**Introduction**

* The Staffordshire Community Paths Initiative (CPI) provides funding for projects to improve or promote countryside access through rights of way.
* Typically, grants of up to £2,000 are available. However, in exceptional circumstances, grants of up to £5,000 will be considered.
* Please bear in mind that these amounts are not targets; Staffordshire County Council allocates just £30,000 a year for the CPI.

**Who can apply?**

* Parish or Town Councils (see note below)
* Landowners
* Community or residents groups
* User or interest groups

With the exception of landowners, applicants must have clear governance structures in place, including financial standing orders and terms of reference. All applicants must have a bank account.

Note: *Parish and Town Councils will be carrying out improvements under their own legal powers to maintain rights of way (Highways Act 1980) – these powers apply to footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways, but* ***do not*** *apply to byways open to all traffic. Powers to provide benches on or at the side of public paths are given under the Parish Councils Act 1957.*

**What can the CPI fund?**

* The CPI seeks to fund projects that deliver at least one of the following:

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| * Projects that focus on routes or issues that provide benefit to residents, visitors and the local economy.
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| * Projects that have been developed in response to local needs and/or through working with others.
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| * Projects that overcome seasonal or long-standing issues.
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| * Projects that provide information on finding paths and using them responsibly.
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| * Projects that provide a long-term benefit to the local community, beyond the funding period.
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* Typical projects include:

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| * Path Surfacing
 | - | Improve drainage or apply new surface material. |
| * Vegetation Control
 | - | Clear encroaching vegetation by bidding for strimmers, bushcutters, PPE, etc  |
| * Replacing stiles with gates
 | - | Improve access for disabled users, those with limited mobility and users with pushchairs and young children. |
| * Installation of a boardwalk or bridge
 | - | Provide access across a boggy area or a crossing over a ditch or stream. |
| * Benches
 | - | Install additional benches, especially where there is a vista. |
| * Mapboards and leaflets
 | - | Encourage access to the countryside with professionally designed leaflets or mapboards promoting local walks. |
| * Signage
 | - | Good signage gives the public confidence that they are using the correct route and avoids inadvertent trespass.  |

**Funding criteria**

* Typically, the CPI will match fund up to 50% of the total project costs. Contributions from Staffordshire County Council greater than 50% will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
* The applicant has to secure at least 50% of the total project costs. This can come from various sources, including the applicant’s own funds, district/planning councils and local businesses. Applicants may also want to speak to their County Councillor as they have access to funding through the Divisional Highway Programme and the Local Community Fund.
* Volunteer labour and in-kind contributions from landowners can also be used to contribute towards the match funding.
* Volunteer labour should be calculated at no more than £22.50 person/hour.No more than 25% of the total project cost can be claimed as volunteer contributions.
* Landowners may offer to complete the work themselves, using their own staff and equipment. If they are not charging for this service as a contractor, it can be deemed an in-kind contribution. No more than 25% of the total project cost can be claimed as an in-kind contribution from a landowner.
* The total project cost can comprise one or more of the following:

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| * Capital expenditure (e.g. materials and tools)
 | * Value of volunteer labour
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| * Revenue expenditure (e.g. contractor fees)
 | * Value of landowner in-kind contribution
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**What the CPI can’t fund**

* Projects that are primarily for nature conservation
* Fencing projects
* Projects on recreation grounds unless the land is also recorded as a right of way
* The repair or replacement of stiles, although applications to replace stiles with gates are supported
* Work to paved/tarmaced paths
* Picnic benches
* Notice boards
* Dog bins
* Research

**Grant criteria and eligibility**

* The project must take place in Staffordshire.
* Applications must have the support of the local community and/or Parish/Town Council.
* All affected landowners must have given their written permission for the project to take place and this must be supplied before any funding applicant can be considered.
* Applicants must be able to demonstrate that without the support of Staffordshire County Council, the project would not proceed at all or to the extent outlined in the application.
* Applicants with significant funds in place or higher levels of reserves, must demonstrate why funding from Staffordshire County Council is needed.
* The applicant must have a plan in place to continue the project or maintain it, after the funding ends.
* Successful applicants must provide Staffordshire County Council with appropriate reporting and/or monitoring of their projects.
* Applicants must acknowledge the support of Staffordshire County Council in all publicity and media coverage relating to the project, and in the organisation’s next annual audited statement of accounts.
* Projects for practical improvement works (e.g. path resurfacing) and interpretation materials (e.g. leaflets and mapboards), must follow best practice (e.g. British Standards), health and safety regulations, and in certain instances a specification of works.
* If work is to be completed by volunteers, the applicant must provide an estimation of the anticipated number of volunteer hours needed to complete the project. The value of volunteer hours can be calculated at no more than. £22.50 person/hour. This sum must not exceed 25% of the total costs of the project. The applicant must be confident that all volunteers have the skills to carry out the work and are appropriately trained. The applicant must also ensure the volunteers are covered by employers’ liability insurance and public liability insurance.
* All items of expenditure over £500 must be accompanied by at least 3 like-for-like quotes. Staffordshire County Council will always seek to secure the best value quote where appropriate.
* If the project is to be completed by a contractor, the applicant will be responsible for ensuring the contractor has adequate employers’ liability insurance and public liability insurance, supervising the work and ensuring that works are carried out to a suitable standard.
* If the project is to be completed by a landowner, the landowner can use their own staff and equipment and this will count as an in-kind contribution i.e. match funding. A landowner’s in-kind contribution cannot exceed more than 25% of the total project cost. The applicant/landowner must have adequate employers’ liability insurance and public liability insurance.
* All grant monies will be paid in arrears and on receipt of evidence of expenditure e.g. valid receipts, photographs, etc. The applicant must have sufficient funds to bank roll the project.

Applications will be rejected if the application form is incomplete or if the submission does do not contain all the information requested. Ensure you answer all the questions fully and provide all the information requested. Remember, the CPI is a competitive process, so grants will be approved on their merits.

**Contact us**

Before submitting an application, discuss your project with your local Rights of Way Officer. They can advise you on the eligibility of your project and arrange a site visit (where appropriate).

Rights of Way Officers:

* Gordon Batey (South) gordon.batey@staffordshire.gov.uk
* Dominic Ward (North) dominic.ward@staffordshire.gov.uk

The application process is electronic. Therefore, you must have a valid email address. If you are unable to submit an application electronically, please contact your local Rights of Way Officer.