

Operation Watershed FAQs

About Operation Watershed

Q: What is the Operation Watershed Fund?

A: The Active Communities Fund provides funding for community-led projects that help prepare for, reduce or manage flooding impacts.

Q: What is Operation Watershed trying to achieve?

A: The programme supports communities to address local flood-related issues that fall outside normal County Council priorities or responsibilities.

Q: How long will Operation Watershed run for?

A: Operation Watershed began in 2013/14. Funding is currently available for eligible projects during the 2026/27 financial year.

Q: How much funding is available this year?

A: West Sussex County Council has allocated £435,000 of capital funding for 2026/27.

Eligibility

Q: Who can apply?

A: Properly constituted organisations such as Parish Councils, Flood Action Groups, Residents Associations and established community groups.

Q: Which organisations are not eligible?

A: Individuals, District and Borough Councils, commercial organisations, businesses and most limited companies are not eligible for funding.

Q: How do I find my local County Councillor?

A: Details are available via the [WSCC Councillor web page](#).

Funding and Project Delivery

Q: How much can a community apply for and how will the funding be received?

A: There is no fixed upper funding limit. Applications are assessed against the evaluation criteria, community impact, available budget and value for money.

If successful, funding is usually paid within 8 weeks by bank transfer (applicant will need to have a bank account). Applicants are responsible for managing the grant and must retain records of all expenditure for audit purposes.

Q: Will the fund cover all project costs?

A: Most projects may be fully funded, although match funding or community contributions may sometimes be requested.

Q: Will we need insurance and who is liable for the work?

A: Yes. Applicants are responsible for ensuring appropriate insurance cover is in place for any activities carried out as part of the project. Community groups must also ensure that any contractors appointed hold suitable insurance and qualifications. The applicant is responsible for project management and oversight, while liability for defective workmanship or negligent delivery would normally rest with the contractor responsible for the works. Applicants should maintain clear contractual and financial records throughout the project.

Q: How do we find designers / contractors for the work?

Volunteering is encouraged; however, many projects will require appropriately trained and equipped professionals and contractors. WSCC cannot recommend specific suppliers. However, we can provide a list of local companies who have successfully delivered similar projects in the area. Contractors can also be identified through local business directories, trade associations, and online searches.

Q: Must projects be related to flooding?

A: Yes. Projects must address flood risk, flood resilience or flood prevention and may include responses to recent flood events.

Q: Can funding be used for highways drainage or flood mitigation works?

A: Yes, where local highway flooding is significant, and community-led delivery provides benefit.

The responsibility for the maintenance and management of the public highway infrastructure remains with WSCC.

Q: Can funding be used for works on private land?

A: Only where there is a clear wider community benefit. The fund cannot replace a landowner's legal maintenance responsibilities.

Further information on responsibilities is available on the [managing flood risk web page](#).

Q: What if the watercourse is a Main River?

A: Main Rivers are managed by the Environment Agency and are subject to additional regulatory and environmental requirements. As a result, Operation Watershed will not normally support projects involving works on or immediately adjacent to a Main River. Applicants should instead contact the Environment Agency for advice on works to a Main River.

Q: Who will be responsible for maintaining the completed works?

A: Responsibility for future maintenance will depend on the type and location of the works:

- For works delivered on public highway infrastructure, future maintenance responsibility will normally revert to West Sussex County Council.
- For works delivered on private land, watercourses or riparian ditch networks, future maintenance will normally remain the responsibility of the landowner, unless the community group has committed to undertaking ongoing maintenance.

Applicants should clearly identify future maintenance arrangements as part of their project proposal.

Q: What are the assessment criteria?

A: Applicants should refer to the published Evaluation Scorecard on the [OW website](#).