

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

Q: What is the Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund?

A: The "Active Communities Fund" was created so that groups can apply for funding to support projects that are important to their communities, to help prepare and protect against flooding and flood issues.

Q: What is Operation Watershed trying to achieve?

A: The "Active Communities Fund" initiative aspires to provide communities with funding to address local issues that adversely affect the community relating to flooding that either sit outside the remit of the County Council or would not be prioritised by WSCC in the near future. It aims to help parishes and community groups engage in managing or carrying out works in their local area for the benefit of the community.

Q: How much money is available from Operation Watershed this year?

A: West Sussex County Council has allocated £375k capital funding to Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund for the financial year 2020/21.

Q: Operation Watershed is now capital funding, is this a change?

A: Yes. Given the significant challenges to reduce public spending, but recognising the aspiration of community groups to actively address flood risk issues themselves West Sussex County Councils has made available Capital funding of £375k via Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund for the financial year 2020/21

Q: Does capital funding change the type of application that could be funded?

A: There are some changes in terms of the types of activity that could qualify for funding. Referring to the guidance on the website and the 'evaluation scorecard' will help you to identify appropriate projects.

Q: How long will Operation Watershed run for?

A: The Operation Watershed the Active Communities Fund started in 2013/14. Current funding is available for the year from April 2019.

Q: Who can apply for an Operation Watershed "Active Communities Fund" grant?

A: The Active Communities Fund is open to applications from properly constituted groups such as; a Flood Action Group, Residents Association, Parish Council or otherwise established community group.

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

Although it is preferred that applicants should have developed a formalised management committee, applications by newly founded organisations which are seeking assistance will be considered.

Q: What organisations are not eligible for grants?

A: Commercial organisations, businesses and most forms of limited companies are not eligible for funding.

Applications from limited companies established for residents' management companies may be considered.

The offer of funding remains at the discretion of Operation Watershed.

Q: Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund - How much money can a community apply for?

A: There is no set value cap for applications. All applications will be evaluated and scored in line with the criteria shown in the 'Evaluation Scorecard'.

Q: What can we get funding for?

A: Works that are related to flooding or flood management.

Projects must address recognised issues relating to flooding which affects a community, whether it affects properties, public highways, widely used public access, improving or implementing flood defence measures or activities to raise awareness within the community.

Required demonstrable criteria for applications to be successful include:

- *Tackle a recognised surface or ground water flood risk*
- *Meet at least one of the following elements in its technical scope:-*
 - *Provide new infrastructure installations or build*
 - *Make material change improvements to existing infrastructure*
 - *Increase the drainage capacity of existing infrastructure*
 - *Provide for equipment, tools or protective work wear to community groups*
- *Evidence 'Community Commitment' to delivering the project and future maintenance.*

The criteria shown in the 'Evaluation Scorecard' may assist you in recognising what is considered as positive activity.

Any project proposal must have a measurable benefit to the wider community.

Q: Can we use it to get highways work done

A: Yes. Where flooding of public highway is a significant local issue, but may not be a priority action for WSCC in county wide planning, Operation Watershed may grant funds for the community to manage such works.

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

Q: What about wildlife?

A: At the earliest possible stage, consideration is needed about the impact your proposal may have on wildlife. Time may have to be factored into your proposal if applications are needed or surveys undertaken.

Woodlands, groups and individual trees may be protected by [Tree Preservation Orders \[TPO\]](#) or be within a Conservation Area. TPO details are usually accessible online, so check the relevant [district or borough council](#) website. Regardless of TPOs or Trees in Conservation Areas [TCAs], best practice must be followed if working in close proximity to trees. Major root severance, for example can potentially destabilise trees. Please follow this [technical guidance](#) which is based on the British Standard BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations. Advice is also available from the [Arboricultural Association](#) and their registered consultants and contractors.

[Felling licences](#) may be required, please check if this is needed or an exemption applies. In particular, ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable. The [standing advice](#) to planning authorities is that planning permission should be refused if development results in the loss or deterioration of these habitats, so your proposal should also avoid loss or deterioration.

Most countryside hedgerows are protected by the [Hedgerows Regulations 1997](#); check if this is the case for your proposal.

Q: Can we use it for getting private work done

A: Applications for grants to carry out work on private property, including private estates, will only be considered where a demonstrable benefit to the wider community is clear. Property owners who are liable for the works anyway will be expected to contribute as deemed appropriate by WSCC.

Q: Will I need to take out specific insurance for any works undertaken?

A: The insurance position is clear. Where a community group undertakes work itself it must ensure it has appropriate insurances. You will need to check that your group or Parish Council carries the relevant insurance for public liability. Please ask the Operation Watershed team for further advice if you are not sure.

Where others are engaged to provide works or services the contractors must have appropriate levels and types of insurance in place for any works undertaken. The Community Group is responsible for checking these are in place.

Similarly, the risks involved will need to have a risk assessment undertaken through your Parish Council or your group.

Q: How do we find contractors to help us?

A: Local civils contractors, civils engineers, highways engineers and specialist service providers can readily be sourced via business directories and the internet. While WSCC cannot recommend contractors for carrying out works, previous applicants

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

have engaged a range of contractors and delivered their projects successfully, and Operation Watershed can facilitate meetings or contact with other groups.

Q: Does it have to be for flooding

A: Operation Watershed was specifically established to address flood related issues. Applications will only be considered where projects target; flooding and flood mitigation, reduction of the risk of flooding, drainage maintenance and improvement benefitting the wider community, raising awareness of flood risk and mitigation, planning and equipment for response to emergency including flood.

Q: What else might be needed to support an application?

A: The information required includes;

- *A completed and signed Active Communities Fund application form*
- *Documented breakdown of expected total costs. With 3 competitive contractor quotes if appropriate*
- *A statement outlining the community groups commitment to on-going support after project completion; monitoring, maintenance, training etc.*
- *Sponsorship signature from their local County Councillor.*

Q: Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund – will the fund cover all the costs of our community project?

A: Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In most cases it is hoped that the fund will cover all costs of a community project.

Operation Watershed may ask that for some applications a level of community match-funding or other community input to the project is provided.

Q: Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund – is the fund available to communities in the event of a new flood event?

A: Yes. Applications will be considered for any projects addressing issues related to flooding, flood resilience and flood prevention.

Q: What are the criteria for Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund?

A: A copy of the 'Evaluation Scorecard' can be found on the [Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund web page](#). Each application will need to meet a benchmark score of 65 or over to be recommended for approval.

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

Q: How quickly can communities receive funding if their application is successful?

A: Operation Watershed will work to process applications through to payment in 8 weeks.

Q: Where will the money be paid if my community is successful in their bid for funding?

A: Bank Transfer will be to the applicant group. Where a group considering an application for funding is recognised but does not have banking facilities it should work in cooperation with another group or Parish Council.

Q: Who will manage the money if the community is successful in their bid for funding?

A: The responsibility for the management of the funds rests with the group applying for the money. Audit trails and evidence for the spending of the grant must be their responsibility.

Q: Do we have to do the work ourselves?

A: While Operation Watershed encourages the development of volunteering many projects will require appropriately trained and equipped professionals and contractors. The community group will be responsible for the management of the project where other services are contracted.

Q: Why should we do work on the highway?

A: The responsibility for the maintenance and management of the public highway infrastructure rests with WSCC, who prioritise maintenance activity across the county based upon a wide range of factors. While local issues will, of course, be of high importance to a community, those issues may not have the level of priority to be addressed in the near future through the budget and resource attributed to the Authority. Operation Watershed aspires to empower local communities to take on management and delivery of such works if they are happy to do so.

Q: Are we liable for work carried out?

A: The responsibility for the project management will rest with the community group and they should ensure they have clear scopes, working methods and financial arrangements in place, whether it is for volunteer working or contractors.

Ensuring any works are complete and meet the agreed scope is part of closing out the project.

Frequently Asked Questions



Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund 2021/22

Q: If the works undertaken by my community fail after a short time, what redress do I have?

A: Any contractors employed by the applicant(s) are liable if the failure of the works is due to negligence or sub-standard goods.

Q: Who will maintain anything we have done in the future?

A: There are a number of different scenarios which should be considered when answering the question of responsibility for future maintenance;

- 1. The responsibility for future maintenance following any works on public highways infrastructure will pass back to WSCC*
- 2. The responsibility for future maintenance following any works on private land and/or riparian ditch networks will revert to the landowner – unless the community group have provided an undertaking to continue maintenance in the future.*

Q: What will Operation Watershed do to confirm the project has been delivered?

A: Each group delivering a project will be required to submit a Project Completion Certificate once works have been completed. Operation Watershed will be carrying out audits and inspections on a selection of projects throughout the lifespan of the fund.

Q: How do I find out who my local member is?

A: You can find your local WSCC member on our [Councillor web pages](#).

Q: What does "riparian" mean?

A: Watercourses (ditches), other than main rivers, are the responsibility of riparian owners. You are a riparian owner if your property or land is on, or very near, a watercourse.

Riparian owners have a duty to keep the watercourse clear of any obstruction to flow and the County Council can serve legal notices on riparian owners to deal with obstructions. Certain "strategic" watercourses, that are known to pose a high risk of property flooding if they become blocked, are checked and maintained by our contractor on a regular basis.

For further information is available on our [managing flood risk web page](#).

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