

Repayment of grant funding

The Council reserves the right to withhold, reduce or recover grant funding where:

- incorrect, misleading or intentionally incomplete information has been provided;
- grant conditions are breached;
- the project is not delivered substantially as approved; or
- duplicate funding is identified for the same costs.

16. Checking your use of grant

After payment of the grant by the council, the council and WRE reserve the right to visit your business and check on your use of the grant purchased equipment to ensure it is in line with the agreed project.

17. What the grant cannot pay for

The following are not eligible for grant funding (this list is not exhaustive).

Agricultural business costs

The grant will not cover agricultural costs, such as:

- projects that introduce or increase the use of abstracted or mains water
- borehole installation
- generators
- rain guns and rain gun mounts
- diesel powered equipment and machinery
- buildings or equipment used for growing and harvesting agricultural and horticultural products
- standard agricultural equipment and inputs like livestock and seed
- items that do not have a lifespan of 5 years or more
- equipment to store or distribute mains water
- equipment with a main use to control flooding
- hand watering equipment
- second-hand equipment

General costs

The grant will not cover general costs, such as:

- projects that are carried out only to meet a legal requirement
- any costs incurred before you have accepted a grant funding agreement (GFA) and reached the project start date shown in the GFA
- contingency costs
- the cost of getting any permissions, consents or statutory requirements, such as planning permission or abstraction licences
- legal costs
- project management fees
- any items which you have already had national (or EU) funding for (or intend to get national funding for)
- moving and expansion costs
- costs associated with the provision of housing
- marketing and promotion

Buildings, land and equipment costs

The grant will not cover buildings, land and equipment costs, such as:

- repairs and maintenance of existing buildings, equipment and machinery
- like-for-like replacement of existing items (such as buildings, equipment and machinery)
- purchase of machinery or equipment that will not be in use by the business 5 years after completion of the project
- purchase of land, whether or not this land is built on
- renewable heat and energy systems

Business running costs

The grant will not cover business running costs, such as:

- salaries and running costs of the business

- recurring monthly or annual licence or rental fees or subscriptions, unless these are purchased upfront as a 5-year package
- computers, software and printers used in the general running of the business, like processing orders or accounts
- mobile phones

Financial costs

The grant will not cover financial costs, such as:

- bad debts
- advance payments
- insurance policy costs
- working capital
- financial charges, such as bank charges, fines and interest
- costs connected with a leasing contract, such as a lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges
- reclaimable VAT
- pension provision

18. Further information

The following are also available on the Agricultural Water Resilience Grant webpage:

- The link to the Microsoft Forms Grant Application Form (also in the [How to apply for a Cambridgeshire Water Resilience Grant](#) section of this document).
- Word version of the application form
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- GDPR Privacy Notice