



## Taking Flight: Funding Criteria

Taking Flight is designed to accelerate progress against the [Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan](#) (Seabird CAP) and its aim of maximising seabird prospects and building resilience in seabird populations. To achieve this, we will support projects able to demonstrate how they will contribute to the delivery of one or more of the following outcomes:

### 1. Breaking down barriers to delivering the Seabird CAP

E.g. by piloting new approaches to monitoring or delivery, improving knowledge and awareness of key threats, staff or volunteer training, or developing new technology to support conservation.

### 2. Developing projects that will deliver future actions to support seabird resilience

E.g. by planning new projects designed to deliver on the priority actions identified in the Seabird CAP, including conducting survey and scoping activities.

### 3. Supporting collaboration and engagement in aid of seabird conservation

E.g. by increasing dialogue across communities, organisations, sectors, and businesses, and bringing new people together to help deliver the Seabird CAP.

In supporting projects that will break down barriers and support accelerated progress under the Seabird CAP, Taking Flight will also provide data and generate learnings that can aid decision making relating to future compensation measures.

### How to apply

We are looking to award grants in the range of £25,000 to £250,000. If you want to apply for a grant outside of this range, please get in touch with us before applying. Grants can be up to a maximum of 3 years in length.

We are initially planning to run two funding rounds:

#### Round 1

- Open from the 22<sup>nd</sup> September until **midday on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025**, for a decision in early 2026.
- To apply, please first read the information provided below. Download and complete an Application Form and Project Budget Template.
- To submit your application, email the form and project budget to [grants@smeef.scot](mailto:grants@smeef.scot).
- Please use the following naming format: 'Organisation name\_SMEEF \_Taking Flight\_ Application Form'.

#### Round 2

- We are planning on re-opening for applications to Taking Flight in spring 2026, for a decision in late summer 2026.
- If you are not ready to apply now but would like to tell us about your interest in applying in Round 2, you can do so using this Project Idea form.
- Please note that this is optional and will not affect whether you can apply for funding. We may contact you to discuss your project further.

### Who can apply

Applicant(s) must be based in the UK and all projects must be delivered in Scotland. The following types of organisations are eligible to apply:

- Registered charities and trusts
- Constituted organisations (e.g. constituted community groups)
- Local authorities and other public sector organisations.
- Partnerships and organisations working collaboratively with others.
- If your organisation does not fit the above categories but would still like to apply, please get in touch.

SMEEF can support applications from companies where there is clear evidence that funds will be used to support benefits for biodiversity and/or ecosystems. The main aim of the project cannot be generating profit. As part of this, you must be able to demonstrate a commitment to community engagement and showcase the environmental need for the project, exclusive of the business case. We may request further information and evidence during the assessment process to allow us to be confident that your project meets the above criteria.

### What we will fund

To help ensure funds are as effective as possible, applicants are encouraged to work in partnership and develop budgets which include an element of match funding (either as cash or in-kind contributions). Applications for funding 100% of a project will also be considered.

All projects must:

- Be able to demonstrate how they will support the delivery of the Seabirds CAP.
- Be as collaborative as possible, working closely with experts and affected communities.
- Demonstrate clear additionality to existing and proposed actions (e.g. measures relating to Marine Protection Areas).
- Be informed by science, driven by knowledge, and have a clear plan for monitoring and evaluating the project.
- Be prepared to acknowledge SMEEF support.

As the fund is designed to support discussion, collaboration, and problem solving, the majority of funds should be used to support revenue or operating costs. Limited capital costs will be considered as part of a wider project, where the need can be clearly demonstrated.

Taking Flight has been designed to support the initiation of new activities rather than the continuation of work already underway. Funds cannot be used for activities already started or for routine expenses, however applications are welcome to support new stages of an existing project.

Costs that we will fund include:

- Staffing costs inclusive of salary, National Insurance and Employee Pension Contributions.
- Professional fees that are appropriate and proportionate to the project.
- Travel and subsistence to cover staff and any volunteers supporting the delivery of project activities.
- The costs of monitoring and evaluating project delivery and success.
- Dissemination of the project outcomes and learning.
- Irrecoverable VAT.

Costs that we will not fund include:

- SMEEF is unable to fund statutory functions.
- The project can include financial returns or cost recovery through a financial mechanism, but the main aim of the project must be biodiversity/ecosystem gains not profit.
- SMEEF will not fund political activity or campaigns.
- We cannot pay for activities already started.

### Before you apply

Please ensure that you have reviewed the following documents before submitting your application:

- Taking Flight 'Guidance for Applicants'
- [Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan \(Seabird CAP\)](#)
- NatureScot's [Standard Terms and Conditions](#)
- NatureScot's [Fair Work First – guidance for funding applicants](#)

### After you apply

All applications will be subject to an initial review by the SMEEF team. Eligible applications will then be assessed by topic and area leads within NatureScot and invited experts where relevant. Following this, applications will be reviewed by the SMEEF Grants Panel and Steering Group (you can read more about how SMEEF works in our latest [Impact Report](#)). During this period, we may get in touch with you to request additional information or discuss your application further. We are hoping to confirm the outcome of all applications by early 2026.

### Getting in touch

If you are unsure whether your project could be funded by Taking Flight or have any problems in applying, please reach out and discuss your application with the SMEEF team. You can do this by emailing [grants@smeeef.scot](mailto:grants@smeeef.scot).

### Thank you

Taking Flight is supported by the Seabird Resilience Fund, which was set up within SMEEF following an investment of £1.6m in voluntary donations from offshore renewable energy developers in the Northeast and East Ornithology Group (NEEOG). This initiative would not be possible without the developers within NEEOG and we thank them for their generous donations. A full list of the grant pot builders can be found [here](#).