## **Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS)**

## **NatureScot Application Form**

Use this form when applying for FIRNS funding from NatureScot. Make your parallel application for funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund directly through the [**Heritage Fund application portal**](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/sign-in). When completing The National Lottery Heritage Fund application, please use the same project title.

We encourage you to read both this application form and the Heritage Fund online application before starting. Many of the questions in this application form are the same as, or very similar to, questions posed in the Heritage Fund online application. This is deliberate and will allow you to use the same answer in both applications where relevant.

When applying to NatureScot, you will be required to complete the separate Project Finances spreadsheet that is available on the [**NatureScot website**](https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/firns-facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland/firns-how-apply). You will also be required to submit the same [**project plan**](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-heritage-grants-10k-250k/project-plan-risks-template-0), briefs for commissioned work, full cost recovery calculations and other supporting documentation that will support your Heritage Fund application.

Third sector organisations can apply for cost recovery of their organisational overheads in respect of staff working on the project, in addition to salaries. We recommend you consult The National Lottery Community Fund [**full cost recovery**](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/full-cost-recovery) guide if you intend to apply for it.

You must submit your completed Application, including supporting documents, no later than **noon 14 March 2025** to **FIRNS@nature.scot****.**

**Section A – About You**

1. **Your details**

This should be the person and/or organisation that is applying for the grant and who will manage the project.

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| Your NatureScot FIRNS project reference | **(Assigned by NatureScot upon application submission)** |
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| Applicant name |  |
| Name of Organisation (if applicable)  |  |
| Position in Organisation (if applicable) |  |
| Address |  |
| Postcode |  |
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| Landline phone number |  |
| Mobile phone number |  |
| Email |  |
|  |  |
| Charity or business number (if applicable) |  |
| VAT registration number (if applicable) |  |

1. **Type of project you are applying for, please select only one:**

Development Phase [ ]

Market and Investment Readiness [ ]

Market Infrastructure [ ]

1. **Is your organisation*:***(please check box)

 [ ]  A constituted organisation, including registered charities and trusts

 [ ]  A constituted community group

 [ ]  A public body

 [ ]  A private individual or company

 [ ]  An academic institution

 [ ]  A community interest or community benefit company

1. **If you are currently receiving funding from NatureScot for any other projects, please give details including the project identification number(s).** (Maximum 500 words).

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## **Section B - Your FIRNS project**

1. **Project title**

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1. **Project Start Date:**  **Project End Date:**

FIRNS awards are expected to be communicated in May 2025, with formal Grant Offers issued and agreed in the following weeks. Projects should plan a Start Date from mid-June 2025 to account for this Grant Offer period with an End Date no later than 31 March 2026.

1. **Describe your idea.**

This helps us to understand what your FIRNS project is all about. Explain your vision for your FIRNS project, its links to any larger project and what you hope the legacy of your project will be. (Maximum 150 words).

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1. **Tell us what you will do during your project.**

Please detail the activities, outputs and timescales of your FIRNS project, quantified and with dates where possible. *Your project plan should provide more detailed information about each element of your project.* (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **Tell us what advice you have received in planning your project and who from. This should include any advice from NatureScot staff.** (Maximum 500 words).

You should tell us about any discussions, consultation, or engagement on your project.

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1. **What stage of the ‘path to investment readiness’ do you think your project is at now and what stage will your FIRNS project reach?**

This is set out in the [**Green Finance Institute Investment Readiness Toolkit**](https://www.greenfinanceinstitute.co.uk/gfihive/toolkit/) and in the FIRNS scheme guidance. Please tell us what stages you have achieved to date and what you aim to achieve through your FIRNS project. (Maximum 500 words).

**If you are applying for a Market Infrastructure project – please skip this question.**

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1. **Tell us about the nature you will focus on as part of this project.**

What types of nature and natural capital would be benefiting from the project? For place-based projects, please tell us about its size, its condition and why it is important to your local area. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **Where will your project take place?**

Your project may be taking place somewhere different than where your organisation is based. Tell us where that is. If your project is taking place at more than one site, tell us where all of those sites are. You can also provide a grid reference, where relevant. (Maximum 200 words).

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1. **Is the nature and natural capital at risk in the absence of the work you are seeking funding for?**

 [ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, explain why and how (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **If your project is place based, does the land have any formal nature designations e.g. SSSI, SPA, SAC?**

 [ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, tell us about all the designations that you are aware of. (Maximum 200 words).

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1. **Do you need permission from anyone to do your project or are there any legal conditions or restrictions which may affect your project?** (Maximum 500 words).

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, tell us who from and whether you have spoken to them about your project. Tell us more about any legal conditions or restrictions which may affect your project. Do you need any statutory consents or other permissions to deliver your project.

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1. **Why does your project need to happen now?**

Please tell us why your project needs to happen now, also tell us about the information or research that has led to this project being developed. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **What difference will your project make and how will you measure its impact?**

Tell us what impact your project will have on nature and natural capital, nature-based markets and communities and how you will measure this. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **What makes your project innovative?**

Are you aware of similar projects or ideas, either in delivery or development, and if so, what research have you done and how will your project differentiate itself? (Maximum 300 words).

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1. **Why do you think your project’s underlying business rationale is viable and will attract investment?**

Please tell us about the business model for your project, your estimated investment need, the buyers and sellers you hope to work with, any potential nature markets you hope to access and how you would repay investment if required.(Maximum 500 words).

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1. **Have you contacted relevant projects and organisations including the potential investors and potential buyers of ecosystem services?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes; tell us who. If no; you tell us how you plan to engage them. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **Is your project included in, or related to, any development, implementation, site management or action plans that you, or any of your project partners, are involved in?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, please provide details. (Maximum 500 words).

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## **Section C – Project Outcomes**

1. **Explain how your project will meet the outcomes of the FIRNS programme:**

*Projects are required to achieve outcome 1 or 2,* *please select the one most relevant to your project. All projects must achieve outcomes 3 and 4.*

1. Create reliable ways to engage land managers and businesses to use Scotland’s existing voluntary carbon markets: the Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code. (Maximum 500 words).

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**OR**

1. Create reliable ways to invest in Scotland’s nature and biodiversity, preferably using ideas from [**Scotland’s Natural Capital Market Framework**](https://www.gov.scot/publications/natural-capital-market-framework/pages/3/) (esp. Section 1: Attracting more high-integrity private investment in Scotland’s natural capital pg. 8-14) and [**Biodiversity Strategy**](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-2045/)and [**Delivery Plan**](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-biodiversity-delivery-plan-20242030/). (Maximum 500 words).

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1. Engage meaningfully with communities in project design and delivery, fostering inclusion, and develop effective mechanisms to share benefits where appropriate, thereby supporting a just transition. *Additional advice on community benefit is available from the* [***Scottish Land Commission***](https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/our-work/good-practice/community-benefits-1) and the [***Nature Finance Certification Alliance***](https://www.natcert.earth/community-benefits-standard/)(Maximum 500 words).

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1. Capture and share learning and best practice to enhance and scale high-integrity natural capital markets. (Maximum 500 words).

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## **Section D – Project Management**

1. **Will your project be delivered by a partnership?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, tell us why your partnership has the necessary skillset and resources to run this project. Tell us who the lead partner is and the roles and responsibilities each partner will have. Please state how project partners have been selected and what added value this brings to the project. Please submit evidence of your partnership with your application, such as a partnership agreement. (Maximum 500 words). **If no, please answer Q26.**

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1. **Why is your organisation best placed to deliver this project?**

Tell us why your organisation is the right one to run this project. Demonstrate that you have the necessary skillset and resources. (Maximum 500 words). **If you answered Q25 – please skip this question.**

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1. **How will your project be managed?**

You should tell us:

* How you, or the partnership/consortium, will manage the project on a day-to-day basis
* What governance arrangements are in place
* How you will monitor the project finances
* How you will monitor and report on project progress

Please submit a [**risk register**](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-heritage-grants-10k-250k/project-plan-risks-template-0) with your application. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **Tell us about any jobs or apprenticeships that you will create to deliver your project.**

If you plan to recruit a new member of staff to help deliver your project, including an apprentice, please submit a job description for that post. (Maximum 300 words).

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1. **How will you evaluate the delivery of your FIRNS project?**

Include how you plan to measure your FIRNS project’s impact in terms of environmental, social and economic benefit. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **What will happen after the FIRNS project ends?**

Tell us how the outcomes will be maintained and how they will be supported. Also tell us about any next steps for your project and how these would be delivered. (Maximum 500 words).

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1. **How do you plan to acknowledge your grant?** (Maximum 300 words).

For additional advice on acknowledgement, please review the [***FIRNS Acknowledgement Guidance***](https://www.nature.scot/doc/firns-facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland-guidance-applicants-how-acknowledge-our-support-your).

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## **Section E – Project Costs**

You will need to provide details of your project costs with your application. You should complete the separate [**Project Finances template**](https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/firns-facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland/firns-how-apply) (Excel spreadsheet) alongside this application form. It uses the same project cost headings as The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We need to know the following costs, broken down by NatureScot financial year (1 April – 31 March):

* The **total cash cost** of your project – all cash items required to deliver the project activities
* The amount of **cash** you are requesting **from NatureScot**
* The amount of **cash** contributions **you or** **other funders** are providing (please include the contribution requested from the Heritage Fundwhich will normally be the same as the amount requested from NatureScot)
* The amount of **in-kind** contributions **you or other contributors** are providing

**Please note** – FIRNS is not able to fund capital works, so such costs must not be included in your application. NatureScot does not provide ‘contingency’ funds, so these should not be included in your NatureScot application either.

**Please note all staff costs need to be in line with the Real Living Wage. Please ensure you have read** [**Fair Work First – guidance for funding applicants**](https://www.nature.scot/doc/fair-work-first-fwf-guidance-funding-applicants) **available on our website.**

**Please also note the procurement requirements set out in Annex 1.**

1. **Are you registered for VAT?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

1. **Are you able to reclaim VAT from HM Revenue and Customs for the costs included within your FIRNS project?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No [ ]  In part

If you are **not** able to reclaim VAT from HM Revenue and Customs, you should include ‘**Irrecoverable VAT’** relating to each project cost in the Project Finances spreadsheet.

1. **If you are applying for Full Cost Recovery, please explain what elements are included in the value you have requested and how it was calculated.**

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1. **Please indicate if you would prefer to claim monthly or quarterly.**

If successful, NatureScot can make payments monthly or quarterly in arrears on receipt of a satisfactory progress and claim report, with the final payment subject to receipt of a satisfactory End of Project Report.

[ ]  Quarterly [ ]  Monthly

## **Section F – Declaration**

* I am the Applicant, and I am applying for a grant under the terms of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. I have the appropriate authority to submit this application.
* I confirm that the information I have given in this application is correct, to the best of my knowledge.
* I have read and accept Scottish Natural Heritage (NatureScot) [**Standard Terms and Conditions of Funding**](https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-funding-applicants-standard-terms-and-conditions-funding)**.**
* I have read the [**Fair Work First - guidance for funding applicants**](https://www.nature.scot/doc/fair-work-first-fwf-guidance-funding-applicants) which outlines employer responsibilities for employees to receive at least the real Living Wage; and for workers to be provided with appropriate channels for effective voice.

NatureScot will collect and hold your contact details. You should read our [**Funding Privacy Notice**](https://www.nature.scot/about-naturescot/access-information-and-services/access-information/funding-privacy-notice).

**I have submitted the following documents with my NatureScot application:**

[ ]  Project Finances spreadsheet

[ ]  A project plan

[ ]  Risk register

[ ]  Briefs for any internally or externally commissioned work (required if relevant)

[ ]  Full cost recovery calculations (required if relevant)

[ ]  Job Description(s) (required if relevant)

[ ]  Evidence of partnership (e.g. a partnership agreement) (required if relevant)

[ ]  Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant signature**

We prefer to receive an electronic copy of your application. You can either:

* insert a scanned copy of your hand-written signature, or
* insert your name and submit the application from an email address that is identifiable as you/your organisation.

Your signature:

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Date:

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Please email your completed application form, Project Finances spreadsheet and supporting documents to **FIRNS@nature.scot** no later than **noon 14 March 2025**.

**Annex 1 – Procurement purchasing thresholds**

All Applicants should demonstrate good procurement practice by inviting open and fair competition, applying the thresholds below. Emailed quotes are acceptable.

Public Bodies should follow their own purchasing procedures to ensure public accountability. Please have these available, as we may ask to see them.

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| **Purchasing thresholds****including any non-recoverable VAT**  | **Minimum Competition Requirements** | **Further information and approvals that will be required** |
| **£1,000 and below**  | **x 2 Quotes**–to enable a value for money comparison | None |
| **£1,000 to £25,000** | **x 3 Written Quotes** - a minimum of 3 suppliers to be invited to quote  | Justification and approval required if 3 suppliers not invited to quoteJustification required if other than lowest quote is opted forExplanation required if only one quote received |
| **£25,000 to £50,000** | **x 5 Written Quotes**- a minimum of 5 suppliers to be invited to quote  | Justification and approval required if 5 suppliers not invited to quote Justification and approval required if other than lowest quote is opted for Justification and approval required if only one quote received |
| **£50,000 and above** | Advertise and full procurement tendering exercise  | Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) portal is the preferred route to advertise **all** contract tender opportunities and MUST be used for all contracts of £50,000 and over, inclusive of VAT Contracts must be advertised for a minimum of 3 weeksSupply only contracts may be procured outwith PCS with our prior approval. A minimum of 5 written quotes must be invited with approval requirements as set out in the £25,000 - £50,000 threshold above.Approval required if only one tender received (no competition) |

If you intend to contract on a different basis from the thresholds above, you must get our prior approval in writing. You can find further information in the [**FIRNS procurement guidance**](https://www.nature.scot/doc/facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland-firns-procurement-guidance).

You will need to keep appropriate financial information and records to support purchasing decisions. You can find further information in our [**Financial information and records**](https://www.nature.scot/doc/financial-information-and-records-guidance-funding-applicants) guidance available on our website.

Applicants must not enter into a formal contract with a supplier prior to receiving and accepting a formal offer of funding from us and seeking our approval as outlined above.