



**Supporting education  
settings with the National  
Education Nature Park  
grant**

# Introduction

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# Young people are leading the way in creating a network of green spaces in schools, colleges and nurseries across the country

Free programme for all education settings in England

Young people exploring and transforming their learning sites for people and wildlife

Boosting biodiversity locally and nationally, while developing connection to nature and vital skills for their futures

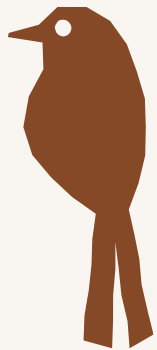
Using digital tools to map out and survey their outdoor spaces

Collecting real scientific data to aid nature recovery, with the difference everyone is making displayed on an online map

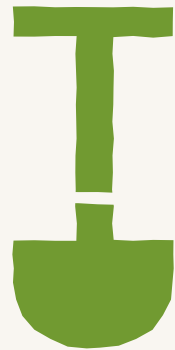


# Programme goals

Biodiversity gain  
across the  
educational  
estate



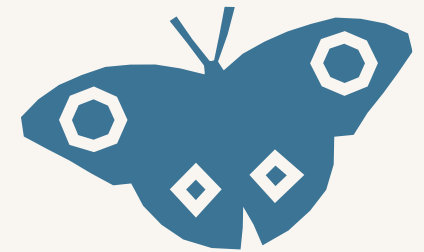
Development of  
green skills



Young people  
exhibit pro-  
environmental  
behaviours



Improved  
wellbeing for  
young people



# How it works: five-step cycle



National Education  
Nature Park and  
Climate Action Awards

# About the grant programme

- Funded by the Department for Education (DfE)
- DfE have selected nurseries and schools across England to receive the grant
- A full breakdown of eligibility can be found on the DfE website



# About the 2024/25 grants

Applications open on 12 September 2024

**Up to £2,000** for the 537 settings that received a grant in 2023/24

- Applications close on 28 November 2024
- Expenditure deadline 17 March 2025
- Reporting deadline 22 April 2025

**Up to £10,000** for the 700+ other eligible settings

- Applications close on 27 March 2025
- Expenditure deadline 5 June 2025
- Reporting deadline 3 July 2025



# Eligible expenditure

- Capital spend only
- Expenditure should add biodiversity and enable engagement with the National Education Nature Park programme
- Grey to green habitat enhancements, including making improvements to year 1 grant project
- Creating or adding biodiversity to grasslands
- Creating or improving ponds
- 50% limit on labour costs





# Grey space



# Not eligible

- Enhancement of green space unless it is a pond or grassland
- Building outdoor classrooms, play areas or structures that aren't part of a project to increase biodiversity
- Training or CPD
- Overtime payments for school staff
- Visits to local nature sites
- Seating unless it can be a habitat (eg it has an integrated planter) or is needed for accessibility
- Anything outside of the school site



# Not eligible – spaces that already are green



# Support available for schools

[Find help and local expertise | Education Nature Park](#)



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## Find help and local expertise

The National Education Nature Park programme's [five-step process](#) can help you to structure your thinking about improving your outdoor areas for nature. [Guidance for the first set of improvements – grey to green – can be found here](#). Use our Nature Park resources with your children and young people to help them to understand their site and to identify what improvements would be best to make. If you're starting with a grey site, [read our tips on changing grey areas to green spaces here](#).

Make sure that you continue to involve children and young people when it comes to making the changes. Keeping them engaged deepens their connection with nature and gives them a sense of ownership over the changes being made.

For some tasks, such as removing hard standing, digging a pond or building raised beds, you may need to bring in an external contractor or seek professional advice. There's also a vast network of local nature enthusiasts and growers who can advise you or help support your activities. This page provides some considerations to think about when finding help as well as some useful organisations. Find out more about how you can fund the improvements you want to make for nature on our [Finding funding](#) page.



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Become a member >

Get involved Schools [Every child in England can boost biodiversity](#)


# National Education Nature Park grant

## Frequently asked questions

Our frequently asked questions (FAQs) cover all you need to know about the National Education Nature Park grant

### About the grant programme

Who is funding the National Education Nature Park grant? 

Will this grant be given every year? 

# The application process

- Online application
- [Portal homepage - RHS grants \(flexigrant.com\)](https://flexigrant.com)
- Questions can be downloaded as a pdf which settings can provide you with



The screenshot shows the RHS Grant Portal homepage. At the top left is the RHS logo, followed by a green button labeled 'Application Portal'. To the right are navigation links: 'Contact Management', 'Manage Grants', and 'Admin'. The main heading is 'Welcome to the RHS Grant Portal'. Below this is a message: 'If this is your first time here, select the Register button below.' There is an 'Edit content' button. Two main content blocks are visible: 'Update my information' with a 'MY ACCOUNT' button, and 'National Education Nature Park & Climate Action Awards' with a 'National Education Nature Park grant' section.

RHS

Application Portal

Contact Management

Manage Grants

Admin

## Welcome to the RHS Grant Portal

If this is your first time here, select the Register button below.

Edit content

### Update my information

Update your account and contact information using the link below.

MY ACCOUNT



National Education  
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### National Education Nature Park grant

RHS is administering the Nature Park grant as member of the National Education Nature Pa partnership.

Full details of the grants programme can be found **here**.

# Grey to green

The first year of the National Education Nature Park focuses on creating *new* green spaces.

<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/turn-grey-green>

Why grey spaces?

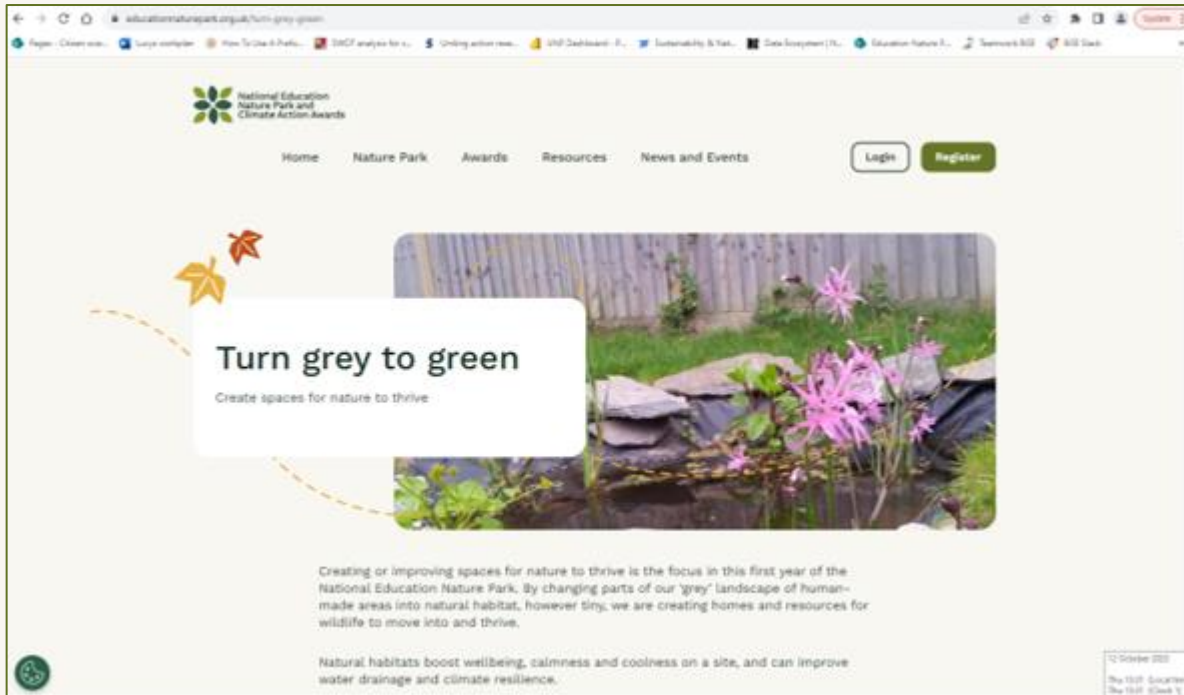
- This is where the greatest nature gains are
- Every nursery, school and college has some grey space
- Settings can take time to study nature on their site before changing any green spaces, enabling them to *measure their* nature gains

By changing parts of our ‘grey’ landscape of human-made areas into natural habitat, however tiny, we are creating homes and resources for wildlife to move into and thrive.

Natural habitats boost wellbeing, calmness and coolness on a site, and can improve water drainage and climate resilience.

# Guidance online

<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/turn-grey-green>



Our guidance tells you where to start, helps you to choose the right location and the right plants, and gives step by step instructions.

There is also lots of guidance available from organisations such as the RHS, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and RSPB.

More information on removing paving:

- [Why Depave | Depave](#)
- [Grey to Green Guide\\_V15.indd \(london.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Brownfield Hub - Buglife](#)

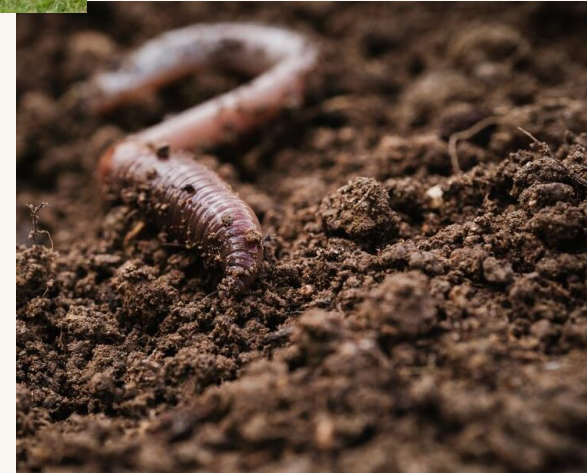
# Grassland and pond guidance

- Guidance: Add flower-rich grassland | Education Nature Park
- How have they been created?
- What will they look like?
- What are some of the highlights?
  - **Grassland:** Less mowing, remove cuttings, perennial mixes, using yellow rattle, no oversowing, no chemicals, the use of plug plants
  - **Ponds:** All sizes are fine, no fountains or pumps, different depths, no fish, raised bed style ponds. It will also include rain gardens and stormwater planters



# Grass: living vs plastic

- Plastic grass is made from oil and takes carbon and water to produce
- At end-of-life (10-15yrs) it usually ends up as landfill
- Published evidence\* indicates bad news for earthworms. Current study\*\* investigating wider ecological impact
- By-products of real lawns and meadows (e.g. clippings) may be composted and put back into the school ground to cycle nutrients



*\*Pochron et al, 2018 Exposure to aged crumb rubber reduces survival time during a stress test in earthworms*

**\*\*Astro-turfing the city: quantifying the impact of artificial lawns on the structure and function of urban ecosystems**

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/one-planet/ourresearchers/cohort5/caitlincook.html>

# Value of enhanced grass – the living lawn

- Short grass with reduced mowing (e.g. fortnightly) and no fertiliser/ weedkiller/ mosskiller inputs can make excellent mining bee nests habitat support pollinators
- Lawn ‘weeds’ allowed to flower support pollinators, e.g. dandelion\*
- Long grass better at flood mitigation, cooling, pollution capture, resisting drought and supporting larval stage insects, mammals and amphibians than short grass
- Long grass reduces some of the 80,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>/yr emitted by petrol lawnmowers



Wild About Lawns booklet available from <https://wildaboutgardens.org.uk/>

\*<https://ukpoms.org.uk/delightful-dandelions>

# Value of enhanced grass – the wildflower and urban meadow

- 97% wildflower (perennial) meadows lost in UK in last century
- In a 3-yr study\* of meadow vs lawn terrestrial invertebrate biomass was 25 times higher in the meadow compared with the lawn and in spite of its small size (0.36 ha), the meadow supported approximately three times more plant species, three times more spider and bug species and individuals, and bats were recorded three times more often over the meadow than the remaining lawn
- Meadows with more flower colour, esp annuals, are esp good for people\*\*



*Perennial wildflower meadow*



*Annual 'meadow'*

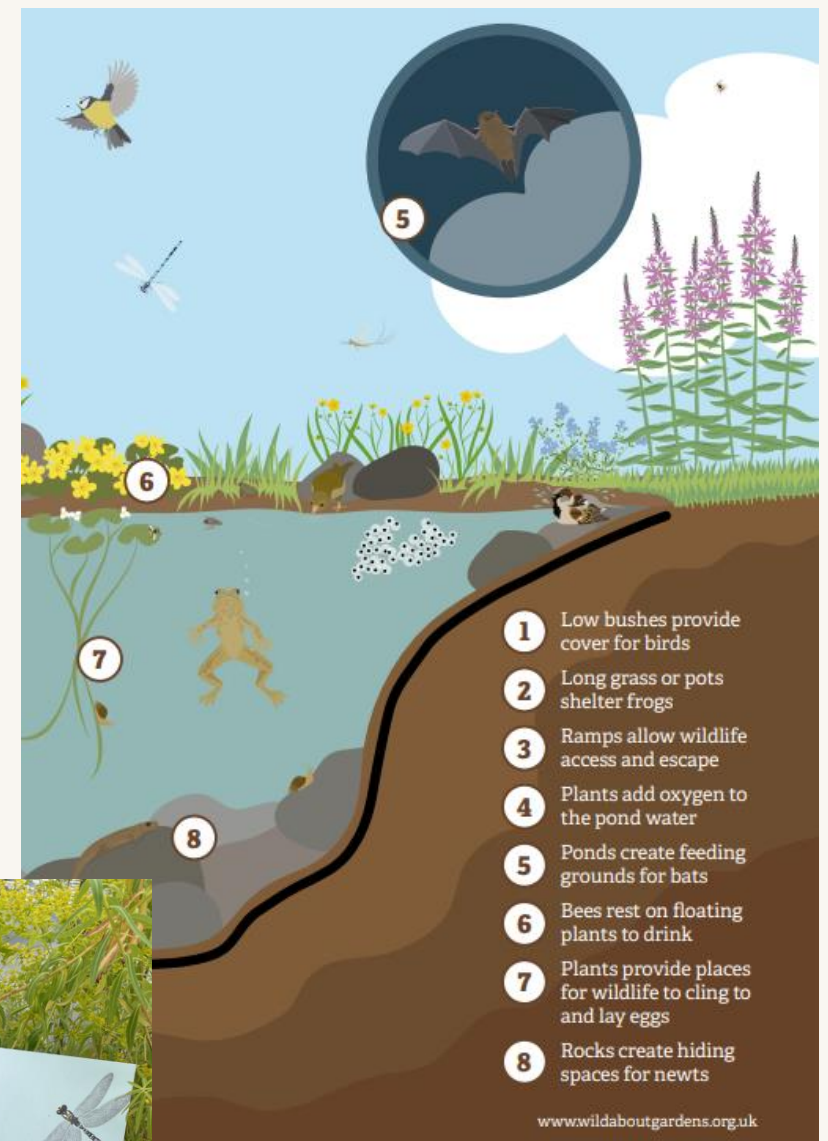
\* **Urban wildflower meadow planting for biodiversity, climate and society: An evaluation at King's College, Cambridge** <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2688-8319.12243>

\*\* <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/081221-NERC-LWEC-PPN32-ImprovingUrbanGrasslandPeopleWildlife.pdf>

# Ponds and water – a wildlife lifesaver

- Half a million ponds have been lost in UK over the last 100 years and one in five remaining ponds are thought to be in poor condition
- When compared to other freshwater habitats, ponds support more species of macrophytes and macroinvertebrates
- Water provides wildlife with drinking, bathing, feeding, breeding, hunting and habitat opportunities

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/water-habitats>



# Ponds – key features

- Tapering sides and/or ramp
- Water quality
- Water levels
- Exposed mud
- Plant architecture, above and below the water line
- Adjacent planting



*Formal steep-sided pond with wildlife ramp and planting baskets*



*Poorly positioned wildlife ramp*

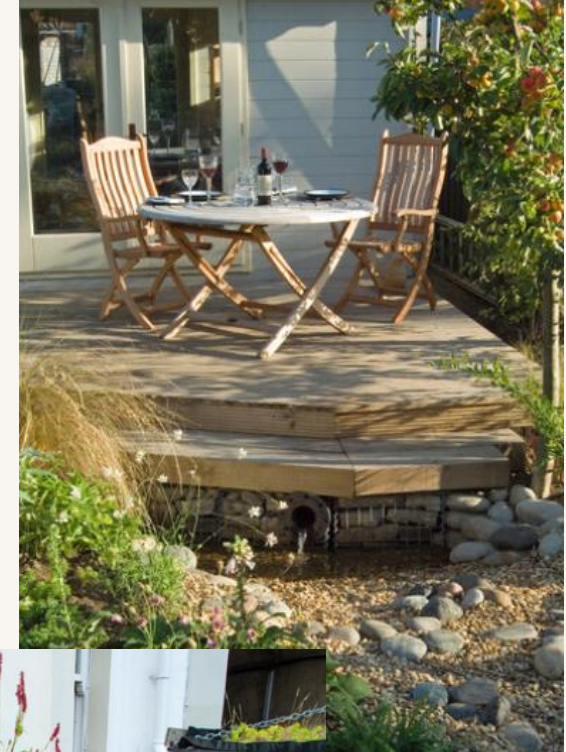


*Wildlife pond with shallowly sloping sides and good plant cover*

# Other ways for wildlife with water

- Rain garden (feeds water into soil) and stormwater planters (feeds water into drains)  
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-features/rain-gardens>
- Rain-fed wildlife pond (feeds water into pond)  
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/ponds/rain-fed-wildlife-friendly-pond-steps>
- Container wildlife pond  
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/ponds/wildlife-container-pond-steps>

*Rain-fed wildlife pond*



*Container pond*



*Rain garden*

# Developing a connection with nature

- A key aim of the Nature Park leading to:
  - Improved wellbeing
  - Improved pro-environmental behaviours
- Engaging throughout all of the five steps wherever and whenever possible



# Developing a connection with nature

- Ways to connect with nature through the Nature Park include:
  - Senses – sounds, textures, taste, colours
  - Beauty – consider the aesthetics, adding in art
  - Emotion – creating different atmospheres
  - Meaning – celebrating the changing seasons
  - Compassion – taking care of the natural world



**The link for education settings to register to join**

**[www.educationnaturepark.org.uk](http://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk)**

**Get in touch with the grants team**

**[natureparkgrants@rhs.org.uk](mailto:natureparkgrants@rhs.org.uk)**



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