

Natural Heritage Grant Programme Application Guide

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The guidance in this document should be studied before completing a grant application for the Natural Heritage Grants Programme (NHGP).

Please check that you have the most recent version of the application form and guidance notes by contacting the Grants Team or referring to www.ni-environment.gov.uk/landscape/grant.htm.

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PART 1

PART 1 of this guide explains the grant themes, the factors determining eligibility, grant levels, and information regarding the NHGP assessment process.

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INTRODUCTION

Can you help?

Northern Ireland Environment Agency¹ (NIEA) administers the Natural Heritage Grant Programme (NHGP) to:

Encourage the conservation and enhancement of key elements of the environment and its wildlife, and the provision of facilities which help as wide a range of people as possible to enjoy and appreciate our natural heritage.

Grant applications are invited from a wide range of organisations, although some grant categories are restricted to certain sectors such as District Councils - see Section 1.2 for details of eligibility.

How can you help?

You can apply for a grant to support actions contributing to **3 Priority Themes:**

- **Nature - Biodiversity and Geodiversity**
Conserving the diversity of wildlife, geology and landforms
- **Tomorrow's Landscapes**
Maintaining and improving the landscape quality of the countryside and supporting its sustainable management
- **Countryside Access**
Providing and promoting opportunities for sustainable access and countryside recreation

Annually, the NHGP budget is approximately £2.5 million. Some of this budget is committed up to 3 years in advance.

This is a competitive grant programme. We regret that there may be more applications than the budget can support.

Each year NIEA will allocate a proportion of this budget to these 3 priority themes. Grants will be awarded for activities contributing to each of the priority themes within **4 Criteria:**

- **Site Action**
- **Awareness and Inspiration**
- **Involving People**
- **Planning for the Future**

Normally grants may be awarded at up to 75% of project costs or 60% of an organisation's core costs. The maximum grant for land purchase or access projects is normally £120,000 while applications will be considered for grants of £500 to £300,000 over any 3 year period for other projects.

¹ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an agency within the Department of the Environment (DOE). The Natural Heritage Directorate of NIEA administers the Natural Heritage Grant Programme under the provisions of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985, the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983 and the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

NIEA Natural Heritage has a separate budget for research projects. Contact the Natural Heritage Research Team on 028 9056 9648 for further details.

When will you apply?

Annual deadlines will be displayed on the website.

Grant bids up to £10,000	Applications for projects up to £10,000 may be submitted at any time when the programme is open and sufficient funds are available – see Section 4.
£10,000 or over	There are annual deadlines for projects seeking £10,000 or more grant aid. Applications will be assessed competitively and offers made on merit when compared with NIEA priorities.
Education projects	Education projects must be submitted to the Environmental Education Forum (EEF) for comment 6 weeks prior to submission to NHGP by the appropriate deadline. EEF will comment on the application and return it to you to enable you to consider their comments prior to submission to NHGP – see Appendix 2 for further details.

Who can give advice?

You are encouraged to discuss your proposals for a project (and core funding proposals) with a relevant member of Natural Heritage Staff prior to preparing an application. They will be able to give you an INDICATION of what elements of a project MAY be eligible for grant aid and whether your proposals may need further consideration. NHGP staff can also give advice on the eligibility of specific schemes and advice on the completion of the application form and any post project evaluation of previous projects. The final decision will always depend upon the assessment of the completed application and the availability of finance. No firm indication can be assumed unless you receive a formal letter of offer.

NHGP staff are available to help applicants with queries and can be contacted at:

NIEA Natural Heritage Grants Programme

Klondyke Building, 2nd Floor

Cromac Avenue

Gasworks Business Park

Lower Ormeau Road

Belfast BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 9056 9599

E-mail: nhgrants@doeni.gov.uk

Web: www.ni-environment.gov.uk/landscape/grant.htm

1. General Principles

1.1 Central Principles

- Projects must be consistent with the aims and objectives of NIEA.
- Applications will not be supported where work is targeted by other government grant schemes for specific work areas such as Agri-environment Schemes, the Woodland Grant Scheme or MOSS.
- Projects must meet a clearly identified need.
- Partnerships are encouraged where this will enhance the project.
- Grants are discretionary.
- Grants will be constrained by the overall funds available in any financial year.
- The maximum period of funding NIEA will commit to is 3 years.
- Funding of a project provides no guarantee of follow on funding for the same project.
- Grant offers must be secured in advance of any expenditure for the project.
- Grant is paid in arrears - unless the need for advance payment is agreed with the Grants Team.
- NIEA may publish details of all projects applying to and supported by the NHGP.

1.2 Who can apply?

- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/voluntary bodies whose aims include conservation, and access to the countryside.
- Schools.
- District Councils.

Individuals will only be considered where the funding will directly contribute to a habitat or species action plan, or if there is direct public benefit meeting the objectives of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985.

1.3 Compliance with legislation

In carrying out any project supported by NHGP, the grant recipient must comply with the provisions of all enactments, statutory provisions and other laws operating in Northern Ireland including, but not only, those relating to planning, nature conservation, access, equal opportunities, fair employment and health and safety. European law, where applicable, should also be followed. NIEA's grant policy and assessment of grant applications comply with the provisions and other laws operating in Northern Ireland.

1.4 Protecting the Historic Environment

It is important to assess the impact on and compatibility of project proposals on the natural and historic environment and to design them accordingly. The setting and design of projects should take account of local landscape character and natural landmarks. Projects which would have an adverse effect on the natural or built heritage will not be approved for grant aid.

Elements of the historic environment which could be impacted by development include visible archaeological sites, buried archaeology, field boundaries, designed landscapes, industrial heritage, intervisibility between sites and the individual settings of these features. Further advice is available from NIEA Built Heritage (028 9023 5000).

2. Themes and Criteria

All grant applications must demonstrate their focus on ONE OR MORE of three themes. These themes reflect NIEA Natural Heritage priorities set out in the Natural Heritage Strategic Plan and other plans relating to access, landscape and biodiversity. The documents referred to may be accessed on the Natural Heritage grants web-page at www.ni-environment.gov.uk/landscape/grant.htm.

The 3 Priority Themes are:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Nature - Biodiversity and Geodiversity;▪ Tomorrow's Landscapes;▪ Countryside Access. |
|--|

The 4 Criteria relating to each of these themes are:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Site Action;▪ Awareness and Inspiration;▪ Involving People;▪ Planning for the Future. |
|--|

All grant applicants must demonstrate that their project focuses on AT LEAST ONE of the three themes and describe how they contribute to whichever of the criteria are relevant under the chosen theme/s. The themes and criteria are explained in more detail on the following pages.

As part of the grant assessment we will score applications against the relevant themes and criteria. Not all themes or criteria will be relevant to every project. Applicants are therefore asked to identify the relevant themes and criteria and describe how their project contributes to these.

To give an indication of how we will score applications, tables are included in APPENDIX 1 to show what will merit a high, medium or low score for each criterion. The total score for each project will influence the selection of projects for award of grant and the level of grant offered, within the budget available.

We will also take account of a number of overarching factors, shown in the table below:

The overarching factors we will also consider include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Evidence of the need for the project and its outputs;▪ Value for money;▪ Your organisation's ability to manage and deliver the project;▪ The urgency of carrying out the project;▪ How you will measure the progress and success of the project;▪ Environmental Impact;▪ The sustainability of the project |
|--|

2.1 THEMES

2.1.1 Nature - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Conserving the diversity of wildlife, geology and landforms

A simple definition of biodiversity is the total variety of life found on earth. Northern Ireland has a rich and varied natural heritage including habitats and species of international, national and local significance. For its land area, Northern Ireland is one of the most geologically diverse regions in the world.

The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985 legislates for National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs), and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) whilst the Environment (NI) Order 2002 legislates for Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). The most important biological sites at the European level have been designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive. One site, the Giant's Causeway, is designated as a World Heritage Site (WHS) while the Marble Arch Caves and Cuilcagh Mountain Park is a UNESCO European Geopark. Protecting sites of national or international importance is given a high priority for support.

Applicants seeking grants for projects on ASSIs, SACs or SPAs should seek initial advice from the Conservation Designations and Protection Unit (CDP) of NIEA prior to submitting their application. Projects which may affect a European designated site will require further assessment and more detailed information will be required (Competent Authorities will be required to carry out their own appropriate assessment prior to applying for consent). CDP can be contacted on 028 9056 9538 or cdp@doeni.gov.uk.

The Earth Science Conservation Review (ESCR) has systematically reviewed earth science localities to identify both sites of national significance and a suite of locally important sites which can serve scientific, amenity and landscape functions. NHGP will support projects that protect and interpret earth science features with an emphasis on sites designated as ASSI or identified in the ESCR.

Conservation of biodiversity requires practical action in the wider countryside as well as in designated sites. The strategic background for biodiversity work comes from the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy (NIBS). The NIBS makes recommendations on actions required to maintain, enhance and restore biodiversity and identifies Priority Habitats and Species. A further list of Species of Conservation Concern was published in March 2004.

Detailed plans for safeguarding priority habitats and species in Northern Ireland have been published by NIEA. These include Habitat Action Plans (HAPs), Species Action Plans (SAPs) and several all-Ireland Species Action Plans. High priority will be given to projects that will deliver actions identified in these strategies and plans.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) provide opportunities of greater public and sectoral involvement in biodiversity action and are a mechanism for the delivery of HAPs and SAPs. LBAPs are currently under preparation for over half of the land area of Northern Ireland – see www.ni-environment.gov.uk/biodiversity/nibg_cg/lbaps.htm. NIEA supports councils in developing and implementing LBAPs.

A programme is also underway to identify Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs). LBAPs and SLNCIs also help identify sites suitable for the creation of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) to secure the conservation of existing biodiversity at local level and provide access to nature. NIEA will encourage the designation of LNRs.

We will also support projects where there is a real opportunity to achieve long term control or reduce the impacts of invasive non-native species. An all-Ireland invasive species strategy and action plan is under development and further information will be available at www.invasivespeciesireland.com. NHGP will support projects which will implement the actions identified in the risk assessments and management strategies for those non-native species which pose the greatest threat to biodiversity. Contact 9056 9556 for further information.

2.1.2 Tomorrow's Landscapes

Maintaining and improving the landscape quality of the countryside and supporting its sustainable management.

The landscape of Northern Ireland is of great value for the often outstanding beauty of its scenery, its cultural heritage, biodiversity and increasingly as an economic asset. It provides people with opportunities for recreation, inspiration and employment. It is an important resource that, once disfigured, cannot easily be restored.

The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment has identified and mapped 130 separate landscape character areas. Each area possesses characteristic features which define its distinctiveness and create a sense of place. These landscapes have been shaped by man through centuries of husbandry and habitation.

The combination of many different features such as landform, field boundaries, ancient byways, swathes of heath, pockets of bog or woodland, river corridors and coastline gives landscapes their distinctive character. This creates a sense of place that enhances our work, leisure and journeys and is valued by visitors. The features which make up our landscape are worth protecting; particularly when they contribute to local character, are associated with public access or where there is the added dimension of community interest and involvement. Natural landscapes can be of greater importance where they are adjacent to urban areas.

Landscapes that are most valued for their scenic qualities are usually recognised by a statutory designation which allows for their special management. Currently the only designation used for areas of high landscape quality is that of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), although proposed new legislation will enable National Parks to be established as well. Designation as an AONB enables the Department to develop policies aimed at providing sensitive and sustainable management of the area and opportunities for enjoyment through public access, informal recreation and interpretation. The Department's policies for AONBs and National Parks are presented in the document "Shared Horizons – A Statement of Policy on Protected Landscapes" www.ni-environment.gov.uk/shared_horizons.pdf.

Funding priority will be given to projects which secure or enhance the landscape of designated areas (AONBs and the World Heritage Site). Medium priority will be given to landscapes of high quality and low priority to other non-designated landscapes.

2.1.3 Countryside Access

Providing and promoting opportunities for sustainable access and countryside recreation.

The countryside of Northern Ireland is an environment in which people live and work, and which many visit for leisure purposes. NIEA promotes opportunities for the appreciation and free enjoyment of the countryside, with its associated benefits to health, by encouraging and supporting access to the countryside. NIEA authority for this work derives from powers in the Access to the Countryside Order (Northern Ireland) 1983. In encouraging access, it is important that the principles of environmental sustainability are followed. Acceptable activities are ones that make low demands on natural resources and which are likely to be welcomed by local communities.

Priority will be given to projects facilitating walking and those that meet the needs of people who have difficulties in using the countryside for recreation purposes, rather than more sport-based forms of countryside recreation. Off-road provisions will generally be preferred to projects that make extensive use of public roads. Access routes within urban areas will only be considered for support where there is an appreciable countryside experience.

There are many different recreational activities which rely on access to the countryside. Much of the recent co-ordination of these activities has been undertaken by the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) and NIEA will continue to encourage appropriate projects which have been strategically approved by the Network.

Applications for access grants will only be considered from bodies, such as District Councils, that have a long-established record of successfully creating and maintaining access. Any other

individual or organisation seeking funding for an access project must have the support of the District Council and the council must undertake to maintain any such project in default of the applicant and to keep it open to the public for a period of twenty years. A standard letter is available from the Countryside Access Officer at NIEA. Applicants must have ownership of the land or hold a lease for an appropriate period in relation to the amount of grant requested. Grant applications should include a statement that a public right of way, permissive path or other access agreement is in place. Support for long distance routes will normally be dependent upon the applicant having advance approval, for the proposed route, as set out under Articles 21-22 of the Access Order.

Support may be considered for development of a countryside recreation strategy where the need for one has been identified by a funding body or council.

2.2 CRITERIA

Each theme will be assessed in relation whichever of the following **4 criteria** are relevant to your project. Your application should quantify HOW MUCH will be achieved such as:

- The area of a habitat being maintained, restored or created or length of an access route;
- The number of volunteers who will be involved in a project.

2.2.1 Site Action

This includes:

- Practical action necessary to maintain, restore or enhance biodiversity, earth science features, landscapes or distinct features within them, or access facilities such as footpaths.
- Creation of new habitats or countryside access facilities.
- Survey and monitoring where a gap in information exists or a need to monitor a resource is identified.
- Land purchase will only be considered where this is considered to be the most cost-efficient way to achieve the project aims.

2.2.2 Awareness and Inspiration*

It is often necessary to raise awareness and inspire people to take action to achieve many of the goals set out in the plans and strategies referred in 2.1. This may be achieved using a variety of media from signage and interpretation to preparation of resources and delivery of programmes. Projects should help people to understand the impacts they have on the environment and learn how they can help to lessen them or have a positive effect. A key question for you to answer is therefore: How will this project lead to CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND RESULT IN PERSONAL ACTION?

NIEA will support the provision of information on the environment, its conservation and enjoyment so that natural heritage is understood in a way which enables informed choices to be made. We recognise that there is a need to reach people of all ages and to target certain stakeholders and will give priority to programmes which fill a gap in provision. Applicants should demonstrate that they are meeting a significant existing gap in information.

NIEA will support the creation of resources in school grounds where these will be used to inspire and educate pupils about biodiversity, geodiversity or the landscape.

* Grant applications for over £10,000 for Structured Environmental Education Programmes targeted towards young people under the age of 25 must include an Environmental Education Forum (EEF) Evaluation Report. See APPENDIX 2 for details of how to obtain this.

2.2.3 Involving People

Involving people refers to projects that give people opportunities to participate in managing or enjoying their environment. It is recognised that volunteers may contribute in many ways from practical work to providing expertise such as environmental recording or operational support. Projects may involve people in planning for sustainable management of local resources. They could also target a sector of society which is seen as important for protection of natural resources.

2.2.4 Planning for the Future

This criterion includes support for core costs and the development of strategies and management plans whose implementation will contribute to the delivery of national goals for biodiversity, geoconservation, landscape or countryside recreation.

NIEA can support core costs to help to secure the continuation and development of organisations that deliver strategic plans which fit closely with NHGP objectives.

Applicants should demonstrate that strategic plans and management plans will improve co-ordination and result in more efficient and effective delivery of goals. NIEA will consider audits or strategies that help local people identify natural resources of importance or assess needs and plan for their management or provision.

NIEA sees local action at a council level as an increasingly important mechanism for delivery of biodiversity targets, particularly within the context of the Review of Public Administration. Councils are eligible to apply for support for a Local Biodiversity Officer to develop and implement a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). Joint applications from more than 1 council within the proposed Local Government districts will be given priority and are therefore more likely to receive grant aid support.

3. Financial Matters

3.1 Grant Levels

The NHGP grant budget is limited. Scoring against the assessment criteria only determines the priority for projects. Applications may be refused or offered a lower level of grant if there is insufficient budget or there are concerns about value for money or risks in delivering the outputs.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that sufficient match funding is available to enable completion of the undertaking. We can take account of contributions in kind by way of land, buildings, labour (including volunteers) or donations of materials.

3.1.1 Core Costs

NIEA can provide Core Funding support to help to secure the continuation and development of organisations that deliver strategic plans which fit closely with NHGP objectives. Core costs are costs not connected with the levels of activity undertaken by an organisation but which are fundamental to the organisation's operations. Eligible organisations include those that NIEA has been fundamental in establishing and there is a continuing need for the services they provide. Bids for Core Funding must be supported by a strategic/business plan for the period for which funding is sought.

This provision is primarily to support small environmental NGO's which do not have a large membership base, income, legacies or endowments to sustain themselves and whose primary functions are not the responsibility of another statutory provider or non departmental public body.

Core funding to voluntary bodies can normally be awarded up to a maximum of 60% of eligible costs for organisations which operate in Northern Ireland. Staff supported under NHGP core funding will not be supported as part of projects.

Under the NHGP, funding can be awarded to cover core staff and overhead costs which relate to the following key posts: Director/Lead Officer post and one or two other posts if appropriate to the size of the organisation (these could for example be an Administration post or a Funding/Development post). The amount and level of support will depend on factors such as the organisation's size, ability to support itself and the content of the organisations strategic plan.

3.1.2 Project Costs

NHGP project funding support will be considered for projects which will take place in Northern Ireland and which will contribute to the NHGP themes and criteria.

Normally grant may be awarded at up to 75% of eligible costs to a maximum of £120,000 for access or land purchase and £300,000 for other projects over any 3 year period. An offer of grant may however be lower to reflect for example the scoring or value for money.

It is expected that project funding will be limited to a maximum of 3 years rather than repeat funding being sought continuously for an issue, campaign or area of work. Projects should therefore clearly identify the area of need, resource requirements, scheme of work and exit strategy for each project.

3.1.3 Projects that cannot be funded by the NHGP

NHGP support **will not normally be considered** for the following:

- Works to buildings, or associated general improvements, repairs and maintenance;
- The purchase of vehicles and other mobile equipment unless this is proven to be the most cost effective option. Hire or lease of vehicles or purchase of specialist equipment may be considered;
- Consultants' fees and costs associated with the production of feasibility materials to support an application for funding;
- Work which is targeted by other government grants schemes for specific work areas, such as the Woodland Grant Scheme, Agri-Environment Schemes or MOSS.
- VAT if the applicant can reclaim VAT;
- Research projects which are eligible for support under the Natural Heritage Research Programme (contact the Research Team for information: 028 9056 9648);
- Actions by individuals or businesses required as part of a planning consent.

Land acquisition will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the resource or feature cannot be effectively protected, enhanced or created by other means.

3.2 Demonstrating Value for Money

Given the limited funds that are available to Government, it needs to make sure that, when awarding a grant, the activity it is supporting would not have gone ahead anyway without the funding. It is also important to ensure that funding is directed to new activity rather than actions which displace/replace activity elsewhere.

Once the need for a project has been identified, NHGP must assess the value for money which the proposed project could provide. This is to weigh up the quality of the proposed activity against the cost of its provision.

The applicant/grantee will normally be required to award all contracts and purchases over £500 by competitive tender. The following table should be used as guidance on how and when tendering should be applied:

Value of Purchase	Minimum Quotations
Up to £500	Not mandatory
£5,000	2
£10,000	3
£15,000	4
Over £15,000	Formal tendering procedures apply
Over £20,000	Formal tender by public advertisement

District Council tendering rules are normally acceptable. If these are to be applied, this should be stated as part of the application.

A specific project tender competition may not be required if a District Council, or other approved, measured term contract has been awarded and the contract clauses are appropriate to the planned project.

3.3 Option/Economic Appraisal

Option appraisal aims to ensure that all projects provide value for money, that you have considered a variety of methods to achieve your objectives and that potential risks have been identified and addressed. The level of effort that goes into producing the appraisal should be proportionate to the scale of the project. Choose the option appropriate for the level of grant you are seeking:

- **Applications up to £10,000** – a full economic appraisal is not required – fill in the information for Option 1 which describes your proposed project
- **Applications greater than £10,000 - fill in this section fully.** For additional help on completing this section, refer to the Department of Finance and Personnel website guidance for Economic Appraisal: www.eag.dfpni.gov.uk/. The DOE Departmental Economists can also provide help to fill in this section. If you require advice and assistance at any stage of the application in relation to option appraisal please contact Gayle McIvor at gayle.mcivor@drdni.gov.uk or 028 9054 1155.

The most important part of completing any economic appraisal is commensurate effort. The required amount of detail that is put into any economic appraisal should be reflective not only of the total level of expenditure, the amount of funding sought from the grant and whether the project is likely to be contentious.

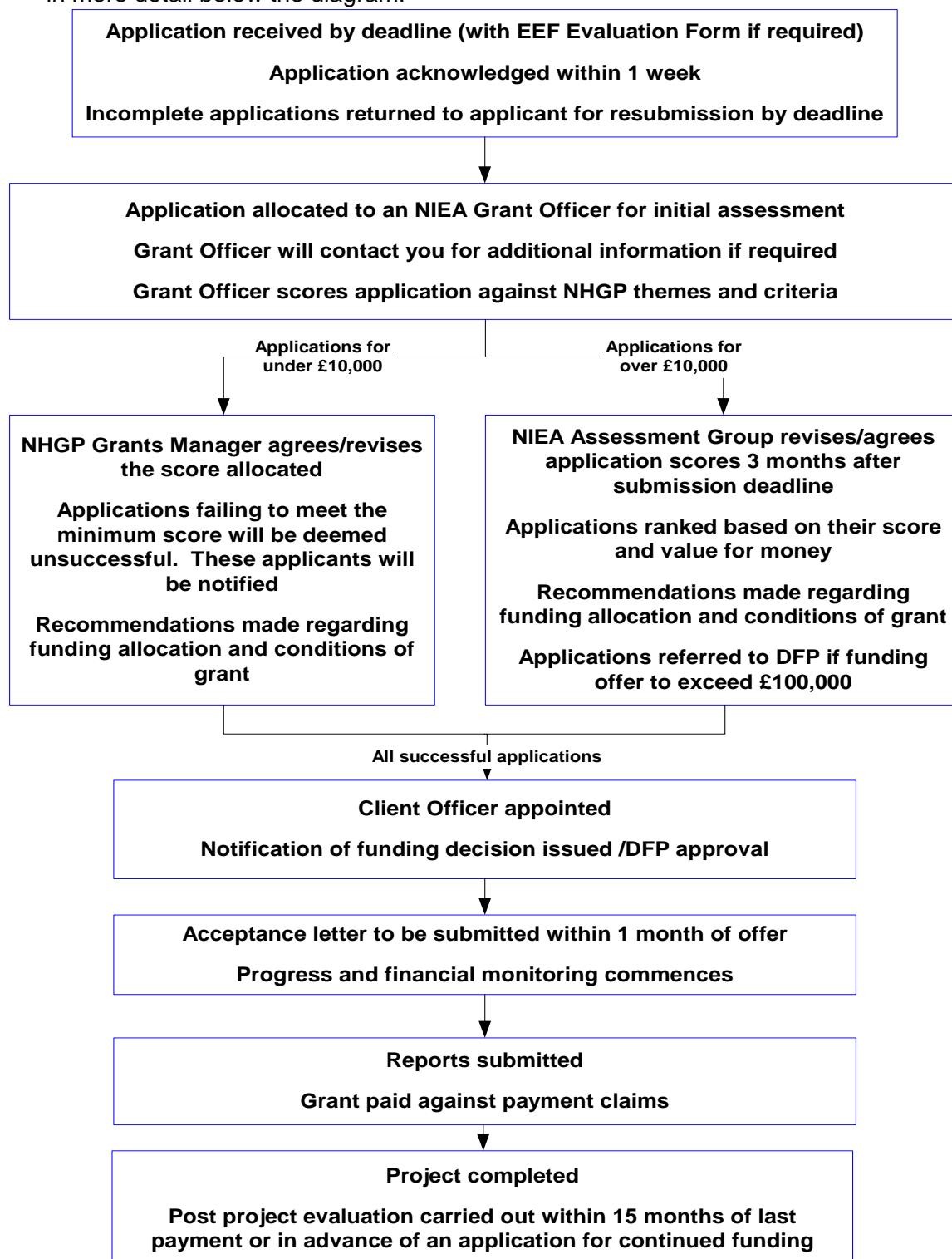
The amount of detail required for on going core funding or a recurrent project is less than for new projects or new core funding arrangements. **For applications over £100,000 a separate economic appraisal is no longer required.** Sufficient information must, however, be included in your application to allow an economic appraisal to be conducted. You must therefore refer to the principles detailed in the Northern Ireland Practical Guide to the Green Book.

Your whole application must be made available electronically.

4. Application Assessment

4.1 Assessment Flow Diagram

The flow diagram below summarises the grant assessment process. Each step is explained in more detail below the diagram.



4.2 Application Deadlines

Applications up to £10,000

Applications may be submitted at any time when the NHGP is open. These applications will be assessed on receipt. Our target is to make decisions on these applications within two months providing sufficient information has been provided.

To ensure that sufficient grant remains for larger projects the total budget for small grants will be limited. On the date that this limit is reached we will place a notice on our web-site to advise that no further small grant applications will be accepted until the NHGP next opens. When this amount has been allocated to small grants we will hold any remaining applications for small grants to be assessed alongside the applications for large grants or until a new round of funding is opened.

Over £10,000

Annual deadlines will be set for submitting applications. These will be detailed on the Grants web page and in the application form.

Note that it may take longer to issue decisions on applications for grants of more than £100,000 as these must also be assessed by DFP. If incomplete applications are submitted or additional information requested is not provided quickly then the date of decision could be delayed until the subsequent grant programme.

Fast track

Under exceptional circumstances, NIEA may fast track your project application. The fast track option will only be considered if you have a particularly urgent need for funding, for example:

- If you are purchasing land; or
- Carrying out essential work in the interests of health and safety.

If you require your application to be fast tracked you will need to contact a member of the NIEA Grants Team as soon as you know that you will be seeking support and before you submit an application.

4.3 Assessment Procedures

All applications will be assessed by a member of the Grants Team based on the information you have provided in your application. Your application will be assessed in terms of the extent to which it meets the NHGP priority themes, supporting criteria and the additional factors identified in Part 1 under the Themes and Criteria section. Where demand exceeds the budget available, it may also be necessary for us to consider regional coverage and the diversity of projects supported.

When completing our assessment of your application, we may contact you to request further information or to seek clarification on specific points of your application. This information should be supplied as quickly as possible.

The contribution of your project to each theme will then be evaluated by the assessor who will also determine the relative importance of each criterion to the project. Each theme will be scored against the criteria. The criteria score is dependent on whether NIEA believes evidence from the application merits a high, medium or low score and will be based on the guidelines Appendix 1. The following table provides further detail regarding the scoring framework.

Table 1: NHGP Scoring Framework

	THEME (row should total 100%)		
CRITERIA ↓	Nature - Biodiversity and Geodiversity 0-100%	Tomorrows Landscapes 0-100%	Countryside Access 0-100%
Site Action	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score
Awareness & Inspiration	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score
Involving People	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score
Planning for the Future	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score	Applicable: Yes/No Score

Applications for amounts up to £10,000 will be countersigned and approved for issue of a decision by another member of the Grants Team.

Applications for amounts exceeding £10,000 will be forwarded to the NHGP Assessment Group (consisting of several NIEA representatives) for further consideration. If the application is seeking more than £100,000 the Grants Team may also need to seek approval from DOE Economics Branch before referring it to the Assessment Group. The Assessment Group will review the scores awarded to applications and rank them based on factors including relevance to NIEA priorities and value for money. Where the bids exceed the budget available for a theme the ranking will be used to determine which projects are successful.

5. Grant management

5.1 What to expect if your application is successful

NIEA will issue you with a Letter of Offer if your application has been successful. This letter will set out the terms and conditions under which NIEA will be prepared to issue funding and will include:

- The rate and maximum amount of grant by financial year (April to March);
- Timescales of funding and permission to start project/ recruit post(s);
- Financial monitoring requirements;
- Progress monitoring requirements;
- How and when funding will be released.

You must confirm in writing your acceptance of the grant offer within 1 month of the date of issue of the offer, otherwise claims cannot be honoured. Acceptance of the Letter of Offer will represent the formal funding agreement between NIEA and the applicant.

Where there is more than one funding body supporting your project NHGP may liaise with these other bodies and, where appropriate, a lead funder may be identified to manage the financial monitoring of the whole project.

5.2 Keeping NIEA informed - Client Officers and Link Officers

Every grant awarded will be assigned a Client Officer from NIEA for the duration of your project. Contact details for this person will be contained within your Letter of Offer. The Client Officer will be your primary point of contact within NIEA and will provide advice and support to you throughout the life of your project.

The Grants Team must also be kept informed and contacted particularly if you require advice relating to claims or administration of your grant.

	Grants Team Contact	Client Officer
Progress meetings		✓
Reports	✓	✓
Grant Claims	✓	

Most organisations which have a long-term relationship with Natural Heritage will also have a Link Officer. This person should maintain an overview of the organisations activities and will not necessarily be the client officer for a given project.

5.3 Publicity

The funding role of NIEA must be acknowledged on any promotional or interpretative material associated with this project.

The Client Officer and NHGP should be informed of any opportunities to celebrate the success of your supported project. This will include any launches of the project or awards received.

NIEA may use photos or information about your project to promote the NHGP or projects that NIEA supports.

5.4 Progress and financial monitoring

Grant must be spent within the financial year it has been offered for. Only in exceptional circumstances (that have been agreed with the NH Grants Team), and if sufficient budget is available, can an offer be moved from one financial year to another.

NIEA will provide you with a progress monitoring template which is designed to enable you to report on progress towards your project's aims. You will be required to complete this template to accompany every grant claim.

NIEA will issue future payments to you based on the content of these forms (i.e. evidence that funding is being spent in support of the achievement of your project's aims and objectives).

You will be expected to maintain a project file for each grant awarded to you. This should contain all relevant information relating to the project including:

- The Letter of Offer;
- Details of any other funding towards the project;
- Original receipts;
- Records of project achievements and progress reports.

5.5 Payment of NHGP grants

NHGP funding will normally be paid quarterly in arrears. Payments will only be made after NIEA has received a claim in which you provide details of expenditure and associated invoices/receipts and demonstrate that grant conditions have been met. The frequency of payments will be detailed in your Letter of Offer.

Where a real need is agreed with Grants staff, NH will consider paying grants in advance of expenditure. Please contact the Grants Team contact if you would like to discuss this.

5.6 Post Project Evaluation

Post project evaluation (PPE) is carried out to determine whether project objectives have been met, assure quality, ensure that predicted benefits are being delivered, provide accountability and allow improvement of the grant programme through the application of lessons learnt. PPE will be carried out on all projects where the NIEA contribution is £30,000 or more. Applicants will be required to supply information about the outcomes of their project within 15 months of the final payment which will be reviewed by NIEA. An interim PPE will be required alongside the application form where you are applying for further funding for a project. NIEA may support reasonable costs associated with monitoring the project if these are included in the application. A sample of smaller projects will be evaluated by NIEA.

5.7 What to expect if unsuccessful

You will be informed in writing if your application has not been awarded funded for NHGP funding. This letter will provide you with the reasons behind our decision and will contain contact details should you wish to discuss our decision further.

PART 2

GUIDANCE FOR FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION FORM

It is preferred that you submit your application by e-mail. A “Word” version is available on www.ni-environment.gov.uk/landscape/grant.htm or by email from the Grants Team.

SECTION A: YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION

1 Applicant Organisation

The District Council, voluntary group, school or individual directly involved in the project should complete this section in full.

2 Grant Officer

This is the person that will answer any queries that the assessment officer has about the application, the budget or grant claims. This may be the person who compiled the application or the funding/development manager for the organisation.

3 Project Manager

This is the person who will have ultimate responsibility for the management and delivery of the project if funding is secured (or the manager of this person if there is presently no-one in post) and should be able to assist us with any enquiries, site visits or monitoring.

You should explain how this person has the skills and experience to manage this project (such as qualifications or previous experience of similar projects – a CV may be submitted).

4 Voluntary Organisation Aims and Objectives

Grant Aid is available to non-profit making organisations having amongst their objectives the conservation of wildlife and the countryside. It is therefore important to list the aims and objectives of the organisation and append a constitution. This should be completed if you are applying for either core or project funding.

SECTION B: The Project

5 Project Title

Give a short title to the project.

6 Previous NIEA Funding

Please identify whether you have obtained grant aid for this project/core funding previously. For projects already supported by NHGP, state the previous Grant Reference number and project title. This number should be clearly stated in any previous letter of offer or other correspondence. If you cannot locate this number please contact us.

If you have received funding for this project, or a very similar project, in the past you must indicate whether you have completed a Post Project Evaluation (PPE). If no PPE has been completed, this should be submitted with the application form. If the project is still in progress, an interim PPE should be submitted. This form can be downloaded from the NHGP web site.

7 Project Timetable

Applicants should be as accurate as possible when listing commencement and completion dates. If the project is to be phased, interim timescales should be shown.

Applicants are reminded that these dates are important in terms of our financial budgeting of the scheme. **Any grant offered will be specific to defined financial years (April to March) and will only be altered to another financial year in exceptional circumstances.**

8 Core or Project Funding

See Part 1: 3.1.1 for further details.

9 Project Location

Please state the precise location of the project and provide a map if appropriate. You must include either the Grid Reference or townland to assist with locating the project site.

If you will carry out the project in a number of areas, please be as specific as possible. When you are submitting an annual report about your project we will require you to submit a map showing the location of you project/work carried out (preferably as a GIS layer).

10 Project Summary

Provide a brief overview of the project - what you aim to achieve and how you will achieve it.

11 Strategic Context and Need/Demand for project

It is necessary to set the project in its context. The need for a particular project may exist on a number of levels and it is important that each of these is identified in the application. These may be current deficiencies that exist, either in a service or facility that is provided, which require improvement. There may also be a demand for a particular provision, which is not being met. If so, you should try to quantify and justify the proposed level of provision over the planned period.

You should identify any underlying policies or strategies that this project will contribute to, or that identify the need for this project e.g. statutory requirements, Programme for Government commitment(s), Departmental policy statement or business plan, Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plans. Then you should consider 'How will this project contribute to these?' You may find that you repeat some information here that you include in Q15.

Reference should be made to any studies or appraisals carried out which have identified the need for the project. In addition, the expected value or benefit of the project to conservation, the local community or in promoting educational awareness should be highlighted. Where possible please try to quantify the need for the project/core funding by indicating of number of users of the services, participation in activities, number of visitors, etc

If there are similar activities currently being provided in the area, how does this project complement the other activities?

If a Post Project Evaluation has been completed how have the lessons learned been implemented in this application?

12 Project Outcomes

Outcomes - describe the outcomes or changes that your project aims to bring about. This should include details of the extent to which the project will contribute to specific targets in strategies such as a Biodiversity Action Plan, Access Strategy or AONB management plan.

Measure of success and method of assessment - how you will know that your outcome has been achieved and how you will measure this. You will be required to report on progress at least annually. Interim targets or milestones should be provided to allow the Client Officer to assess whether the project is on track.

Abbreviated example:

Outcomes/ Aims	Measure of success and method of assessment
50% of the people in the Purple Lake District will be involved in wildlife gardening or a biodiversity project in the district by September 2012.	A baseline survey has been carried out that shows 5% of people surveyed presently have 1 or more wildlife features (list supplied) in their garden or are involved in a biodiversity project. A street survey of 100 people (1/30 th population) will be conducted outside Purple Lake shops at the end of each year. Interim targets are 20% people involved at the end of year 1 and 35% at the end of year 2.

13 Project Implementation

Describe the actions you intend to implement if this funding is awarded to achieve the outcomes. These actions should be 'SMART' - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bounded. This should include:

- A timetable for the employment of any staff required to implement the project;
- The physical details of the project and any phases of implementation;
- The timing and works involved in each phase should be clearly explained.

This should also allow the assessor to understand what the costs outlined in Section E will contribute to.

For large projects a time schedule of the whole project and a work plan for year 1 should be appended. Also include a location map and design drawings if appropriate.

Abbreviated example:

Implementation - Actions required to achieve outcomes (SMART)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A steering group will be set up in January 2009 to manage the project.2. A community fun day will be run in May 2010 to introduce ideas as to how people can become involved in wildlife gardening, wildlife recording and volunteering for local wildlife groups.3. One seminar a month will be organised (daytime and evening) to focus on individual topics showing people how to get involved in wildlife gardening, wildlife recording and environmental volunteering. There will be a target of 25 people for the average attendance at these seminars.4. One poster will be designed and displayed in the area to raise awareness of biodiversity issues each year.5. A P/T project manager will be employed for 3 years to implement the project

14 Priority Themes and Criteria

Our grant-aid programme is targeted to:

- Reflect Natural Heritage's priorities for the environment
- Make efficient use of the budget available and provide good value for money.

Projects are assessed for their eligibility and scale of funding using the 3 priority themes and 4 criteria described in Part 1:2.

This question provides you with the opportunity to indicate:

- How much of your project focuses on Natural Heritage Priority Themes;
- Which Criteria are relevant to your project;
- Describe how your project contributes to these Criteria and Themes.

Most projects should tick a maximum of 4 boxes as most projects will have 2 or 3 key aims. Applications which try to cover all areas may weaken their score.

Your application should quantify HOW MUCH will be achieved such as:

- The area of a specific habitat being maintained, restored or created (relate this to the relevant HAP), or length of an access route;

- The number of volunteers who will be involved in a project.

Abbreviated Example: A local community group aims to increase people’s use of a Nature Reserve and their understanding of the habitats there. To do this they will provide new access to and interpretation for the site. They might therefore fill in the following:

		THEMES		
		Nature - Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Tomorrows Landscapes	Countryside Access
Theme as % total project (row should total 100%)		30%	0%	70%
CRITERIA	Site Action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Awareness & Inspiration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Involving People	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Planning for the Future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Theme	Countryside Access	Criteria	Site Action
How your project contributes	At present there is no access to this area and no countryside access within 5 miles of this populated area (1,000 people within 1 mile). We will create a network of 2km of paths to enable people of all ages and abilities to access the site.		

Theme	Nature – Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Criteria	Awareness and Inspiration
How your project contributes	Using the new access created, people will be able to observe the habitats there. The 3 information boards to be installed will allow people to identify the more noticeable plants and animals. The series of nature guided walks will enable people to understand how the ecosystems function.		

15 Curriculum (Projects aimed at formal education audiences only)

Describe how the project fits in with the school curriculum.

16 Additional Information for EEF (Projects that will be assessed by EEF only)

Provide any additional information that may help the EEF assessment process.

17 Additional Project Benefits

Additional benefits are likely to be non-monetary or not directly related to the objectives of the NHGP. Examples include: improvements in quality of life; health benefits; potential for tourism; or improved employability.

18 Long-term Management/Maintenance

Please specify if the project will require long-term management/maintenance or public liability insurance. This should outline:

- Who will undertake the responsibility - either you the applicant or another party;
- How it will be funded;
- If staff are to be employed, how they will be supported if required to maintain the project;
- An exit strategy if ongoing resources are unlikely to be available.

Where a community group is purchasing land or creating a project on a piece of land, a written commitment is required from the Council or an established NGO that they will take over the responsibility for the land and its management if the group is no longer able to.

SECTION C: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

19 Land Ownership

We need to know whether the proposed project is within land you already own, intend to purchase or on land you have been given written permission to occupy. Schools should ensure that the project has Board/Governors approval before applying for grant-aid. You must supply proof of ownership or permission to carry out work on the land.

Where the land does not belong to you, we will require documentary proof of agreement of the landowner, for the works to be carried out on the site and that the site will be available for the purpose proposed for a minimum length of time. The length of time will be related to the cost of the project. Please contact the grants team if you require further information.

If you hope to purchase the land, refer to Part 1 for eligibility - we cannot accept an application for land purchase without a District Valuer's Certificate or District Valuer's approval of an independent valuation.

20 Provision of Access

Refer to Part 1:2.1.3 for requirements.

21 Planning Permission

Your project may or may not require planning permission. If you are in any doubt consult with Planning Service prior to submitting a grant application. NIEA will not be able to assess an application or honour claims where planning permission has not been granted.

Please include relevant copy.

22 Environmental Statement

You need to consider whether your project will have any negative environmental impact and, if so, how you will address or mitigate this impact. You should describe the negative impacts and how these impacts will be addressed or negated.

Abbreviated Example: A local community group aims to increase people's use of a Nature Reserve and their understanding of the habitats there. To do this they will provide new access to and interpretation for the site.

Potential Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures	Residual Risk, monitoring and action required
People using site disturb breeding birds in the wetland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create path on only one side of the wetland. ▪ Dogs must be kept on a lead. ▪ Explain importance of not creating disturbance on interpretation. ▪ Encourage local people to become wardens for the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor annual breeding numbers. ▪ Monitor visitor use of site. If necessary, use fencing to exclude visitors from sensitive areas.
People dropping litter on the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide presentation re site in local school and discuss impact of litter on wildlife. ▪ Encourage local people to become wardens for the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If problem arises increase visits by site maintenance personnel and pursue prosecutions where necessary.

You should consider impacts on the integrity of at least the following:

- Habitat extent and quality
- Species numbers and breeding
- Landscape

- Geology
- Water and marine features
- Historic buildings, monuments and archaeology (Q24)

Further information will be required if the site is designated (Q23).

23 Designated Sites

Further to Q22, if the proposed project is to take place within an ASSI or Natura 2000 (SAC or SPA) site you must obtain the written consent (Consent/Assent) of the Department prior to the project receiving final grant approval². This is to ensure that the project is not likely to have a significant impact on the site selection features.

Normally, you would apply to the Conservation, Designations and Protection (CDP) team in NIEA for an Assent/Consent to carry out the works. If you have already received an Assent/Consent, please attach it to your application. If you have not already applied, we will assess your grant application and then ask you to submit an Assent/Consent if your grant application is assessed as meriting support. This however should not be viewed as an indication that funding will be available for the project.

Prior to Consent/Assent being granted for a Natura 2000 site an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the relevant Competent Authority. If you are a Competent Authority (this includes Councils and Non Departmental Public Bodies) you must carry out an Article 6 Assessment yourself and submit this with your grant application. Further help and advice is available on www.ni-environment.gov.uk/habitat_regs_guidance_notes.pdf. If you are not an NDPB, we will carry out this assessment for you, in our role as the Competent Authority. We may contact you for further information to complete this if required.

CDP will issue your formal notification of Consent/Assent as appropriate. Grant will only be awarded for such projects or on ASSIs where all likely significant adverse effects of a proposed project have been avoided. Any necessary conditions will also be contained in any letter of offer of grant aid.

A list of designated sites and their features is available from www.ni-environment.gov.uk/biodiversity/designated-areas.htm. Please contact the Grant Aid team if you require the conservation objectives of specific sites.

NB. It is the landowner/occupier that must apply for Consent (and is responsible for meeting the conditions of this). If you are not the landowner/occupier, the landowner must still sign the application for Consent.

Please include relevant copy.

24 Is there a Historic Building / Monument or Archaeological Object on the site?

If there is an historic building/monument on the site you should provide us with details, what implications the project will have on it, if any and whether you have had discussions with staff in NIEA, Built Heritage.

Please provide evidence, relevant copy extracts, the name of the person you consulted etc.

25 Does the project require Scheduled Monument or Listed Building Consent?

Further guidance is available at www.ni-environment.gov.uk/built/legislation/legislation.shtml

² As detailed in the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, The Environment Order 2002 and the Habitat's Directive.

If in doubt you should contact NIEA Built Heritage Staff on Tel: 02890 235000 or at hm@doeni.gov.uk.
Include relevant copy.

SECTION D: Option Appraisal and Funding Profile

Option appraisal aims to ensure that all projects provide value for money, that you have considered a variety of methods to achieve your objectives and that potential risks have been identified and addressed. The level of effort that goes into producing the appraisal should be proportionate with the scale of the project. See PART 1: 3.3 for further details.

Choose the option appropriate for the level of grant you are seeking and following the instructions associated with it. The Departmental Economists can provide help to fill in this section. If you require any advice and assistance at any stage of the application in relation to option appraisal please contact Gayle McIvor at gayle.mcivor@drdni.gov.uk or 028 9054 1155. Further information about the information required for economic appraisals can be found on the Department of Finance and Personnel website: www.eaq.dfpni.gov.uk/

26 Consideration of Options

The consideration of options lies at the heart of appraisal. It is important to show how the preferred option has been arrived at.

The first option to consider, the *Status Quo* option, represents the current level of activity and should be included in every appraisal. It is a base case against which the other options can be compared. In some cases this may mean zero provision but, more often than not, there is some level of existing provision.

The alternative options will be for the applicant to decide. There may have been a much longer list considered at an earlier stage of the process. These options should be listed in the other options box and an explanation of why the option was rejected should be included. However, here you should include the two most likely alternatives to the do nothing for meeting the needs described earlier. Note however, that these options should show some variation in the level of activity and not just in terms of the amount of grant being sought from NIEA.

27 Costs of Options

You need to show the FULL costs of each option, not just those for which the NIEA grant is being sought. Costs for all options should be available for inspection by NIEA if required.

This section should include an itemised breakdown of all of the project costs you are seeking support for from the NHGP. For example, the design or printing costs for a leaflet, stiles, construction materials, etc. This is particularly important where only certain elements of the scheme may be approved for funding. Where there is insufficient room on the application form, please input a funding summary into this table and append a more detailed breakdown.

It should be clear how the costs identified link to the actions that you have identified as required to achieve your proposed outcomes, and the associated monitoring of the project.

If you are in any doubt if an item is eligible you should contact the Grant Aid team. This may save some time later on in the assessment process and avoid you having to re-submit an application.

Examples of eligible costs might include:

- Repair or conservation work;
- Materials and equipment, including computer hardware;
- Vehicle lease;
- Non-cash contributions and volunteer labour related to the work;
- Staff costs including recruitment, employers pensions contribution and overheads;

- Training for staff and volunteers;
- Professional fees for consultancy and expert advice;
- Travel for staff and volunteers;
- Measuring the project's success;
- Office stationary.

Costs should be 'reasonable' with specific costs detailed and salaries identified by each post.

Normally in an economic appraisal, monetary costs and benefits are shown in *real terms*. However, for the purposes of financial management, costs and benefits can be shown to increase in line with inflation over the three years, as long as these assumptions are clearly made.

28 Monetary Benefits

It is important to indicate if there are any income streams generated by the project. For example, if the organisation is requesting core funding, they should indicate what income they receive from membership fees. At a project level, an example of an income stream could be fees from participation fees or publications sold.

29 Non-monetary Costs and Benefits

Q17 of the application form asks about the Additional Project Benefits that may arise as a result of the proposed project. Just because these costs and benefits cannot be quantified or valued in money terms does not make them any less important. It is only through adding these to the monetary costs and benefits identified in Q27 & 28 that the full economic value of the options can be viewed.

In this section, you should identify and describe the types of non-monetary costs and benefits that each option could generate.

Complete Table 1 as follows:

- a. List the non-monetary benefits. Some examples of non-monetary benefits are: educational benefits, social inclusion, tourism, regeneration of areas, preserving a habitat and health benefits of access provision.
- b. For each of the non-monetary benefits, indicate the weight (relative to the other non-monetary benefits) as to how important is the benefit. The weights should add up to 100.
- c. Explain the magnitude of the weight given to the benefit in the third column.

Complete Table 2 as follows:

- a. Copy the information from the benefit and weight columns in Table 1 into the benefit and weight column in the Table 2.
- b. For each of the options give a score between 1 and 10 (10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest) to indicate how effective the option is in terms of achieving the specific benefit.
- c. Multiply the weight of the benefit by the score to calculate the weighted score.
- d. For each option, add up the weighted scores. The maximum score for an option will be 1000.
- e. Rank the options in terms of the highest total score to the lowest total score.

30 Risk and Uncertainty

This is to show that you have thought about and given serious consideration to any difficulties your project may encounter and have given thought to how they might be reduced or overcome. For example, there may be a risk associated with being able to fill a post (for which grant aid is being sought); this risk may be considered to be *medium - high*; the result would be an inability to meet the objectives of the project; and this risk could be reduced by advertising widely or by employing a recruitment agency.

31 Other considerations

The objective of this question is to explore any potential commitments which may be implicated in reaching a decision to approve Grant Aid. It demonstrates to the assessor that the applicant is fully aware [or otherwise] of the strategic position of their project and how it inter-relates to its surroundings both physically and 'politically'. This is an aid to the decision-making process and will also aid the applicant by reinforcing the strategic aims of the Grant Aid policy.

In terms of economic appraisal, (b) is attempting to measure the degree of *displacement* that would be associated with the project. Displacement refers to new activity which simply replaces rather than adds to activity elsewhere. Obviously, it is not the aim of Government to fund a project which will replace, either wholly or in part, a service or activity that is already being provided. Therefore, the aim is that there should be zero displacement.

(c) relates to a similar issue, *additionality*. Given the limited funds that are available to Government, it needs to make sure that, when awarding a grant, the activity it is supporting would not have gone ahead anyway without the funding.

32 Selection of the Preferred Option

Having undertaken the process of considering the options, costing them, considering benefits and risks you are now asked to weigh up all the pros and cons and select one option.

33 Reason for choosing the Preferred Option

Select the option which you prefer and state why you have chosen it. This should have sufficient detail to enable the assessor to easily see why you have reached your decision. Consequently it should contain information pertaining to Risk, Non-monetary and Monetary costs & benefits which led you to disregard the other options considered and select the preferred option.

34 Are you VAT registered?

Organisations that do not pay, or can reclaim, VAT should not include these VAT costs within the eligible costs of their funding application.

35 Details of all of the sources of funding

Full details should be supplied regarding any other possible sources of funding that may have been applied for, or secured, irrespective of whether they have a local or European base. The sources stated should add up to the total cost of the project. Where volunteers are to be used as matched funding, the value of the voluntary labour should be included as a source of funding.

This is to enable Audit requirements to be fulfilled by NIEA to ensure that there is no double funding, and that Government funding does not exceed set proportions. NIEA support should not exceed 75% of the total project costs. It also allows an assessment to be made as to the risk of the project proceeding by noting if all funding is secured.

The box for further details allows you to add any relevant information such as the progress of your applications to other funders or how you have calculated your volunteer costs.

36 Are you seeking to include Salaries?

If you are seeking support for salaries you must provide a staff structure for the organisation or the section relevant to the funding. The posts for which funding is sought, should be highlighted and job descriptions provided. Please note that, for each post referred to here, you must also provide a breakdown of the salaries for each post later in the application form.

Where NHGP is being asked to (or already does) support more than 1 post within an organisation, you must provide a staff chart and indicate the amount and % funding supported by NHGP and all other funders for each post NHGP is involved in supporting.

37 Project expenditure profile

This is a key summary statement and should be consistent with other figures on the form. The profile should be completed for each year that funding is requested showing the total eligible expenditure for that year and the amount of grant requested from NIEA towards eligible items.

SECTION E: FURTHER INFORMATION AND AUTHORISATION

38 Enclosures

You should attach or post all of the relevant information outlined in these guidance notes, to be received by the closing date. If the information required is not attached, you may jeopardise your application and may have to wait for your application to be assessed during a subsequent competition.

There are 3 tick boxes available for each enclosure. The first box is to note enclosures submitted electronically and the second is to indicate an enclosure to be sent by post, the third box indicates enclosures accompanying the form. This will aid both applicants and assessors and act as a checklist of information pertaining to the application.

Map	For those projects where geographical location is relevant a schematic map at 1:2500 scale (to include a grid reference) must be enclosed, clearly indicating the project location in relation to other existing features. Access applications require the line of the proposed route to be clearly shown.
Drawings	Projects involving physical works must include detailed drawings and/or plans clearly indicating the items for which NIEA funding is sought. It would be helpful to identify and illustrate any earlier or future phases of the project.
District Valuer's Certificate	A project, which necessitates the acquisition of land, must be accompanied by a District Valuer's Certificate or District Valuer's approval of an independent valuation (as outlined in Q20).
Staff Structure	This is required in Q37 and should refer specifically to the posts applied for and all other projects supported by NHGP.
Job Descriptions	This is required in Q37 and should refer specifically to the posts applied for.
Constitution /Objectives	This is required in Q4 however it need not be supplied if provided in a previous application. For ease of reference please ensure that the previous application's reference number is contained in the form.
Annual Work Plan	This is required in Q7 when a project extends over a period of several years.
Interim/Post Project Evaluation form	Where you are applying for repeat funding of a project, an interim PPE form relating to the existing project must be submitted with the application. This can be downloaded from the web site.
Proof of ownership or permission to carry out project on land	This is required in Q19. You should attach either proof of ownership or a letter, signed by the owner, giving you permission to carry out the project. This must also identify the length of time that the landowner is committed to retaining the project on the site for.
Undertaking of District Council to maintain access route	This is required in Q20B. If you are not a District Council or NGO with a long-established access remit, you must provide written agreement from the appropriate council that it will maintain and keep open the project in your default.
Appropriate Assessment	This is required in Q23. If you are a Competent Authority you must submit an appropriate assessment of potential environmental impacts if your proposed project may have an

	impact on a designated site.
Consent/assent authorisation	This is required in Q23 for designated sites. If you have already received Consent/Assent for your project you should submit a copy of this with your application.
Certificate by Applicant	A signed, hard copy, of this Certificate must be forwarded to NIEA for each application.
Other	Additional enclosures must be specified on the application form. You may include any other documentation which you consider supports your project and would assist our assessment procedures.

APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA & SCORING FRAMEWORKS

Note: Prior to each round of funding, the NIEA Grants Assessment Group will discuss what the NHGP themes and supporting criteria should be for the next financial year. The NIEA Natural Heritage Strategy together with existing and new policies relevant to the themes will provide the context for this discussion. Updated themes and criteria will be published on the NIEA website in advance of each round of funding.

THEME: Nature – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

CRITERIA	SCORING FRAMEWORK
Site Action	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects representing substantial progress towards the implementation of Habitat and/or Species Action Plan (HAP and SAP) targets. • Projects representing substantial progress towards the implementation of LBAPs. • Projects creating ecological networks across the landscape. • Projects which buffer designated sites. • Projects which significantly contribute to achieving the conservation objectives of protected species and sites of international and national importance³. • Control of non-native species posing a high risk.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey and monitoring of habitats and species recognised as priority or of conservation concern and where there is a gap in information. • Projects which benefit protected species or contribute to HAP and/or SAP actions and targets. • Management or interpretation of ESCR sites of regional or local importance. • Establishment and management of LNRs where this will bring an experience of bio/geodiversity to people where there is no other accessible site within their locality. • Management of SLNCIs. • Control of non-native species posing a medium risk.
	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of sites which do not host priority habitats or species. • Small local projects that do not contribute to LBAPs, HAPs and SAPs. • Projects delivering on NIBS recommendations where there has already been substantial activity.
Awareness and Inspiration	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of individuals, community groups and other sectors of society in the development of LBAPs and implementation of LBAP actions which raise awareness of biodiversity, leading to direct action for nature conservation. • Educational activities and national campaigns which relate to key issues or lead to direct action for nature conservation or geoconservation. • Provision of information that will further the management of species of conservation concern or control of invasive non-native species where there is a gap in knowledge. • Promotion of best practice where this will further the delivery of HAPs,

³ This excludes work and associated staffing that is targeted by other government grant schemes such as Agri-environment Schemes, the Woodland Grant Scheme and MOSS.

	<p>SAPs and management of species of conservation concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation for sites of international or national importance where there is no existing interpretation and where provision is compatible with conservation objectives/management plans. • School grounds projects which demonstrate integration into the school curriculum to raise understanding of issues relating to the conservation of biodiversity/geodiversity personal action that can be undertaken, where the school is working towards a recognised environmental programme. <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational activities and regional campaigns encouraging action for conservation. • Interpretation for sites of international or national importance where there is existing provision. • School grounds projects which demonstrate integration into the school curriculum of issues relating to conservation. • Interpretation for sites which will attract a high or medium number of users. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation for local sites or sites with low numbers of visitors. • Projects which promote an activity of low conservation value.
Involving People	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of people in contributing significantly to the delivery HAPs and SAPs. • Engaging individuals, community groups and other sectors of society in the development of LBAPs and implementation of LBAP actions, raising awareness of biodiversity and in direct action for nature conservation. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals for protecting biodiversity at a national and council level. • Development of partnerships to further goals for protecting biodiversity. • Involvement of people which significantly contributes to the implementation of non-native species strategies. • Targeting and involving a sector which has been identified as important for delivery of biodiversity or geoconservation. • Involvement of people in the management of sites of international and national importance. <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that involve people in meeting a need for delivery at a local level, including actions identified in LBAPs. • Activities to extend the level of biological recording in NI. • Involvement of people in contributing to the delivery HAPs and SAPs • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals for protecting biodiversity at a local level. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects involving groups and individuals who have already received a high level of support. • Involving people in projects which will have little impact on biodiversity.
Planning for the Future	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core funding of organisations that are essential to the delivery of key biodiversity and geodiversity objectives. • Production and implementation of a district council led LBAP (joint applications from more than one council within the proposed Local Government Districts will be given priority). • Development of strategies or management plans that provide co-ordination to enable more effective and efficient delivery of biodiversity

	<p>(HAPs & SAPs) and geodiversity goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of strategies which aim to connect fragmented habitats through the establishment of habitat networks.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core funding of organisations that substantially contribute to the delivery of key biodiversity and geodiversity objectives.• Development of strategies or plans which contribute to, but are not essential for, delivery of biodiversity goals.
	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core funding of organisations that contribute to the delivery of biodiversity and geodiversity objectives.

THEME – Tomorrow’s Landscapes

CRITERIA	SCORING FRAMEWORK
Site Action	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that deliver actions within a management plan for a designated landscape. • Protection, restoration or enhancement of distinctive landscape features in a protected landscape (may include management agreements). <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that significantly contribute to the implementation of actions within a management plan for a landscape of high quality or contribute to the implementation of actions within a management plan for a protected landscape. • Protection, restoration or enhancement of distinctive landscape features in a landscape of high quality. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that contribute to the implementation of actions within a management plan for other non designated landscapes.
Awareness and Inspiration	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of individuals, community groups and other sectors of society in the development of management plans and implementation of proposed actions which improve understanding of the importance of designated landscapes and lead to direct action for the protection of these landscapes. • Educational activities and national campaigns which relate to key landscape issues or lead to direct action for protected landscape protection, management and enhancement. • Provision of information that will further the effective management and sustainable use of protected landscapes where there is a gap in knowledge. • Promotion of best practice where this will further the delivery protected landscape management. <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of individuals, community groups and other sectors of society in the development of management plans and implementation of proposed actions which improve understanding of the importance of landscapes of high quality and lead to direct action for the protection of these landscapes. • Educational activities and regional campaigns which relate to key landscape issues or lead to direct action for the protection, management and enhancement of high quality landscapes. • Provision of information that will further the effective management and sustainable use of landscapes of high quality where there is a gap in knowledge. • Promotion of best practice where this will further the delivery of sustainable management in landscapes of high value. • Training in skills necessary for maintaining or restoring locally distinctive landscape features. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of individuals, community groups and other sectors of society in the development of management plans and implementation of proposed actions which improve understanding of the importance of non designated landscapes and lead to direct action for the protection of these landscapes. • Educational activities and regional campaigns which relate to landscape

	<p>issues or lead to direct action for the protection, management and enhancement of non designated landscapes or promote sustainable use of the wider countryside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information that will further the effective management and sustainable use of non designated landscapes where there is a gap in knowledge. • Promotion of best practice where this will further the delivery of sustainable management of non designated landscapes.
Involving People	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of high numbers of people in the development and delivery of management plans for protected landscapes where this will enhance the effectiveness of the plan. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals for protecting designated landscapes. • Development of partnerships to further goals for protecting and managing designated landscapes. • Targeting and involving a sector which has been identified as important for the delivery of designated landscape management. <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of high numbers of people in the development and delivery of management plans for landscapes of high quality where this will enhance the effectiveness of the plan. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals for protecting and managing landscapes of high quality. • Development of partnerships to further goals for protecting and managing landscapes of high quality. • Targeting and involving a sector which has been identified as important for the management of landscapes of high quality. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of high numbers of people in the development and delivery of management plans for non designated landscapes where this will enhance the effectiveness of the plan. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals for protecting landscapes. • Development of partnerships to further goals for protecting and managing landscapes. • Targeting and involving a sector which has been identified as important for the delivery of landscape management.
Planning for the Future	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core funding of organisations that are essential for the protection and delivery of management plans for designated landscapes (AONB's and World Heritage site). • Development and revision of management plans for designated landscapes. • Projects to assess the impact of pertinent activities on designated landscapes. <p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core funding of organisations that are essential to the protection and delivery of management plans for landscapes of high quality. • Development and revision of management plans for landscapes of high quality. • Projects to assess the impact of pertinent activities on landscapes of high quality. <p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core funding of organisations that contribute to the development and delivery of management plans for designated landscapes, landscapes of

high quality and other non-designated landscapes.

- Development and revision of management plans for non designated landscapes.
- Projects to assess the impact of pertinent activities on non designated landscapes.

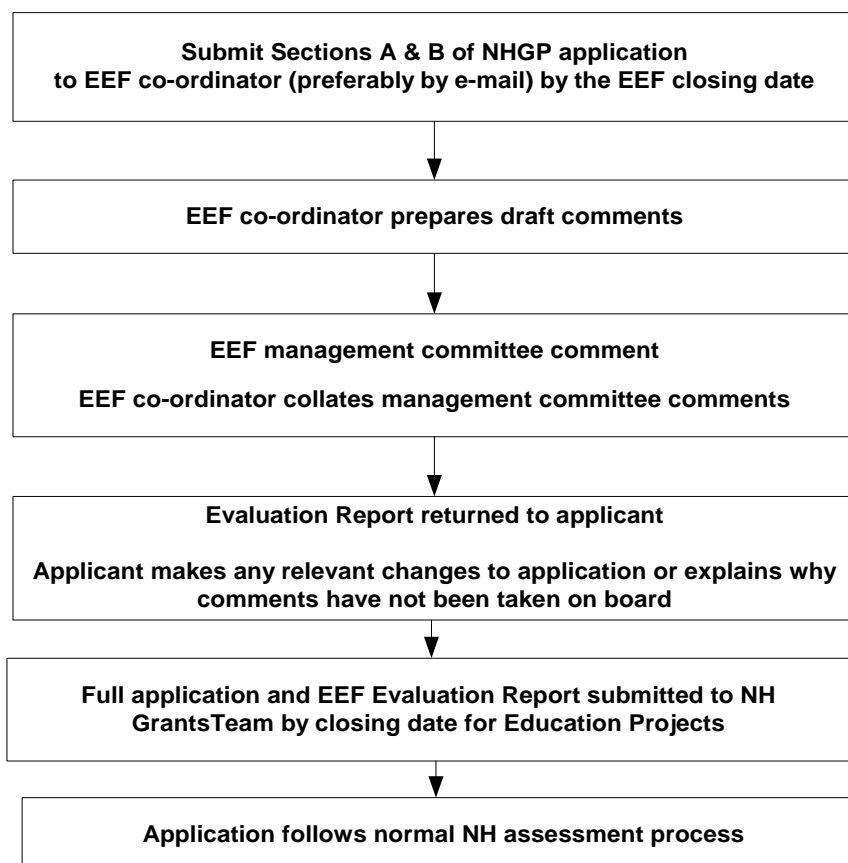
THEME – Countryside Access

CRITERIA	SCORING FRAMEWORK
Site Action	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new access associated with an NIEA approved long distance route or CAAN countryside recreation strategy or within an AONB. • Maintenance of an approved long distance route in compliance with NIEA policy. • Provision of new access to the countryside where the route is of significant length or adjacent to centres of population and provision in the area is currently poor. • Site based staff required to ensure the sustainable and responsible use of access routes on sites of national importance.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new access where current provision requires improvement and use will be high. • Provision of new off-road access to a countryside site of regional or local importance and areas of national importance where this will be compatible with the conservation objectives for the site. • Site based staff required to ensure the sustainable and responsible use of access routes on sites of regional importance.
	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing new access of relatively low importance. • Provision of new access where there may not be a significant number of users. • Provision of new access where provision is already adequate.
Awareness and Inspiration	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of interpretative panels or published material linked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An NIEA approved long distance route or CAAN countryside recreation strategy. ▪ A series of countryside access routes within a region. ▪ The national promotion of responsible countryside access. ▪ Access on a site of national importance including AONBs. • Promotion of best practice where this will significantly further the delivery sustainable countryside recreation.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of interpretative panels or published material linked to access within a countryside site of regional or local importance. • Promotion of best practice where this will further the delivery sustainable countryside recreation.
	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of interpretative panels or published material linked to access within any other countryside site.
Involving People	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving people in the creation, maintenance or monitoring of approved long distance routes which have a high use. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals at a national and regional level for sustainable access. • Development of partnerships to further goals for developing sustainable access at a national and regional level.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving people in the creation, maintenance or monitoring of access routes which have a medium level of use. • Sharing skills and knowledge to further goals at a local level for sustainable access.

	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving people in the creation, maintenance or monitoring of access routes which have a low level of use.
<p>Planning for the Future</p>	<p>High Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core funding of organisations that are essential to the delivery of key access objectives. Production of a countryside access strategy approved by CAAN and NIEA. Assessment of the impact of recreation projects on the environment (such as biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes, economy or society) where the impact is potentially high.
	<p>Medium Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of the impact of recreation projects on the environment where there is a potentially medium impact.
	<p>Low Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of the impact of recreation projects on the environment where there is a potentially low impact.

APPENDIX 2: EEF EVALUATION OF FORMAL EDUCATION PROJECTS

Sections A and B of the NHGP Application Form, and any supporting information you wish to include, must be submitted to the Environmental Education Forum Co-ordinator for comment by the EEF deadline. The EEF Management Committee will comment on the application and return it to you to enable you to consider their comments, and alter your application if appropriate, prior to submission to NH by the given deadline. The diagram below provides more detail of this process:



You should therefore ensure that the information you provide in Sections A and B of the application form is sufficient to allow EEF to evaluate the projects adequately.

Contact details for the EEF Co-ordinator:

eef@nienvironmentlink.org

Tel: 9094 2156

NI Environment Link, 89 Loopland Drive, Belfast BT6 9DW

EEF will provide comment on the following questions:

Natural Heritage Priority Themes

- EEF view of the project's contribution to Natural Heritage Priority Themes.
- How will this project lead to changes in attitude and result in personal action?

Curriculum

- How does the project fit in with the curriculum?
- Is the project designed in such a way that teachers/leaders will be able to take advantage of the resources it offers?

Duplication and Partnerships

- Are there any similar programmes, not identified by the applicant, which currently provide similar goals or resources in this locality? Is there evidence of a demand for more resources to help meet this education need?
- Is there anything further that the applicant could do to make their project more complementary to existing projects or to cover gaps in existing provision?

Partnerships

- Does EEF have any suggestions about how the project might benefit from sharing of resources with another provider of environmental education?

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Does EEF suggest any alternative or additional measures of success or evaluation for this project?

Comments and suggestions

- Does EEF wish to make any further suggestions for this project?

On return of this form, the applicant will complete the following question 16B, prior to the submission of the whole application (with this form) to NHGP:

- Please describe how you have revised your application in response to EEF feedback or explain why comments have not been taken on board.

APPENDIX 3: POST PROJECT EVALUATION (PPE)

Post project evaluation (PPE) is carried out to determine whether project objectives have been met, assure quality, ensure that predicted benefits are being delivered, provide accountability and allow improvement of the grant programme through the application of lessons learnt.

PPE will be carried out on all projects where the NIEA contribution is £30,000 or more. Applicants will be required to supply information about the outcomes of their project within 15 months of the final payment which will be reviewed by NIEA.

An interim PPE will be required alongside the application form where you are applying for further funding for a project.

NIEA may support reasonable costs associated with monitoring the project if these are included in the application. A sample of smaller projects will be evaluated by NIEA.

Both the grantee and NH will fill in PPE forms which may include the questions below:

- Original cost and total actual cost
- Achievements of the project
- Were all the activities for which grant was offered by NIEA carried out? If not, which elements were not completed and your opinion of the reasons.
- Have the project objectives been met? If not, explain which were not met and why.
- Have the stated benefits been derived?
- Is there sufficient evidence that the project objectives were met and expected benefits were delivered?
- Are there any other factors that made assessment of this project difficult?
- In view of the outputs and apparent benefits do you consider that this project was cost effective?
- Are there any lessons from this project which may inform decision making about future funding of this organisation for a similar project?
- Are there any lessons from this project that may inform future decision making for Natural Heritage grants?
- If project conditions or outputs were not met do you recommend any actions in relation to past funding?
- Would the project merit evaluation at a future date?

The most up-to-date PPE form can be downloaded from the grants web-site.

APPENDIX 4: ABBREVIATIONS

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASSI	Area of Special Scientific Interest
CAAN	Countryside Access & Activities Network
CDP	Conservation Designations & Protection Unit
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DFP	Department of Finance & Personnel
DOE	Department of the Environment
EEF	Environmental Education Forum
ERNI	Earnings Related National Insurance
ESCR	Earth Science Conservation Review
HAP	Habitat Action Plan
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MNR	Marine Nature Reserve
MOSS	Management of Sensitive Sites
NHGP	Natural Heritage Grant Programme
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NIBS	NI Biodiversity Strategy
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NNR	National Nature Reserve
PPE	Post Project Evaluation
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SAP	Species Action Plan
SLNCI	Site of Local Nature Conservation Interest
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time- bounded
TSN	Targeting Social Need
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisations
WHS	World Heritage Site