

PATHS FOR COMMUNITIES GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR PARISHES

Natural England has launched a new Paths For Communities Grant scheme enabling community groups and partnerships to improve their local public rights of way network. The fund totals £2 million, to be spent before May 2014. Full details at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/p4c.aspx>



Horses welcome, cars are not

Paths For Communities grant is designed to improve the rights of way network and must include a new right of way either in the form of a new physical path or higher rights such as upgrading a footpath to a bridleway or restricted byway. Funding has come from the Rural Development Programme for England and any scheme must be able to demonstrate benefit to the rural economy and rural populations. This is a good opportunity to look around your parish to see whether a new right of way scheme could be created which would benefit local businesses, local people and visitors; for example a route that leads to the local shop, pub, school, and cycle hire or visitor attraction.

Routes cannot be permissive and must include an element of public right of way creation to permit cycle and horse use. The application handbook states that applicants should also consider use by a wider range of people such as the elderly, wheelchair and pushchair users, path furniture and how there might be integration with public transport and links to popular destinations.

Applications for funding from £5,000 to £150,000 can be submitted by local communities or broader partnerships. Landowner support, in agreeing a voluntary path creation, is essential at the outset. The Fund is open NOW and all application agreements have to be made by the end of December 2013. The process is competitive so it's important to ensure your project secures as many benefits as possible.

As with all grants no work on the project can start before the application is approved. Natural England's Local Grants Officer will discuss any potential projects with the applicant following submission of an initial "Expression of Interest". This form is available on the website above.

The application handbook outlines areas of work that cannot be funded:

- Land acquisition
- Sections of route that are subject to claims for higher rights. Please ask the County Council Highway Authority if you require more information. Tel: 01225 713349
- Contributions towards salaried staff
- Applicants' own labour
- Elements already funded such as Higher Level Stewardship Schemes that have several years to run although consideration can be given to those HLS schemes that have or will expire by end 2013.
- Elements which should be undertaken as a "statutory duty."

Normally 75% of the project will be funded and no additional public funding is allowed for the remaining 25% and this includes National Lottery money. However, there is some flexibility to allow up to 100% funding.

Applicants should seek advice from their local tourism partnership or destination manager:

DavidAndrews@visitwiltshire.co.uk Tel: 01722 341941

Projects should also be discussed with the highway authority and the local access forum:

Wiltshire County Council HA: Michael.Crook@wiltshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01225 713349

Wiltshire and Swindon Local Access Forum: Alison.Stewart@wiltshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01225 756178