

NbS Discovery Fund - FAQs

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About the Fund

1. What is the NbS Discovery Fund?

Answer: From September 2026, the [Norfolk Water Strategy Programme](#) will be administering the NbS Discovery Fund which, enabling applicants to access early-stage funding to develop Nature-based Solutions (NbS) projects that address water challenges in Anglian Water's Advanced WINEP [priority river catchments](#). It is funded by Anglian Water.

2. What is the Norfolk Water Strategy Programme?

Answer: Water Resources East, Norfolk County Council, Anglian Water, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) formed the Norfolk Water Strategy Programme (NWSP) in 2021. The NWSP aims to secure good quality, long-term water resources for all water users through Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

3. What is Anglian Water's Advanced WINEP?

Answer: The [Advanced WINEP](#), or A-WINEP, is a programme to deliver measurable improvements to water quality and water resources using Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

The priority river catchments are in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire:

- North Norfolk
- North West Norfolk Rivers
- Wensum
- Bure
- Yare
- Wissey
- Little Ouse and Thet
- Waveney
- Lark
- Cam Lower
- Cam Rhee Granta

4. What was the Go Fund?

Answer: The Nature Conservancy (TNC), one of NWSP's Core Partners, provided funding for project development and monitoring projects in Norfolk through its international Go Fund between 2024 and 2026. This funding is now spent. Lessons learned from this round of funding have shaped the NbS Discovery Fund.

Eligibility and Project Scope

5. What qualifies as NbS?

Answer: Check out the [NbS visual glossary](#). Projects must predominantly aim to deliver NbS, but might also include some small-scale grey infrastructure elements, such as culverts or water control structures, in combination with NbS.

6. Who can apply for funding and what projects are eligible?

Answer: Landowners, environmental organisations, catchment partnerships, local authorities, community groups, farm advisers, consultants and other organisations with ideas for NbS projects that could deliver benefits for water resources and/or water quality.

7. Will projects on floodplains be funded?

Answer: Our scoring process considers the potential of locations to recharge groundwater and filter diffuse pollution. Locations further up catchments often score better for these potential benefits. However, we have revised the scoring thresholds to be lower than NWSP's previous round of funding, enabling more projects to be awarded.

8. What scale of project is the Fund aiming to support?

Answer: There is no prescribed minimum or maximum physical project size. The Fund supports projects at any scale where the proposed development work is proportionate, can be completed within 12 months of an award and provides a credible pathway to a shovel-ready NbS project which has water-resource and/or water-quality benefits.

9. Is there a way to search by postcode to see whether a project falls within the catchment area?

Answer: Applicants should use the [East of England NbS Planning Hub](#) to check whether the proposed site falls within Anglian Water's Advanced WINEP area. If the location remains unclear, email nwsp@wre.org.uk with the site postcode or grid reference before applying.

10. How should applicants use the NbS opportunity maps?

Answer: While considering your application to the Fund, please review your project area using the [NbS opportunity maps](#) to understand what specific NbS might be appropriate and their potential benefits.

Funding and Costs

11. How much funding can I apply for?

Answer: The Fund offers grants of up to £24,000 to support project development activities such as landowner engagement, surveys, designs, consents, monitoring and staff time. It is designed to help promising ideas progress towards delivery and build a strong pipeline of shovel-ready NbS projects.

12. How does this funding relate to other funding options?

Answer: Grants awarded through the NbS Discovery Fund can contribute towards the matched funding required by Anglian Water's Catchment Regeneration Fund, creating a clear pathway from project development through to delivery.

13. Is match funding required?

Answer: No. Match funding is not required for an application to the NbS Discovery Fund. However, applicants should explain the likely route to delivery funding. An NbS Discovery Fund grant may count towards the matched funding required by Anglian Water's Catchment Regeneration Fund.

14. Can the Fund top up a previous award for a project that is still moving towards being shovel-ready?

Answer: Yes, a project that has received funding from the previous pot may apply where clearly defined development work is still needed to reach shovel-ready stage. The application must distinguish the new activities and costs from work already funded and show how the additional work will advance the project towards delivery.

15. Can funding be applied for retrospectively, for example to recoup the cost of surveys already completed?

Answer: No. Funding cannot be used retrospectively for costs incurred before a grant is awarded. Existing surveys and evidence may be referenced in the application, but the budget should cover only eligible work undertaken after the award.

16. Can work be split into a feasibility phase and multiple delivery phases supported by separate grants?

Answer: Yes. The NbS Discovery Fund can support the feasibility and development work needed to make a project shovel-ready. Delivery may then be

divided into appropriate phases and supported through separate delivery funding, provided each funding application has a distinct scope and does not duplicate costs.

17. What happens if a project encounters an unexpected and expensive issue that prevents it from becoming shovel-ready, such as archaeological remains?

Answer: Applicants should contact the NWSP team as soon as an unexpected issue arises. Any change to the agreed activities, timetable or budget must be approved before costs are committed. The team will consider whether the work can be amended within the existing award; additional funding is not guaranteed, and an unresolvable constraint may mean no further funding can be given.

18. Can projects use co-funding mechanisms beyond biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and carbon markets and could this require grant repayment?

Answer: Yes. Applicants may combine the Fund with other suitable public, private or environmental-market finance, provided the same cost is not funded twice and all funding conditions are compatible. Using another finance mechanism would not normally trigger repayment of the NbS Discovery Fund grant, but any proposed income, credit sales or change of project purpose should be declared and agreed with NWSP in advance.

19. Are there procurement guidelines for design and survey work or recommended providers?

Answer: The Fund does not prescribe particular consultants or suppliers. Applicants should use a fair, proportionate and transparent process, demonstrate value for money and retain quotations and appointment records. The budget should explain how costs were estimated. NWSP can discuss the type of specialist input required but does not endorse individual providers.

Application Process and Timescales

20. When do applications open and close?

Answer: NWSP anticipates that it will take approximately one month from application to decision. The Fund is open and accepting applications from 21 September 2026 and currently has no end date.

21. How can I request an application form and submit an application?

Answer: Please email nwsp@wre.org.uk to receive the application form.

22. Does the NbS Discovery Fund use a different application form?

Answer: Previous feasibility funding provided through The Nature Conservancy's Go Fund is fully allocated. The NbS Discovery Fund replaces that offer across the wider Advanced WINEP area and uses its own application form, which has evolved slightly from the previous round of feasibility funding. Request the current form from nwsp@wre.org.uk.

Assessment, Prioritisation and Monitoring

23. Will the NbS Prioritisation tool be used to score projects?

Answer: We will not use the NbS Prioritisation tool to score NbS Discovery Fund projects because it is currently available only for the Wensum, Yare and Bure catchments. Projects will be scored using common datasets available across the whole A-WINEP area.

24. When will the prioritisation tool become available beyond Norfolk, and will training be offered?

Answer: No publication date has been announced for extending the NbS Prioritisation tool beyond its current catchments. The regional [NbS opportunity mapping](#) and [East of England NbS Planning Hub](#) can be used in the meantime. WRE will publish updates and any supporting training when further coverage is available.

25. What monitoring activities can the Fund support?

Answer: The previous funding round included monitoring proposals. The NbS Discovery Fund will fund the development of project ideas to shovel-ready stage. This could include designing a monitoring regime or collecting some baseline data, but the Fund will not support monitoring projects in isolation.

26. Are there existing monitoring guidelines for evidencing water-quality or water-resource outcomes, or will expectations be designed project by project?

Answer: Monitoring should be proportionate to the project and its intended water-resource or water-quality outcomes. The NbS Discovery Fund can support development of a monitoring plan, baseline surveys, equipment and initial data collection where these are necessary to reach shovel-ready stage. Applicants should propose suitable indicators and methods. Final expectations will be agreed project by project with NWSP and relevant delivery funders.

Please see our [NbS monitoring guidance](#).

Related Funding and Further Information

27. What other relevant funding is available in Norfolk and Suffolk?

Answer: Essex & Suffolk Water offers feasibility funding through its [Bluespaces Scheme](#), as well as Bluespaces delivery funding and [Branch Out](#) delivery funding. The eligible area extends from Norfolk to London. Please see the [eligible areas map](#). Field to Tap funding is also available to farmers and landowners in drinking-water safeguard zones through the [Field to Tap programme](#).

There may be other funding available from your local authority, for example, Mid Suffolk District Council have Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grants available that could support your NbS project: [Mid Suffolk District Council Funding - Mid Suffolk District Council - *babergh.gov.uk* / *midsuffolk.gov.uk*](#).

28. Could the Fund support a mapped overview showing where funding streams are relevant and overlap, including links to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Answer: The NbS opportunity maps and East of England NbS Planning Hub provide the best available spatial starting point for identifying project opportunities. A single map showing every funding stream and overlap with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is not currently available. Applicants should use the relevant funders' eligibility maps alongside the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area and contact NWSP for help identifying a suitable funding pathway.

29. Has the Norfolk Water Fund ended?

Answer: The Norfolk Water Fund remains open and is investing strategically in NbS delivery and monitoring activities. The Norfolk Water Fund Core Partners allocate this funding to high impact projects that have progressed through feasibility stage and are seeking to blend delivery funding from different sources and have a funding gap. From now on, we anticipate projects will be identified through the NbS Discovery Fund feasibility process and Catchment Regeneration Fund applications coming forward in Norfolk. As ambition for NbS deployment grows across the region, and as the funding and policy landscape evolves, the Norfolk Water Fund's geographical scope is under review.

30. How can I find out more?

Answer: For further information on eligibility criteria and the application process, please visit the [NbS Discovery Fund webpage](#), where you can watch a recording of the launch webinar held on 21 September 2026 and read the [application guidance document](#).