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BIODIVERSITY INVESTMENT FUND GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The following document provides guidance on the Biodiversity Investment Fund (BIF). The guidance should be used to inform the development of your Stage 2 application form.

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1. Overview of the Biodiversity Investment Fund

The primary aim of BIF is to produce biodiversity gains through the creation and restoration of ecological habitats along the line of the Phase 2a route, however, there will be sufficient flexibility in the scheme to allow this to be achieved in a way that enables a diverse number of additional benefits.

Bidders for the fund will need to include mechanisms within their proposals which will enable the project to measure Biodiversity gains including use of the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric. Applicants will need to consider a suitable maintenance and monitoring period that will evidence Biodiversity gains and this is likely to be up to 30 years. BIF will also include a broad range of secondary benefits to enable a diverse range of projects.

BIF will fund projects which will produce biodiversity gains through the creation or restoration of ecological habitats.

Initiatives the BIF may support might include:

- Developing a wildlife corridor between green spaces to encourage bats recolonisation and provide food for pollinators;
- Supporting volunteers to restore and actively manage a heathland to develop species rich habitats for lizards and other wildlife;
- Restoring or improving a water ecosystem;
- Turning a neglected green space into a wildlife oasis for birds and insects;

These examples are purely illustrative and your Stage 2 application should focus on the project you applied for at Stage 1. If your Stage 2 includes any significant changes to the project proposed at Stage 1, or if there are any changes to the applicant organisation, you must contact Groundwork UK.

Although it is not a requirement, projects are also encouraged to consider secondary benefits to deliver alongside measures to improve biodiversity. Projects that are able to incorporate secondary benefits recognised by the BIF will be considered more favourably:

- Improved Local Environment (other than Biodiversity enhancement)
- Enhanced natural and built heritage
- Develop Community Networks
- Improved Health and Wellbeing
- Enhanced Education and Training
- Sustainability

How a project demonstrates that it is contributing to these secondary benefits may include:

- Providing project information and raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity on a website, leaflet or through a social media campaign;
- Developing activities onsite that involve visitors, community groups, schools and colleges/universities;
- Providing opportunities for the local community to record and monitor wildlife;



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- Provide better access to the site or habitat for local residents or visitors; and
- Supporting the development of a specialist volunteer or monitoring group.

2. What is the process for submitting my Stage 2 application?

Your Stage 2 application should be submitted through the online portal.

The deadline for submission of a completed Stage 2 application alongside your Ecological Assessment and Management Plan is **12pm on Monday 19th September 2022**. A decision on your application will be provided by the end of April 2023.

Please note however, that passing Stage 1 and being encouraged to submit a Stage 2 application does not guarantee that funding will be approved towards your project.

We will notify you in writing once the outcome has been confirmed. If for any reason it will take longer to notify you of a decision, we will let you know and give the reasons why.

3. Can we apply as part of a partnership/consortium?

Some organisations may decide to work together and adopt a joint approach and we would encourage this approach; however, any application to BIF must be made by an organisation which has a legal entity. So, one organisation in the partnership needs to be nominated as the lead organisation and make the application. That organisation will be legally accountable for managing the grant, reporting back on project delivery and for ensuring that the project achieves its stated outcomes. This should be the organisation that will coordinate, manage and deliver the project as well as manage all the financial implications. The lead organisation must meet our eligibility requirements for the programme to which they are applying, although organisations that are not fully eligible can usually be involved in the partnership and this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

For any partnership/consortium-based application, you will be asked to submit a partnership agreement that has been signed by all parties, you will need to provide a final draft or signed agreement with your Stage 2 application.

Neither the accountable lead organisation nor the partner organisation(s) receiving awarded grant funding via the lead organisation can use the awarded grant funding for private benefit or gain.

4. Can my organisation apply for multiple projects?

Organisations may apply for more than one project. However, we will consider your capacity to deliver multiple projects at assessment. We will also consider your capacity to be part of multiple partnerships if you are involved in applications submitted by other organisations. We would encourage you to consider your own organisation's priorities before applying.

5. What is the definition of a project?

For the purposes of BIF, a project is a planned piece of work to create or restore habitat that will be started and completed within a given timescale. It will produce specific outputs that



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enable the project to achieve the BIF outcomes. Your project can be a stand-alone project or a discrete, self-contained part of a larger scheme or phased project. Your project may include multiple sites, but there must be a clear link e.g. to support a specific species or to create a wildlife corridor. Projects can be capital, revenue or both and can be multi-year due to the nature of them.

6. Does the BIF support HS2’s Green Corridor?

The BIF builds upon the already established HS2 Funds (CEF, BLEF, and Woodland Fund) to support partnership with the communities neighbouring HS2, to fund a range of green projects which together will contribute towards the ‘Green Corridor’.

The Green Corridor Prospectus provides more detail about how HS2 are already delivering projects along the route of HS2 and provides information on how communities can benefit further by getting involved:

<https://www.hs2.org.uk/building-hs2/hs2-green-corridor/>

7. What is the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric?

DEFRA’s Biodiversity Metric provides a way for ecologists to measure and account for biodiversity losses and gains resulting from development or land management change. The Biodiversity Metric can be used for both area (e.g. grasslands) and linear (e.g. rivers and streams) habitats. The Metric has been developed with input from a wide range of environmental NGOs, developers, land managers, Government agencies and other interested parties.

If you were successful at Stage 1 and were asked to develop an EAMP for your site(s), you will need to ensure that you appoint a person with experience of the Metric (or very similar) to evidence your project’s potential biodiversity gains. You can find more information on Natural England’s website

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>

8. Where do I go for help to develop my project?

You may find some sources of help from your Local Authority or Local Wildlife Trust. These organisations may also provide some support or have some guidance/resources on their websites:

Groundwork UK	HS2 Green Corridor
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
DEFRA	Environment Agency



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<u>Natural England</u>	<u>Joint Nature Conservation Committee</u>
<u>National Biodiversity Network</u>	<u>Bat Conservation Trust</u>
<u>Canal and River Trust</u>	<u>Forestry Commission</u>
<u>Biological Records Centre</u>	<u>Buglife</u>
<u>Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust</u>	<u>Plantlife</u>
<u>Peoples Trust for Endangered Species</u>	<u>The Mammal Society</u>
<u>Amphibian and Reptile Conservation</u>	<u>The Conservation Volunteers</u>
<u>Fields In Trust</u>	<u>Woodmeadow Trust</u>
<u>Field Studies Council</u>	<u>Freshwater Habitats Trust</u>



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9. How can I ensure I submit a good quality application?

Your project's outcomes will have to meet the aims of BIF and applicants that can provide better evidence that the outcomes will be achieved will score higher. Applicants will have to provide a plan of how the project will be managed and monitored and demonstrate value for money. Applications as partnerships are encouraged.

In all applications we will expect to see strong evidence of support to be provided, to demonstrate that the project is needed.

This could include:

- Letters of support from relevant organisations such as local authorities, Local Nature Partnership (LNP) or local biodiversity forum outlining how the application meets local biodiversity strategies.
- Letters of support from other bodies such as Natural England, Environment agency, Wildlife Trust, habitat or species specialist organisations to confirm that the project is of importance to them.
- Confirmation from your partnership and third parties that the investment of the requested BIF grant is a collective priority for the area.

Evidence will also need to be provided to show that the project contributes to local or regional strategic plans of the public, voluntary and/or environmental sectors. For example, this could include reference to Local Nature Recovery Strategies, green routes, (cycleways, footpaths and bridleways), nature conservation strategies, business improvement district plans, economic plans, tourism strategies, green infrastructure plans or voluntary sector investment plans. This is not an exhaustive list and only provides examples of the sort of evidence that should be referenced.

Your Stage 2 application will also include a fully completed Ecological Assessment and Management Plan (EAMP) and you should provide evidence of how your project has adapted from Stage 1 to take this into account. It should also include any consents required to carry out the project. This may include planning permission, conservation area consent, Environment Agency consents, tree felling licence, wildlife licence, etc. If your project includes any work or activities in woodland, you will need to engage with the Forestry Commission to ensure you have the necessary permissions
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>

10. What is your definition of the line of route?

The line of route relates to the physical rail line being built for HS2 Phase 2a as defined in the public domain by HS2 Ltd. This includes tunnels and viaducts where the line goes under or over ground. Any reference to the line of route in terms of metres, miles or kilometres or closeness to it therefore includes either side, above or below.



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If your project is more than 5km from the line of route, you will be asked to justify why your project needs to happen this far away. This may be for example that there are no suitable habitats closer to the route to support a specific species.

11. What does capital funding cover?

Funding can be used towards capital infrastructure costs including, creating/restoring a site, the installation of structures such as nesting boxes, fencing and gates, enhanced access and landscaping.

For capital grants, work should be able to start within 6 months of an award being received.

A contribution of up to £1,000 towards legal fees on capital grants to enable grant security (e.g. securing a lease or placing a restriction on title) to be obtained can be included in the budget at Stage 2. However, the Fund will not pay for any other up-front development costs, such as planning permission or feasibility surveys that are required to be completed. Costs for producing your Ecological Assessment and Management Plan (EAMP) will have been included in your Stage 1 application and any additional costs you incur cannot be included in your Stage 2 budget.

Relevant planning permission, other permissions (e.g. Environment Agency consent) and works licenses do not need to be in place at the time an application is submitted but will need to be evidenced (if relevant) before any funding can be drawn down if your application for capital funding is approved.

12. Can BIF funding be used to improve the public realm?

We would expect that the majority of your costs requested from BIF are to meet the outcome of enhancing biodiversity through the creation or restoration of habitats. However, you may include costs to meet the secondary outcomes

Examples of public realm improvements against BIF criteria which may be eligible under this scheme include:

- Landscape and nature conservation enhancement
- Improved access and enhancements to public open space
- Planting native trees, shrubs and other plants
- Sign entry treatments / gates

Enhancements to pavements, public rights of way, public footpaths, public bridleways or restricted byways where projects are designed to meet the outcomes of the BIF programme, are additional to statutory responsibilities and provide wide public benefit.

If your project includes public realm improvement works, please contact Groundwork UK to discuss your project before submitting your Stage 2 application. If the community benefit outweighs the benefits to biodiversity, you should consider the [Community and Environment Fund \(CEF\)](#) funding programme instead.

13. If I'm applying for capital funding, do I need security of tenure?



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You do not formally need security of tenure as the applicant. If you own, lease or have a licence for the land, you must supply a copy of your leasehold or freehold document or your licence with your application. In your Stage 2 application you must provide a signed Landowner Permission Form ([download here](#)) and a copy of their freehold documents. Whether you own the freehold or have a lease/licences, the name that appears on the document must be the same as that which appears on your governing documents.

If your project will be carried out across multiple sites, documentation listed above must be provided for each site and separate landowner permission forms will need to be completed for each site by the landowner.

If any elements of your project relate to works to buildings (e.g. installing bat roosts) you will need to provide a signed Landowner Permission Form from the building owner at Stage 2.

14. Will you require grant security?

Through the award conditions attached to any capital funding, you will require approval from HS2 Ltd (or an organisation that has been given delegated responsibility on their behalf) in the event of any changes being proposed to the ownership/design/use of the site, for a period of 30 years from the date the habitat is restored or created.

For capital projects over the value of £200,001, HS2 Ltd may also request additional security over any investment in the form of a legal charge or restriction on title being placed with Land Registry.

15. Can I apply for equipment?

Yes. Funding to purchase equipment to support the delivery of a project is eligible. This may include fencing, tree guards, pond liners, etc.

If you are requesting funding for items, such as equipment that will be used by the project but also for other work of the organisation then we cannot pay for the full cost of that item. We can only cover the amount that is proportionate to its use on the project. This may for instance include tools for volunteers, mower machinery, etc.

The Funds will allow reasonable vehicle hire costs on a project by project basis if it is integral to the delivery of the project (e.g. transporting volunteers to a remote site).

16. What does revenue funding cover?

Revenue grants can be used to cover running costs, staffing and project delivery costs. We will only fund direct project costs, that is, costs that relate clearly and directly to the delivery of the creation or restoration project or the ongoing maintenance and monitoring. These can include salaries, volunteer expenses and travel costs. In many cases project costs will also include less delivery-focused aspects such as administration or insurance costs.

Applicants can also apply for up to 10% of the total funding request to cover a contribution to existing costs such as overheads (e.g. heating, lighting, rent) and management costs - as



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long as the costs are linked to the project. These costs will need to be included in the project budget and appropriate evidence submitted to confirm what they cover.

17. Can we apply for costs to cover salaries?

Yes. If your request includes salary costs, please ensure that the salary element of your budget includes the salary plus on-costs, including National Insurance and pension contributions (if applicable). Salary costs must relate directly to the delivery of the project for which you are applying. Any new posts that will be paid for through a grant will be subject to an open and fair recruitment process being followed and any existing posts must have been recruited through an open and fair recruitment process.

18. Can we apply for maintenance costs?

Yes. We understand that the creation or restoration of certain habitats may incur maintenance costs in order to establish and maintain the habitat. BIF can be used to cover these costs for up to 30 years. You should have included indicative costs in your Stage 1 application and your EAMP will identify what maintenance will be required so that you can include robust costs in your Stage 2 application.

19. General guidance on budgets and grant requests

A detailed budget for your project must be included in your Stage 2 application. It is important for us to make sure that your project costs are realistic, so your budget must include all the costs that you will incur. We understand that your budget and grant request at Stage 1 will have been indicative and the production of your EAMP will inform your budget and how much funding from BIF you will be requesting. If there is a significant difference between the grant request at Stage 1 and at Stage 2, you will need to discuss this with Groundwork UK before submitting the Stage 2 application.

You also need to tell us where any partnership funding will be sourced from and evidence of confirmed match contributions need to be provided with your Stage 2 application. If you are requesting a grant which covers multiple years, we will consider reasonable increases each year to account for inflation so please include inflation costs in the cost breakdown as we will not consider increases to any grant award at Stage 2.

20. Do I need to include VAT in my project costs?

You need to include any non-recoverable VAT relating to your request in your budget. If you are unsure if your organisation is eligible to reclaim all or a proportion of the VAT you will pay on this project you should consult with HM Revenue and Customs to clarify. Please note, we are unable to provide tax advice.

21. Are there any project costs that you consider to be ineligible?

The following costs are not eligible for funding through BIF:

- Costs of any associated species or habitat licencing activity which may be required.
- Personal equipment and clothing other than safety wear for volunteers



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- Purchasing vehicles
- Buying land for future use (for example where the benefits to biodiversity will not be realised by the project you are applying for funds for or to prevent future development)
- Projects intended primarily for private gain
- Projects that contribute directly to a company's distributable profits
- To help with budget shortfalls, debt repayments or endowments (including funds to build up a reserve or surplus and loan repayments)
- Retrospective funding – we will not reimburse costs already incurred
- Costs for activities that are primarily for the promotion of religion, religious belief or faith. For example, safety work to gravestones, religious events.
- Any project or activity that may bring HS2 Ltd, its sub-contractors or its partners (including Groundwork UK) into disrepute.
- Projects that do not meet the 'Additionality' principle (set out below)
- Costs for delivering curriculum activity
- Unspecified expenditure
- Costs associated with fundraising or bid writing
- Any project where funding will be passported to other organisations (for example through a grants programme)
- Organisational overheads or running costs which the organisation would incur whether the project was running or not (although we will consider funding support costs incurred as a direct result of running the project)
- Costs associated with campaigning or lobbying
- Feasibility studies
- Any activity that would be in breach of State Aid rules (or equivalent)
- Business rates and subsidies
- Car parking subsidies
- Road safety measures or improvements including speed cameras or vehicle activated signs, speed bumps or other speed reduction measures such as speed tables, speed cushions, priority narrowing or chicanes, installing or enhancing pedestrian crossings (including Puffin, Zebra, Toucan, Pelican and Pegasus) or junction improvements or changes to road layouts
- Maintenance/upkeep of pavements, public rights of way or public footpaths

Please note that the above list of examples is not exhaustive.

In addition to the above, funding requested should conform to the 'Additionality' principle tests;

- Any funding provided through the BIF should not act as a replacement for government funds where there is a statutory obligation to deliver a service or activity (for example the national curriculum, agri-environment schemes, or SSSI statutory obligations).
- All public funding (including BIF) has to obey State Aid rules (or equivalent). State Aid is any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis to any organisations that could potentially distort competition and



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trade in the European Union (EU). It is anything which an undertaking (an organisation engaged in economic activity) could not get on the open market.

- This funding is additional to the comprehensive mitigation outlined in the Act and Phase 2a Environmental Statements to address the environmental impacts of Phase 2a. Funding from the BIF cannot be used towards costs or projects that are already being covered through other mitigation schemes, compensatory mechanisms or specific funding related to Phase One or Phase 2a.
- BIF awards will be made after consideration is given to CEF/BLEF, the HS2 Woodland Fund and any Additional Mitigation/enhancement packages which have been approved through the hybrid Bill process, to avoid any duplication. The Additional Mitigation packages, CEF/BLEF, the Woodland Fund and the Community Investment Programme (CIP) via contractors are separate to the BIF, though are aligned to avoid duplication of funding or double funding.
- The CIP can be used as in-kind match for applications as it is delivered by third party contractors but no other HS2 initiative can be used as match as they are delivered direct from HS2 as the funding source. However, you may be able to apply to BIF for a distinct project on a site that adds benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation and has been funded from another funded scheme. As long as it is not for the same project, the fact that you might have received or applied for funding across other schemes that distribute HS2 funding would not be taken into account when your application for BIF is assessed. For further information on Other Funds see Section 42 of this guidance.

22. Do you require partnership funding (known as match contributions) and what can we include?

We encourage applicants to include partnership funding, however, this is not a requirement of the BIF. We recognise that in the current environment, it may be more difficult than it was previously to attract match contributions, and we are therefore comfortable being the main contributor to projects that meet the BIF criteria. Double Funding, i.e. the same project is funded twice by the same public funding source, is not allowed. If partnership funding is not secured at the time a Stage 1 application is submitted, evidence of a fundraising or income generation plan and a contingency plan must be provided. At Stage 2 we will expect all partnership funding to be secured. We are keen to leverage other investment into projects via this approach which aims to ensure a legacy for the Funds, especially from high value grants.

If any partnership funding remains unsecured at the point of decision of your Stage 2 application, then we may decide to reject the project or delay our decision until those amounts have been confirmed.

Applicants to BIF are encouraged to secure some level of match funding for their project and evidence their match funding in their applications and which sources of match funding they have investigated. Outlined below is guidance on which match funding contributions are acceptable.

Potential sources of match contributions (partnership funding) include both cash and non-cash (also known as In Kind).



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Cash contributions can include income earned from an activity (for example entrance fees and facility hire fees), funding from public organisations such as local authorities, grants from trusts and foundations or contributions from your own organisation or partners. We will need to see formal documentation to support your In Kind partner funding, for example, an invoice for professional services showing the reduced rates.

In Kind contributions take the form of goods and services provided free of charge, where you would normally have to pay for them.

The value of the contributions In Kind should be identified separately and it is important that they are included in both the project costs and partnership funding sections of the application form. Volunteer time is considered as an In Kind contribution. In the interest of equality, all volunteer time should be valued at the national living wage (currently up to £9.50 per hour dependant on age).

Any professional service or labour provider must be acknowledged by a recognised and reputable association or trader scheme.

The following table explains in more detail which In Kind contributions we deem eligible towards your project;

Category	Eligible	Ineligible
Partnership Funding in the Form of Land	Donation of freehold land or property from a genuine third party, provided that it constitutes added value through the transfer of ownership and control. Land must be given freehold, and value needs to be independently and professionally verified and reflect any existing planning consent or restrictions.	Value of any land, facilities, equipment or other assets already owned by an organisation that is based on potential development permission - 'Hope value'
Services / Materials In Kind	Independently validated voluntary labour, professional fees or donations of materials. For example, the provision of professional services, such as landscape architect, project management, or legal services; or materials such as habitat boxes, topsoil and fencing. These services may be offered either free of charge or at significantly reduced rates, perhaps by a member of your organisation or partnership.	Services or materials not independently validated or directly linked to the project
Voluntary effort	This is usually labour which is committed or received as an In Kind value that would otherwise be paid from the project budget. It must genuinely constitute added value, not something that would be undertaken anyway. Health and safety legislation determines that	Activities or tasks that would be done anyway such as general maintenance



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	<p>many elements of habitat creation or restoration must be carried out by suitably qualified people to reduce the risk of accidents on site and to ensure that the finished work is carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. Work In Kind involving specialist trades must be undertaken by an authorised contractor with appropriate certification and professional indemnity. We may ask for evidence of this certification if you are successful.</p>	
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23. Is land eligible as partnership funding?

To be eligible, a donation of freehold land or property must be from a genuine third party, provided that it constitutes added value through the transfer of ownership and control. Land must be given freehold, and the value needs to be independently and professionally verified and reflect any existing planning consent or restrictions. It must also relate directly to the project for which you are seeking funding.

The value of any land, facilities, equipment or other assets already owned by an organisation or that is based on potential development permission (e.g. hope value) or that doesn't relate to the project for which you are seeking funding is not eligible.

24. What criteria will my Stage 2 application be assessed against?

We will assess Stage 2 applications against the following criteria;

Primary Biodiversity Outcome: Successful Establishment

What benefits to biodiversity do you plan to achieve? How do you plan to establish what habitats and species are on the site in order for them to improve them? How do you plan to improve the existing quality of the habitat? How will this monitored, and will work be recorded?

Secondary Biodiversity Outcomes: Benefits to Biodiversity

Does your project link with an area of HS2 proposed mitigation or a wildlife site (designated/non-designated) directly affected by the 2a scheme? Does the project include the improvement or expansion of habitat associated with a designated wildlife site? Could the project potentially lead to a designation of a new wildlife site? Does the project include the restoration or creation of any habitat which would support protected or notable species supported (e.g. identified in local BAP or legally protected)?

Secondary Sustainability Outcomes

Will your project create or improve public access to open space? How many hectares of public open space will be created or improved? How many km/m of cycle or walking routes will be improved? Does your project provide for disability access? Will the setting of a building with a heritage value be improved or enhanced as a result of the project? Will a natural environment



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with a heritage value be enhanced or maintained as a result of the project? Are local schools involved in the project? Are residents involved in the project? Are local wildlife groups / conservation interest groups involved? Will any health and wellbeing facilities be created or maintained as a result of the project? Will the project create or improve any formal or informal sport and/or recreation space? Will training courses be delivered as part of the project and how many? How many people are expected to attend courses and will this result in qualifications? Does the project include any partnerships with educational organisations (schools, colleges, learning centres etc)? How many volunteers will be involved in the project and what roles will they undertake? Have you considered the appropriate management and risks for all outcomes? Will ecological monitoring data be collected from each site for submittal to a Biological Records Centre? Will the project include the reuse or recycling of materials?

We will award funding to organisations that have made a formal application for a grant, that fulfil the requirements of the BIF and which have the necessary systems in place to administer a grant. All funding applications are subject to a formal appraisal before being presented for a recommendation. A scoring system and process is used to guide decisions. Before any funding is distributed, we carefully and thoroughly assess the benefits of the proposed project.

Groundwork UK will undertake the assessment of the Stage 2 application against the published criteria and provide recommendation reports to an Expert Panel (see Section 40), appointed by HS2 Ltd.

The Expert Panel will make decisions on Stage 2 applications which will be ratified by the Independent Panel, recruited through an open recruitment process. The final decision will either be made by a Minister or by a senior civil servant in the Department for Transport with delegated authority from the Secretary of State.

The distribution and achievements of BIF will be reported to relevant stakeholders, including HS2 Ltd and Department for Transport and via independent reports in the public domain.

25. Do you have any priorities within the assessment process?

Project success will not be simply by achieving the most Biodiversity Gains and value for money. Although this is important, stronger projects will have a compelling legacy and achieve secondary outcomes. For example, this may be by involving volunteers during the maintenance and monitoring period or the project encouraging the local community to enhance biodiversity in neglected green spaces. In some cases, priority will be given to projects closest to the high speed rail line. In some circumstances, projects that have partnership funding may also be prioritised.

Priority will also be given to projects that will restore or create important/noteworthy habitats (for example, Habitats of Principle Importance (HPI) or those listed as important at a local level or will support protected or notable species (e.g. identified in local BAP or legally protected).

26. Can we provide additional supporting information with our Stage 2 application?



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Yes. We will be requesting specific documents in the application form including the completed EAMP, governance document, annual accounts, evidence of security of tenure and a site location plan. Some of these documents may not be required if there have been no changes since your Stage 1 application. You can provide additional documents through the online portal but these should be kept to a minimum. Additional documents must be supplementary information only and not provided as a response to questions or be essential for the application.

27. What documents do we need to submit with our Stage 2 application?

The additional information can be uploaded directly with your application. You will need to scan any documents you only have in hard copy. If there have been no changes since submitting your Stage 1 application, you may not need to upload these documents again. The following table confirms which documents you need to submit based on the type of organisation you are:

Organisation Type	Governing Document	Previous Years Accounts	Copies of last 3 months Bank Statements	Lease / Freehold	Evidence of Partnership Funding - if being provided
Fully constituted organisation, association or trust (an organisation generally within the community/voluntary sector with its own constitution or memorandum and articles of association)	Yes	Yes	Requested at Groundwork UK's discretion	Yes	Yes
Local Authorities (county councils, metropolitan district councils, unitary authorities, district councils), Local Education Authority other public sector statutory bodies (parish and town councils)	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Institute of further or higher education	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

Governing documents, accounts, bank statements and leasehold/freehold documents (if relevant) need to be in the same organisation name.

We reserve the right to request further documents or information if required to fully assess your project.

28. What governing documents do you need?



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A governing document is a legal document which represents the rule book for the way in which your organisation will operate.

There are a number of different types of governing documents, including constitutions for an association, a trust deed for a trust, a will for a will trust, articles of association for a company and rules for an Industrial and Provident Society. You should submit the document which formally governs the running of your organisation.

29. What kind of accounts do you need?

The type of accounts we need will depend on the type of organisation you are:

- From an organisation with income over £25,000, but less than £1 million we would expect to receive accounts that have been reviewed by an appropriately qualified person (this is not deemed an audit). We would expect this to be a slimmed down version, but still similar to the accounts that a large organisation produces. Audited accounts will be needed if total assets (before liabilities) exceed £3.26 million and the organisation's gross income is more than £250,000.
- From an organisation with income over £1 million we would expect to receive externally audited accounts. This is likely to be a reasonable-sized document with a detailed Trustee or Directors report and notes to accounts.

30. What happens if our Stage 2 application is successful?

If your Stage 2 application is successful, you will be given a further conditional award. Any conditions attached to the award must be met before you can claim your funding, but Groundwork UK will provide support to help you through the process.

Groundwork UK will also be responsible for monitoring the delivery of your project and the management of your grant. You will therefore be asked to submit regular progress reports on your project to confirm what has been delivered and achieved through the funding. You will also need to complete Grant Claims Forms and evidence of spend with your progress reports in order to draw down funding.

31. What happens if our Stage 2 application is unsuccessful?

If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you explaining why on this occasion we are unable to take your application any further.

We aim to provide constructive feedback to all unsuccessful applicants in order to support them to apply and/or seek funding from other sources.

There may be specific circumstances where it is more appropriate to defer your application, and we will write and let you know what this means for you.

32. What are the monitoring requirements for our project?



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We will ask you to provide Progress Reports during project delivery and refer to your EAMP and information in your application form to identify how the targeted habitats/biodiversity is being improved and that the outcomes are being achieved.

The nature and extent of any monitoring you need to carry out should be identified in your EAMP and be relevant to the habitat and species of interest. All surveys/surveillance will be documented and completed by suitably experienced ecologists (holding membership with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management or equivalent).

In order to evidence Biodiversity gains, you will need to confirm your project site(s) will be monitored and maintained for 30 years.

33. Who is on the Expert Panel?

The Expert Panel will include Groundwork UK and HS2 Ltd staff with biodiversity expertise who will make recommendations on successful and unsuccessful applications. The panel will also include organisations in an advisory capacity including Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

34. Who is on the Independent Panel?

The four independent members of the Panel were appointed by HS2 Ltd in December 2016 then, following a further recruitment process at the end 2019 the following Panel members were appointed; Lisa Smart, John Roseveare, Talbinder Kaur and Karen McArthur. They have experience in the delivery of successful community-led environmental projects, a track record in providing advice and support to small and medium size businesses and experience of managing local government or third sector grant programmes. These four individuals have been recruited to sit alongside Cathy Elliott, who has been the Independent Chair of the Fund since January 2016. Peter Miller, Environment and Town Planning Director for HS2 joins the Panel as HS2's representative. Further information about the Independent Panel members can be found here:

<https://hs2funds.org.uk/about/community-and-business-funds-independent-panel-members/>

35. How will the Fund be governed and managed?

The management of the Fund has been outsourced to an independent Grant Management Body, Groundwork UK, which were selected through an open competitive tender process. They will undertake the assessment of bids against the published criteria. For decisions on grant awards, the Grant Management Body will provide reports and recommendations to the Expert Panel. Groundwork UK will also be responsible for overseeing the payment of grants and monitoring the progress of successful projects.

BIF is a national stand-alone HS2 funding stream that aligns to other HS2 and/or DfT national schemes for the HS2 project, such as the CEF/BLEF, the Woodland Fund, Road Safety Fund, geographical Additional Mitigation/enhancement funds and the Community Investment Programme. Therefore, the only alignment BIF has with other HS2 and DfT schemes is to ensure coordination and to avoid duplication of funding.

36. What is the Grant Management Body's role?



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Groundwork UK is an independent and impartial non-governmental organisation, separately registered and governed to HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport. Funds distributed by the body will aim to ensure the greatest public benefit for communities and economic benefit for the business community in Phase One and Phase 2a.

37. Will there be future funding windows for the BIF?

Currently only one funding window is expected. However, if not all the funding is allocated during this window, a future window will be considered, and the process and dates will be made widely and publicly available.

38. Is there any further help available to us?

Groundwork UK can provide support to applicants, but this will be in the form of advice and guidance and not a financial contribution. If you need help with your application or have any queries about BIF, please contact Groundwork UK via email HS2BIF@groundwork.org.uk

We delivered a webinar in March 2021 to promote BIF, provide an overview of the Fund and the process and to share publicly available information. You can find a recording of the webinar on the Funds website. Groundwork UK and HS2 Ltd will not however attend other meetings or provide development support to individual applicants.

General application guidance in line with publicly available information will be given by Groundwork UK by phone and email.

Updates on the Funds will be issued through the website <https://hs2funds.org.uk/> and through existing communication channels. Updates on the Funds will also be included on the HS2 local community webpages <https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/local-community-webpages/>