

Conservation covenants: apply to become a responsible body

Use this form to apply for your organisation to become a designated responsible body.

Your organisation must be a designated responsible body to be able to [create a conservation covenant with a landowner](#).

You can apply for your organisation to become a responsible body if it's one of the following:

- a local authority
- a public body or charity, where at least some of its main purposes or functions relate to conservation
- a body other than a public body or charity, where at least some of its main activities relate to conservation

How to apply

You should read our guidance on [applying to become a responsible body](#) and, in particular, familiarise yourself with the criteria for being a responsible body before completing this application.

Send your application and supporting information to conservation.covenants@defra.gov.uk

Defra will contact you if you need to provide more information.

What's next

Defra will aim to inform you of the outcome of your organisation's designation request within 12 weeks of receiving a correctly completed application form and all supporting evidence.

If your application is unsuccessful, you can apply again with new information.

If your organisation is successfully designated as a responsible body, you will need to complete annual returns by 31 March each year about the conservation covenants that your organisation holds. Find out more about [submitting annual returns](#).

Contact details

Organisation's name

Enter your organisation's full name, for example, as it appears on Companies House. This will help us to carry out our due diligence checks correctly.

Organisation's email address

UK address (including the postcode)

Telephone number

Lead contact details

Provide details of the most appropriate person in your organisation to contact about your application.

Full name

Lead contact's job role

Email address

Lead contact's telephone number

Eligibility

Tell us what type of organisation you are.

For example, local authority, registered charity, exempt charity, body established by public general act, company or other (specify the type)

Your organisation's Companies House or Charity Commission number (if applicable)

UK operating base

You must provide evidence that your organisation has an operating base in the UK that allows it to properly carry out its conservation covenant functions. This means that the main activities to deliver conservation covenants and the people delivering them must be located in the UK.

Tell us what evidence you will include with this application

For example, a copy of your most recent business rates bill

Purposes, functions or activities

If your organisation is a local authority, you do not need to complete this section of the form. For the purposes of conservation covenants, a local authority is defined as any of the following:

- a county or district council in England
- a London borough council
- the Common Council of the City of London
- the Council of the Isles of Scilly

You must provide evidence that at least some of your organisation's main purposes, functions or activities are related to conservation. If you are:

- a public body or a charity, you must provide evidence of how some of your main purposes or functions relate to conservation
- a body other than a public body or a charity, you must provide evidence of how at least some of your main activities relate to conservation

Tell us what evidence of your organisation’s conservation purpose, function or activity you will include with this application.

For example, relevant sections of:

- reports summarising conservation projects your organisation has delivered
- your annual report
- your charitable objects

Financial security

As part of the application process, Defra will check that your organisation’s financial situation is secure and that it has adequate internal fiscal and administrative control for long term financial viability.

Provide details of your organisation’s UK bank account.

Name of bank

Sort code

Must be 6 digits long

Account number

Must be between 6 and 8 digits long

You must provide evidence of financial security for Defra to carry out its financial checks.

Tell us which of these documents you will include with this application.

Tick all that apply.

your last annual report

a current credit rating reports from 2 credit agencies

for newly formed organisations where credit rating and annual reports may not be available, the last 3 full months of bank statements or a letter confirming a UK bank account has been opened

Financial declaration

You must provide this signed financial declaration from an accountant, finance director or equivalent, on behalf of your organisation, as part of the application for designation of your organisation as a responsible body.

I can confirm that I:

- act as the accountant, finance director or equivalent for the applicant
- have reviewed the applicant's proposed methods of funding and processes for assessing whether it can afford to enter into, and successfully deliver, conservation covenants
- am satisfied with these proposed methods and processes
- have no reason to believe that the applicant would enter into a commitment such as the proposed in the knowledge that they were unable to fulfil it. However, I can make no assessment of the applicant's continuing income or future outgoings

I confirm that I believe the information provided in this application is true. However, the information is provided without my acceptance, as accountant, finance director or equivalent, of any responsibility whatsoever. Therefore, any use you wish to make of the information is entirely at your own risk.

I understand that, as set out in the published criteria, if any statement in the financial declaration is later found to be false, the applicant's designation as a responsible body may be revoked.

Name

Role or position

Signature

Date

Operational capacity and capability

What type of conservation covenant agreements do you expect your organisation to enter into as a responsible body?

Tick all that apply.

to conserve the natural environment or the natural resources of the land (or the setting of land)

to conserve the land as a place of archaeological, architectural, artistic, cultural or historic interest (or the setting of land)

You must demonstrate that your organisation has the operational capacity and capability to manage and enforce the types of covenants you expect to enter into.

Provide a summary and supporting evidence showing how your organisation will meet and comply with each of the [capacity and capability criteria](#).

Your summary should reference the relevant sections of any supporting evidence you will include with this application.

Provide evidence of your organisation's expertise that is relevant to the types of conservation covenant agreements you expect to enter into with landowners

You should be able to demonstrate that your organisation has access to people with the relevant:

- technical expertise in ecology or heritage
- professional qualifications
- previous experience of other conservation projects

For example, evidence of your organisation's access to:

- ecologists or agronomists relevant to nature conservation or the equivalent for heritage conservation
- surveyors for any land-related aspects of covenants

Provide evidence that your organisation has a workforce structure and capacity that will allow it to effectively:

- deliver conservation covenants
- work collaboratively with landowners to achieve successful outcomes.
- monitor and evaluate projects

For example, an organisational chart that highlights who in your organisation will be directly involved in the delivery, management and administration of conservation covenants, or your organisation's articles of association (if applicable).

Provide evidence to demonstrate your organisation's ability to plan and develop contingency measures for unplanned changes.

For example, a risk register, risk assessments or other contingency arrangements your organisation had in place for previous projects.

Provide evidence to show:

- your organisation's ability to monitor the compliance of any landowners you enter into a conservation covenant agreement with
- how your organisation would address a breach of agreement by any landowner

For example, a copy of the monitoring and compliance arrangements your organisation had in place for previous projects.

Provide evidence of your organisation's track record of resolving disputes or proposed processes for dispute resolution as a responsible body.

For example, a copy of a dispute resolution plan or your organisation's dispute resolution process and procedures or evidence that your organisation has, or could access, an expert adjudicator, professional mediation or arbitration services.

Provide evidence or information to show:

- your organisation has clear structures and governance that ensure it can effectively report and escalate issues
- how your organisation would identify and address any potential conflicts of interest at the organisational level, such as acting as a responsible body for land it has commercial interests in

For example, a copy of your organisation’s policies and processes for reporting, identifying and mitigating any conflicts of interest between its conservation purposes, functions or activities and any of its other roles.

Tell us about your organisation’s track record for environmental or heritage responsibility, where available.

For example, you could provide a summary of your organisation’s previous experience of:

- successfully managing relevant conservation or heritage projects
- working collaboratively with landowners to achieve successful outcomes

The summary could reference the relevant sections of any project reports you will include with this application.

You must provide us with details of any pending or unspent prosecutions against your organisation and of any published civil sanctions under environmental or heritage regulations within the last 5 years.

For example, details of any Environment Agency enforcement action or civil sanction.

If your organisation is a charity, you must provide us with details of any Charity Commission inquiry within the last 3 years.

Operational assurance declaration

A director or equivalent for the organisation applying to be responsible body must complete this declaration.

I can confirm that the applicant organisation:

- understands the role and responsibilities it would be taking on as a designated responsible body
- in accordance with the 'ongoing suitability' criterion and to remain a responsible body, commits to informing the Secretary of State if circumstances change within its organisation which may impact on its ability to deliver any conservation covenants it has entered, or intends to enter, into, including:
 - any disputes with landowners about the delivery of a covenant that it, or the courts, are unable to resolve, and that mean the conservation covenant is no longer operating for the public good
 - being subject to any new criminal prosecution, civil sanctions, fraud or insolvency proceedings
 - being subject to a new Charity Commission inquiry
 - any conflicts of interest that affect the delivery of any covenant and details of how they will be resolved
 - any changes in financial situation that significantly affect the delivery of any covenant
 - changes in the expertise required to deliver conservation covenants, as recorded on the published list of responsible bodies
 - changes in its main purposes, functions or activities (as applicable), such that they no longer relate to conservation
 - any other changes that may affect its ability to perform its functions, affect the delivery of any conservation covenant, or that mean it no longer meets all the criteria for being a responsible body
- understands that a failure to notify the Secretary of State of any of the above changes may result in the designation of a responsible body being revoked
- understands that it must comply with the annual reporting requirement
- as set out in the published criteria, understands that, if any statement in this declaration is later found to be false, its designation as a responsible body may be revoked

Name

Role or position

Signature

Date