## **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 (NLHF) directly through the [NHLF application portal](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/sign-in). When completing the National Lottery Heritage Fund application, please include the prefix **#FIRNS2** in your project title.

We encourage you to read both this application form and the NLHF online application before starting. Many of the questions in this application form are the same as, or very similar to, questions posed in the NHLF online application. This is deliberate and will allow you to use the same answer in both applications where relevant. Please note that word limits apply to some of the NLHF online application questions.

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/good-practice-guidance/project-plan-templates), briefs for commissioned work, full cost recovery calculations and other supporting documentation that will support your NLHF application.

Third sector organisations can apply for cost recovery of up to 20% 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 Form and Project Finances spreadsheet, including supporting documents, no later than **noon 26 January 2024** to [**FIRNS@nature.scot**](mailto: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 |  |
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| Charity or business number (if applicable) |  |
| VAT registration number (if applicable) |  |

1. **Are you applying for:**

Development Funding

Market and Investment Readiness Funding

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):**

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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 early April 2024, with formal Grant Offers issued and agreed in the following weeks. Projects should plan a Start Date to account for this Grant Offer period with an End Date no later than 31 March 2025.

1. **Describe your idea.**

This helps us to understand what your FIRNS project is all about. Please focus on what your FIRNS project will deliver. Explain the ambitions of your project, its links to any larger project and the underlying business model.

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1. **What are the outputs of your FIRNS project?**

Please detail the outputs that will be produced by your FIRNS project. Provide a summary of the outputs and timescales; quantified and with dates where possible. *These details should match those provided in your project plan.*

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1. **Tell us what advice you have received in planning your project and who from. This should include advice from NatureScot staff.**

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

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1. **If relevant, how have you addressed any feedback points we provided on your Expression of Interest?**

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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.

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

If place-based, tell us your project locations and sizes. What broad categories of nature and natural capital would be benefiting from the project’s impact?

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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

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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

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1. **Do you need permission from anyone to do your project?**

Yes  No

If yes, tell us who from and whether you have spoken to them about your project. Do you need any statutory consents or other permissions to deliver your project.

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1. **Does your project involve natural heritage that attracts visitors?**

Yes  No  N/A

If yes, tell us in what ways people get involved with or spend time in the natural heritage?

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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.

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1. **What difference will your project make?**

Tell us what impact your project will have on nature and natural capital, nature-based markets and investment, and communities. *This information will also form part of our value for money assessment*.

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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 how will your project differentiate itself?

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

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1. **Have you made contact with relevant projects and organisations including the private sector and potential buyers of ecosystem services?**

If you haven’t yet, tell us how you plan to engage them.

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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.

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1. **What measures will you take to increase positive environmental impacts and decrease negative environmental impacts? How will you measure the impact on the natural capital?**

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## **Section C – Project Outcomes**

1. **Explain how your project will meet the 4 mandatory outcomes of the FIRNS programme:**

* Support the restoration of nature and growth of natural capital backed by robust science-based methodologies.

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* Enable or generate revenue and /or cost savings from ecosystem services in order to attract and repay private sector investment.

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* Explore and demonstrate engagement with community interests in project design, and activities, supporting a just transition.

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* Develop effective mechanisms to share benefits with communities, supporting a just transition.

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1. **Tell us if your project will achieve any of the other FIRNS outcomes:**

The overall number of additional outcomes you plan to achieve will depend on what you want to deliver. The number of outcomes you achieve should be proportionate to the size of grant you are requesting. We encourage you to focus only on outcomes that your project can deliver strongly.

* Develop a project/business and investment model which can be scaled and replicated.

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* Create a transparent and inclusive governance structure.

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* Capture and disseminate lessons learned and best practices.

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* Secure legal contracts, selling high integrity ecosystem services and biodiversity uplifts, creating precedents and models for the market.

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* Increase confidence and capability to create market-ready/investable projects and/or improve market development.

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* Create long term opportunities for development of local delivery capacity and reinforcement of supply chains.

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* Enable the aggregation of projects at a scale generating synergies in terms of financing and/or environmental/social outcomes.

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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 is the right one 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. Demonstrate that you have the necessary skillset and resources. If you have a partnership agreement, please submit it with your application.

**If no, please answer Q27.**

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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.

**If you answered Q26 – 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

If you have a risk register, please submit it with your application.

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1. **How will you evaluate your project?**

Include how you plan to measure the project’s impact in terms of environmental, social and economic benefit.

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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.

We use this information to assess the value for money of our investment in your project.

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1. **How do you plan to acknowledge your grant?**

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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.

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## **Section E – Project Costs**

You will need to provide details of your project costs with your application. You should fill in alongside this application form a separate [Project Finances template](https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/firns-facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland/firns-how-apply) (Excel spreadsheet). 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 **NLHF** which 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.

We use this information to assess the value for money of our investment in your project.

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 cash cost and NatureScot request table in the Project Finances spreadsheet.

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 evaluation report.

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**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 threshold - including any VAT that may be payable** | **Requirement** |
| **£1,000 & below** | **x 2 Quotes**  – to ensure value for money |
| **£1,000 to £25,000** | **x 3 Quotes**  – a minimum of 3 suppliers to be invited to quote  Justification required if single tender  Justification required if Other Than Lowest Quote |
| **£25,000 to £50,000** | **x 5 Quotes**  - a minimum of 5 suppliers to be invited to quote  Justification required if 5 suppliers not invited to quote  Justification required if Other Than Lowest Quote |
| **£50,000 and above** | - advertise and full procurement tendering exercise |

If you intend to contract on a different basis from the thresholds above, you must get our prior approval in writing.

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.

## **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.

(You will find our Standard Conditions of Funding on our website.)

* 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 (required)

A project plan (required)

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

Full cost recovery calculations (required if relevant)

Job Description(s) (required if relevant)

Partnership agreement

Risk register

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**](mailto:FIRNS@nature.scot) no later than **noon 26 January 2024**.