

The ALSF COMMA Fund

ACRE's grants programme, funding community projects in
areas affected by aggregates quarrying

**Making a Difference
for Local People**

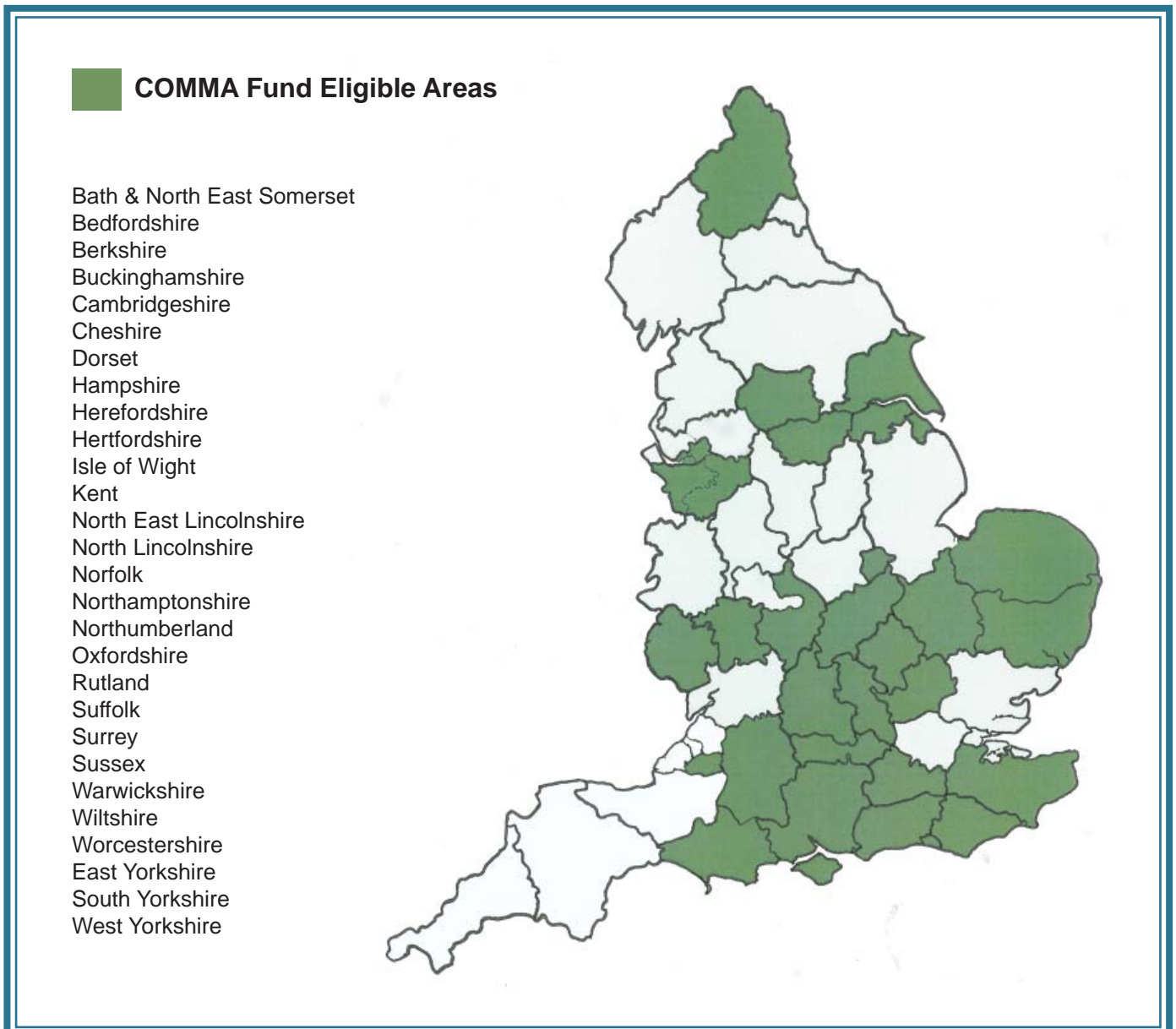


What is the ALSF COMMA Fund?

Since 2007, ACRE has delivered an annual grants programme, funded by Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF). ALSF was introduced in 2002 to complement the objectives of the Aggregates Levy, delivering local benefits to areas subject to the environmental costs of aggregates extraction. Defra distributes funding via a number of delivery partners, working within five themes, whose aims are:

1. **Quarries** - to reduce the environmental footprint of quarries and to take advantage of the opportunities they offer
2. **Marine** - to reduce the environmental footprint of marine extraction
3. **Resource Use** - to deliver more sustainable use of aggregates
4. **Transport** - to reduce the environmental footprint of the transport of aggregates
5. **Communities** - to deliver benefits to communities affected by extraction.

Across England, the Communities theme is delivered in 18 areas by Local Authorities (those areas with the highest impact from quarrying) and in a further 28 areas by ACRE, where the grants programme is known as the ALSF COMMA (**COMM**unity **Aggregates**) Fund.





The COMMA Fund supports projects which demonstrate public benefit in communities affected by aggregates extraction or transportation, located within 10 kilometres of an active or former aggregates quarry.

Dimensions of the Fund

During the first three years of operation (2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10), the COMMA Fund has attracted over 600 applications, with grants totalling £1,350,550 awarded to 133 community based projects. Individual grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 are available, with the average grant being £10,150.

	Applications to the Fund	Projects Awarded Funding	Value of COMMA Funding
2007-08	207	31	£435,000
2008-09	216	47	£434,300
2009-10	201	55	£481,250

Fund Administration and the role of RCAN members

The COMMA Fund is administered by a small staff at ACRE, mobilising support from the staff of RCAN members in the areas covered by the fund. The Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) is the collective name for the 38 Rural Community Councils (RCCs) throughout England, their eight regional bodies and ACRE, their national umbrella body. RCCs are charitable local development agencies, generally based at county level, which support and enable initiatives in rural communities.

The fund is run within an annual cycle of inviting applications, assessing, shortlisting, and awarding funds. Typically, applications are invited early in the year (March/April). The fund is advertised via the ACRE website and through the RCAN members in those counties covered by the fund. Applications may be made by local community groups, charities or town/parish councils.

Applications are assessed by the local RCAN member organisation and a shortlist from each area is forwarded to ACRE. Staff at ACRE undertake further assessment and benchmarking across the shortlisted applications. The final grant awards are determined in early July, by a National Grants Panel comprising both senior ACRE staff and external members. The National Grants Panel seeks to ensure that funding is spread equitably across the counties covered by the scheme and that projects address a variety of community needs.

RCAN members offer continuing support to projects as they proceed and are also able to advise unsuccessful applicants on alternative strategies or other potential sources of funding. Both ACRE and the RCAN members receive modest remuneration from the fund to contribute towards their administrative costs, but their additional support and advice is provided free of charge.

COMMA-Funded Projects

A wide range of projects have received COMMA Funding, with the grant contributing either a part, or all, of the funds required. COMMA Funding has delivered benefits in areas such as:

Community Buildings

enabling repairs, refurbishment and improvement to a wide range of buildings such as Village, Church and Community Halls

Environmental & Landscape

improvements to community open spaces such as woodland, village greens and ponds

Play Areas and Youth Facilities

for example, provision of play areas, exercise equipment or BMX/skate facilities

Arts & Heritage

interpretation and restoration of heritage sites

Outlined below are a selection of COMMA-funded projects, highlighting the diversity of initiatives which fall within the programme.

Wolvey Parish Council - Boardwalk Extension in Wolvey Wetland Reserve

Grant: £3,762

Total cost of project: £3,762

The grant was used to fund construction of a short ramp, using recycled plastic, as an extension to the main boardwalk, connecting it to the bridge which leads to the Woodland Walk area. This has improved access, which was previously difficult and dangerous, after heavy rain. The boardwalk extension was constructed by volunteers from the Wolvey Environment Group, opening up this beautiful area to visitors and villagers. It is also enabling better management and monitoring of the site, which is important to sustain the varied flora and fauna. <http://www.wolvey.org/OCF-GrantAwardBWExt.htm>



Wiltshire Wood Recycling Community Interest Company

Grant: £10,000

Total cost of project: £30,400

The grant contributed towards a new gas-fuelled truck to collect unwanted wood from building sites and industrial premises. This wood is sorted, prepared, then sold or made into useful items such as composters, raised flower or vegetable beds, tables for schools and chicken houses. Wiltshire Wood Recycling was set up to divert wood from landfill and skips, offer it for sale to the local community and provide volunteering and training opportunities for all members of the community. The company also donates wood and wood products to schools and community groups.



“I was most impressed with the variety of uses to which the organisation puts all the wood made available. In addition the enthusiasm of both the three paid staff and the many volunteers on which the organisation depends is an inspiration and a real credit to the vision of the people involved in its inception.”

Grants Manager, Community First

YWCA West Kent Young Women’s Centre - After School Activities Programme

Grant: £5,574

Total cost of project: £5,574

YWCA serves disadvantaged young women in England and Wales. The project provided an opportunity for young women, in two age groups, to attend after school activities which provided creative activities around healthy lifestyles, sexual health, friendships and image and relationships. For the younger group, activities included teambuilding, trips, exploring personal strengths and friendships, designing/accessorising bags and t-shirts. The older group addressed issues such as relationships and emotions, abuse of drugs and alcohol and produced a DVD around sexual health to use as a peer mentoring tool for younger women.

Bubbenhall Parish Council – Bubbenhall Village Green & Village Spring Restoration Project

Grant: £6,500

Total cost of project: £42,000

The grant contributed to the restoration of the village green and spring. This area is now a focal point for the village community and visitors to enjoy, with potable spring water available again.



Watlington Parish Council - Recreation Regeneration

Grant: £20,000

Total cost of project: £184,846



The grant part-funded a new play area and recreation ground. The scheme incorporated a large new play area designed for babies and young people of all abilities, a new fitness trail aimed at older children and adults, a football kick-around area and new landscaping, mounds and pathways. Previously, the old play area was tired, little used and inadequate and those residents that could, travelled to other towns and villages to access better facilities. This new facility revitalises the area and provides excellent play and fitness facilities within the local community.

Wittersham Village Hall Management Committee – New Insulated Suspended Ceiling in the Main Hall

Grant: £7,750

Total cost of project: £15,500

The grant met half the cost of a new suspended ceiling in the main hall. The new ceiling, with acoustic tiling, new lighting and insulation will help sustain the Village Hall for the long term. The insulation will cut fuel costs and the new lighting will encourage more use of the space, particularly in the winter months.



“The new look hall has enticed in new user groups, including short mat bowls, art and yoga classes and an increasing number of private hirers who are choosing the hall as a venue for their weddings, wakes or childrens’ parties. We are very grateful to all the villagers who have donated both their time and money to the project and, of course, to the various bodies who have given grants to help us restore the hall.”

Chairman of the management committee

Gilberdyke and District Leisure Association (GDLA) - Safetrack

Grant: £7,332

Total cost of project: £9,302

This project aimed to improve safe public access to a ten acre recreational area. The access track provides a public right of way through fields to the scout hut, pavilion, playing/sports field and bowls green and is the only access to the site. With the help of a dedicated team of volunteers, it was resurfaced and now provides a safe surface for all visitors, particularly pedestrians, cyclists, prams and those in wheelchairs.



Little Thetford Sports & Social Club - Multi Use Games Area

Grant: £11,400

Total cost of project: £63,500



The grant contributed towards a multi-use games area. This new sporting facility enables children and adults within the community and surrounding areas, of all levels of ability, to participate in a variety of sports. The new all-weather floodlit games area includes football, netball and tennis and it is planned that local schools will use the facility at a concessionary rate.

The Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust

Grant: £19,814

Total cost of project: £49,754

A community programme, with professional support, was set up to preserve Portland's cultural identity through video, photographic and sound recording, to convey oral histories and memories of the older generation of Portland's stone workers before they are lost. A comprehensive audio-visual record of the stone-working community was compiled, featuring a culture that has been associated with quarrying for hundreds of years. The project aimed to supplement existing material, with newly recorded voiceovers and interviews by key specialists in the trade – e.g. rubblers, quarrymen, stone selectors, stone masons, blacksmiths, lime kiln workers, draftsmen and machine drivers.

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership

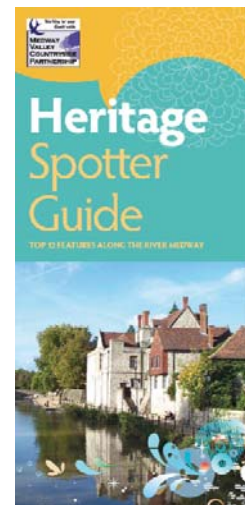
Grant: £6,400

Total cost of project: £9,200

The River Medway has a wealth of natural and industrial heritage, in which quarrying has played a key role. In the past, quarrying would have relied on the river as a transport route; in the present, it continues to shape and be a feature in the local landscape.

The Medway Valley Walk runs alongside the river from Tonbridge to Maidstone passing through villages, towns and rural countryside providing the opportunity for people to access and enjoy the river valley.

There is a demand for information by visitors so they can explore and learn about the river, especially focussed on its wildlife and heritage. This project produced a 'River Medway Spotters Pack' for visitors which can be downloaded from the MVCP website (www.medwayvalleymaps.co.uk) and is also available as leaflets. The pack includes a 'Wildlife Spotter guide' and 'Heritage Spotter guide', both providing an active approach to learning. This free resource directly benefits the local communities, enabling them to learn about and explore the river.



For further information on the COMMA Fund and other aspects of ACRE's work, please visit our website or contact us directly:



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Supported by:



ACRE's rural vision

Our vision is that rural communities will increasingly take a leading role in ensuring the social, environmental and economic well-being of all their residents. They will do this in a way that provides for the present generation and also plans for future needs and future challenges. RCAN members will be there to stimulate their thinking, support their work and help turn their aspirations into reality.