



Landowner Grants Scheme – Guidance Notes 2024-25

River Chess Smarter Water Catchments Project

Working in partnership



Chilterns
National
Landscape

Chiltern
Society



Environment
Agency

AffinityWater



Herts &
Middlesex
Wildlife Trust



Queen Mary
University of London

Report title			
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Project	River Chess Smarter Water Catchments Project		
Theme & milestone	All		
Document Reference	Reference No.	Version 3	Number

Document history and revisions			
Author	Description	Revision	Date
Steph Horn	Revised Oct 22 – to include all themes	31/10/22	
Steph Horn	Updated to the current FY specifications	06/06/23	
Steph Horn	Updated to include Dual Funding Checks	29/09/23	
Steph Horn	Updated to 24-25 specification	10/05/24	

Authorisation and assurance record		
	Name & organisation	Date & signature
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Approved by		

This document has been created for the purposes of Thames Water’s Smarter Water Catchments initiative. Although Thames Water remain the primary client, this document will be made available to all partners associated with the project, in line with the true partnership ethos of the project. The work detailed in this report is based on the information available at the time. Any findings and/or recommendations will inform future phases of the project.

Executive summary

Scope: River Chess Valley

Provided by: Chiltern National Landscape

Maximum value: Discretionary

Status: Closed call for Applications

Application deadline: Round 1 – 13th June, Round 2 – 2nd August

Applications are received through two mechanisms:

- 'Open Call': Applications are open for submissions year-round, to enable reactive support for opportunities that arise. Decisions aim to be made within four weeks of application.
- 'Closed Call': Thematic submissions will also be advertised periodically, with given deadlines and clear criteria for content types and topics. This format aims to enable our community to support engagement with key issues and events within the wider landscape.

Description: Grants are available for landowners to support work which enhances the quality of the environment for wildlife, encouraging further biodiversity within the River Chess Catchment.

Projects must be delivered by February 2025, there is no possibility to extend the funding offered. Match funding for other sources is encouraged.

The Smarter Water Catchment (SWC) is a pilot project funded for 5 years by Thames Water and delivered by multiple partners within the River Chess Catchment. The aims and objective of the project are to create a place where people are working together to protect and improve the water environment for everyone. From the headwaters in Chesham to the confluence with the River Colne in Rickmansworth, we want to ensure that the River Chess possesses the clean, plentiful, flow characteristics of a healthy chalk stream. Many of the issues impacting the River originate outside of it. The SWC and its partners are employing a catchment-based approach, looking at the whole landscape, to holistically tackle these difficulties. We are working towards 6 Themes that will help to deliver these goals and have written a 10 year Catchment [Plan](#).



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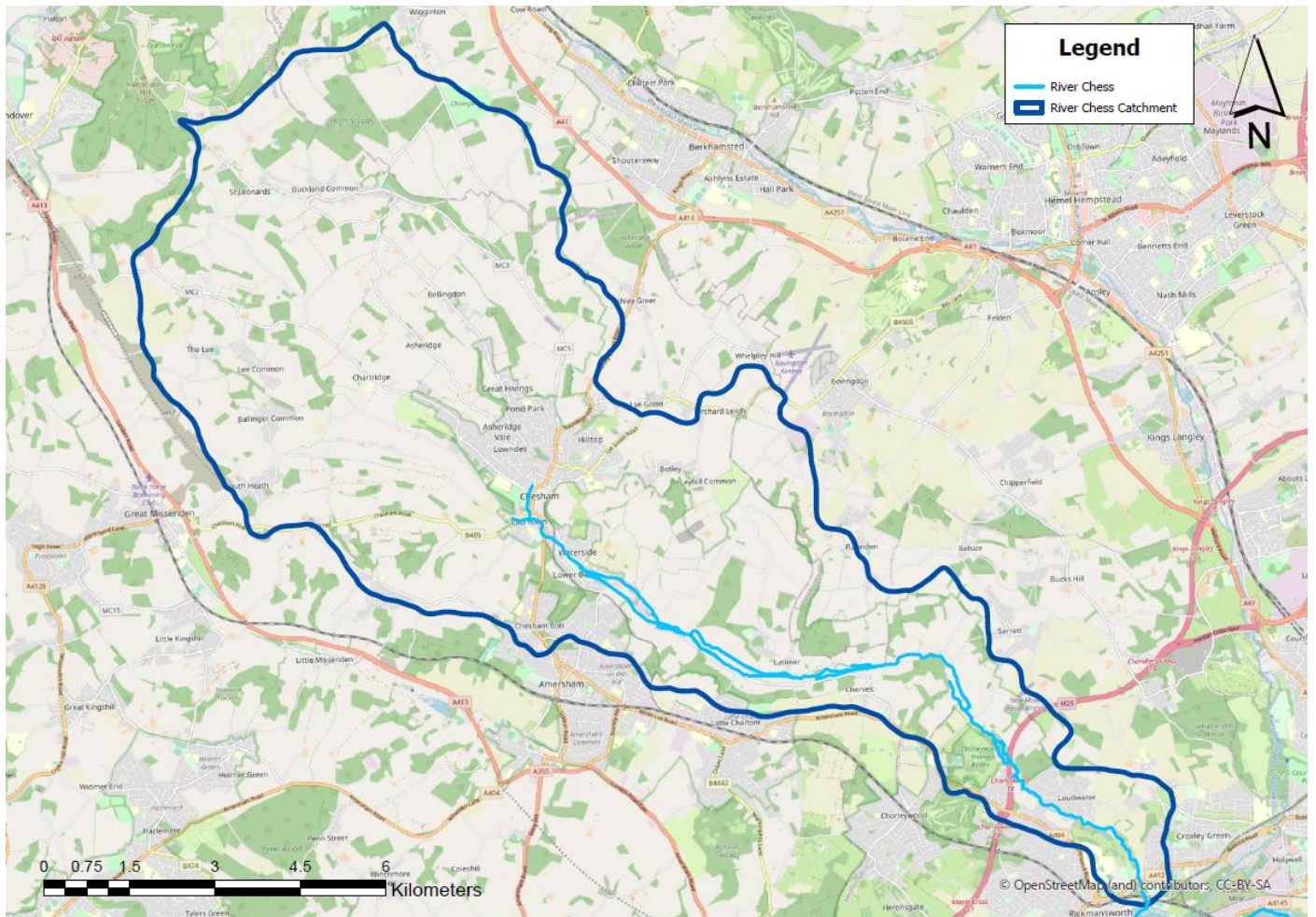


Figure 1 - Project Boundary Area

1 Introduction

This document sets out the landowner and farmer grants process for the financial year April 2024 to March 2025 as part of the Smarter Water Catchments programme. Multiple year projects will NOT be considered.

The grant scheme is available to landowners, land managers and farmers looking to undertake projects that contribute to the following themes of the SWC River Chess Catchment Plan:

- Improving Water Quality
- Managing Flow
- Improving Wildlife Corridors
- Controlling Invasive Non-Native Species
- Involving People
- Working Together

This funding stream is available in addition to other payment schemes such as FiPL, providing the opportunity for seed funding enabling projects to progress. All sources of match funding must be disclosed during application.

1.1 Funding available

There is £100,000 of funding available for this year for all applications. There is no limit to the amount of funding for each grant, however applicants submitting proposals for large sums of money will be required to demonstrate robustly how the proposal will benefit the 6 SWC themes.

Applicants can apply for funding to cover capital and revenue spend.

Revenue spend is where funding is provided to support management actions which deliver Chess SWC objectives.

Capital spend is where funding is provided to purchase or invest in a physical asset (capital item) to achieve a stated outcome, for example increased business prosperity or improvements to the environment. Capital items can be natural landscape features (such as trees, hedgerows and ponds) or built (such as fencing, water, infrastructure, buildings, machinery and equipment).

Applications will not require match funding to receive funding from the grants process, however it is strongly encouraged to bring in third party investment. It should also be noted that this forms part of the review process for the panel. The SWC programme would like to record match funding and in kind support of projects. Applicants are expected to provide information of where match funding and in kind support has been received from.

Landowners whose land parcels receive grants from Countryside Stewardship or other public funded schemes, will need to state this, providing the SBI number of the farm would enable the CSWC officers to check these elements. Additionally, information is required if the objectives of the funding will constitute to delivering advised activities as part of an Environment Agency inspection of the land.

Fund disbursement

The full £100,000 Grant Funding will be held by the Chilterns National Landscape to be drawn down by the Catchment Coordinator. Due care and diligence responsibilities fall on Chilterns National Landscape in terms of data protection, insurance and financial obligations, money laundering protocol etc. Proof of 3 quotes, or justification of why 3 are not present for items over £2,000 will be required.

1.2 Timeline

5th April 2024 – EOI open – ‘open call’

10th May 2024 – Applications Open – ‘Closed Call – Round 1’

13th June 2024 – Applications Close – ‘Closed Call – Round 1’


24th June 2024 – Applications Open – ‘Closed Call – Round 2’

2nd August 2024 – Applications Close – ‘Closed Call – Round 2’

28th February 2024 – Applications will need to have been drawn down from Chilterns National Landscape

Landowner Grants

Timeline



**River Chess
Smarter Water
Catchment**

PROCESS	ROUND 1				ROUND 2			
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
Applications Open		10th May			24th June			
Applications Close			13th June				2nd Aug	
Panel Meeting			20th June				14th Aug	
Grants Awarded			24th June				16th Aug	
All Grants must be complete & claimed by February 2025								
	£60,000				£40,000			

www.ChessSmarterWaterCatchment.org.uk

All projects must be completed, and grants claimed, by February 2025. Grants may be claimed upon project completion, throughout the year, and it is encouraged that grants are claimed as soon as possible upon project completion.

Upon Application

Applications are competitive and will be scored by a panel. Applications will be reviewed through a panel process when received and clarification sought where necessary. – No more than 3 weeks after applications close applicant will be notified.

Award -

If successful, a formal offer letter will be sent. An applicant will be expected to complete a landowner agreement form and accept the T&C's of payment. At this stage, agreements will be outlined for delivery of the project and expected payment.

Payment -

All payments will be made retrospectively once adequate invoices have been provided. On a case-by-case basis Chilterns National Landscape reserves the right to waive this clause should circumstances become a barrier to application.

Unless agreed otherwise payments to landowners/farmers will be made by BACS within 60 days (end of month) on receipt of an approved invoice and only on completion of works.

All projects must be completed, and grants claimed, by February 2025. Grants may be claimed upon project completion, throughout the year, and it is encouraged that grants are claimed as soon as possible upon project completion.

Reporting -

Expected from project start date until of project end, with periodic monitoring there after preferred.

By 28th February 2025 – all final reports required (Benefits Summary Form) (Successful applicants will provide an update on progress, the evidence that can be submitted is invoice / quotes for work, photographs of project)

Completion -

Evidence needed of completed work – including photos and Benefits Summary Form

1.3 Examples the schemes could fund

Including but not limited to (Green indicates particular interest to Smarter Water Catchment's)

Riparian buffer strips	Tree planting
Invasive species management	Footpath upgrades to prevent ingress
Rewilding schemes	Habitat assessments
Run-off reduction	Restoration of ponds/ wetland features
Hedgerow creation/management	Field margin buffer strips
Species specific surveys	Reintroduction of species
Management plans	Wet woodland management
Bird/bat boxes	Wet woodland creation
Carbon sequestration	Fencing to protect hedgerows/riparian buffer strips

Creating scrapes, ponds, wetlands (adjacent water features)	Chalk Grassland Management
Schemes to reduce sediment run-off/ Farm management – safeguarding soil quality	Chalk Grassland Restoration
In-river habitat enhancements i.e. utilising Woody debris	Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes
Woodland management	Pond management

1.4 Assessment of applications

All projects will be scored using a common scoring system. They will be scored against the following categories which are weighted differently for the final score:

- Project outcomes - this includes delivery under the six themes of Water Quality, Flow, Wildlife Corridor, INNS, involving people and working together and also fits with the wider Chess Smarter Water Catchment Plan including addressing data gaps within the catchment. (40%)
- Value for Money (20%) – this includes demonstrating an efficient use of resources and cost-reasonableness
- Match funding (20%)
- Sustainability / legacy of projects (20%) – this includes demonstrating that benefits could be maintained once the programme funding concludes, and may include the likelihood of behaviour change and increased capacity, as well as more tangible measures.
- Ability to deliver (Y/N) – this includes demonstrating the capability to deliver in the timelines required

There are a number of requirements that must be met for an application to progress and these will be made clear in the application template.

Successful applicants must:

- Complete an application form
- Confirm their project will be complete by 28th February 2025
- Demonstrate how their project delivers against at least one of the SWC themes and to provide the details of any partners with whom you have chosen to work.
- Provide evidence of any match funding opportunities available
- Proof of 3 quotes, or justification of why 3 are not present for items over £2,000 will be required.
- Provide information including SBI numbers to check for dual funding from Countryside Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming or otherwise.
- Provide information of advisory visits from Environment Agency if they are in relation to the project
- Within the grant agreement phase outline a timeline for payment and expected deliverables
- Provide evidence in the form of continuous and/or periodic reporting/monitoring on progress particularly in reference to the status of deliverables.
- Permit or engage monitoring to occur by SWC partners and/or volunteers prior and subsequently to works completion to access the impact and success of the scheme
- Provide invoices of completed work to enable retrospective payment
- Upon completion complete a Project Benefits Summary Form

1.5 Panel Roles and Responsibilities

The Catchment Co-ordinator will coordinate the Grant Agreement Preparation Process across the catchment partnership.

The panel will be made up of the following members:



- Smarter Water Catchment Host – Chilterns Chalk Streams Project representative
- Smarter Water Catchment Host – River Chess Association representative
- Thames Water Representative
- Wildlife Corridors Theme Lead
- Water Quality Theme Lead
- Chilterns National Landscape Farming Advisor
- Affinity Water Farming Advisor

The panel has 1 week to convene a meeting, collect evidence and score an application.

1.6 Communication of the scheme

The coordinator and farming adviser will be engaging directly with partners/farmers/landowners to make them aware of the scheme and suggest they apply. This may be alongside communications (social media, news articles, website etc) via the National Landscape channels. The scheme will also be advertised on www.chesssmarterwatercatchment.org, the website associated with the project.

2 Conclusion

This is the final year of confirmed funding for the Chess SWC Landowner Grant Scheme. It is therefore advised to take up this opportunity before it closes. Advice and support is available from Harriet Bennett – Farming Advisor – Chilterns National Landscape hbennett@chilterns.org.uk and Steph Horn – Project Coordinator – Chilterns National Landscape stephorn@chilterns.org.uk

