



GOVERNMENT
OF MALTA

MINISTRY FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY
AND PUBLIC CLEANLINESS

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR FISHERIES, AQUACULTURE
AND ANIMAL RIGHTS



2026

Scheme Guidelines:

Support to Local Councils for the Setup of Recreational Open Spaces, Sensory Play areas, and Green Pockets which include Dog Parks and Cat Cafes - Scheme 2026





Scheme Guidelines 6c

1. Introduction

1. The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights , The Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness and Project Green are offering Local Councils the opportunity to promote initiatives and projects in favour of animals through the setting up of recreational Open Spaces, Sensory Play areas, Green Pockets which include Dog Parks and Cat Cafes in the various localities around Malta and Gozo
2. This initiative fulfils the Government’s electoral manifesto that explicitly promised to continue to help local councils identify more areas that can be converted into recreational open spaces, sensory play areas, green pockets which include dog parks and cat cafes to offer exercise areas for dogs in more locations around Malta. The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights in collaboration with Project Green and the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness will be supporting Local Councils to encourage them to come up with projects to further safeguard the wellbeing of animals and further promote animal welfare awareness among various categories of society.





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2. Objectives

1. The Scheme aims to support Local Councils to set up the Recreational Open Spaces, Sensory Play areas, Green Pockets which include Dog Parks and Cat Cafes in their localities with the aim to enhance the well-being of animals, promote effective management practices, and strengthen the welfare services within the community.
2. The initiative aims to establish well-designed and accessible recreational open spaces, sensory play areas, green pockets which include dog parks and cat cafes within communities, providing safe, secure, and engaging spaces where dogs can exercise, socialize, and play off-leash in a controlled environment. By creating these dedicated areas, the project seeks to promote responsible pet ownership, reduce conflicts in shared public spaces, and enhance the overall well-being of both pets and their owners. Additionally, the initiative will contribute to fostering a stronger sense of community by encouraging interaction among dog owners while promoting animal welfare and environmental sustainability through proper park maintenance and infrastructure.





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3. Management and Assessment

1. The support scheme is managed by the Animal Welfare Directorate (AWD). A Committee will also be set up to approve or reject project proposals based on the recommendations of the Directorate. The Committee will be made up of four (4) members appointed by the Permanent Secretary (MAFA) One member shall be nominated by Project Green (PG) must be included in the vetting and evaluation process, with full voting rights. The Committee shall be assisted by a secretary to be appointed by the Director (Animal Welfare).
2. The Committee:
 1. shall confirm the eligibility of the applications following verifications by the AWD;
 2. shall assess applications against the objectives, parameters and criteria set out herein and prioritise them accordingly, as per scoring sheet;
 3. may request any clarifications from applicants for purposes of assessment which need to be submitted by the applicant within seven (7) working days.





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3. Each application shall be assessed by the Committee against the following criteria:

a. Community Need and Demand (20%)

A. demonstrated need for the facility in the community.

b. Location Suitability (20%)

- Site shall be accessible for residents (public transport, parking availability), spacious enough to accommodate various facilities such as an off-leash area, walking trails, and seating and the terrain is safe.
- The proposed site must be located within an Urban Development Zone.
- The minimum required plot size is 1,500 square meters (sqm).
- Land use should be allocated as follows:
 - 80% dedicated to landscaping or green space.
 - 20% allocated for either a dog park or a cat café.
- The proposal must not involve the uprooting or transplanting of existing trees.
- Proof of land ownership must be provided.
- There should be no existing dog park or cat café within the same locality. Notwithstanding should a dog park or cat café that can be embellished already exist in the locality these will be taken into consideration.
- For cat café proposals, a clear segregation must be maintained between the café and the landscaped area.





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c. Preparedness (20%)

Development approval processes and compliance requirements initiated or completed.

d. Infrastructure and Amenities (20%)

Availability of water supply and potential for future enhancements.

e. Safety and Environmental Impact (20%)

The selected site shall be distant from wildlife habitats which do not disrupt local ecosystems or sensitive green spaces.





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4. General Parameters

1. The following general parameters are applicable:
 - a. the maximum allocation for each project shall not exceed €50,000 (inclusive of VAT) irrespective of whether the Local Council is applying in its own capacity or partnering;
 - b. projects must be covered by all necessary regulatory and other permits and must be carried out in full conformity with all applicable laws and permits, as appropriate;
 - c. the Local Council must provide evidence of ownership and/or right to use the property and must subsequently keep the structural improvements in good order for a minimum period of five (5) years from completion;
 - d. only one (1) project per Local Council will be financed.





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5. Eligibility

1. Applicants must:

- a. be Local Councils set up in line with Chapter 363, Local Councils Act. Localities that already have a dog park or cat café may still be considered, provided these spaces can be refurbished, embellished, or replaced as part of the scheme.;
- b. submit their fully completed application on the form that may be downloaded from link provided on the Ministry Webpage – mafa.gov.mt and Local Councils Webpage - www.localgovernment.gov.mt within the established time frame;
- c. include in their application a detailed project plan and information required in section 3.3,
- d. submit a site plan (1:5000) signed by an architect and a google map of the proposed site to be set up as a recreational open spaces, sensory play areas and green pockets;
- e. be in line with the General Parameters and with the conditions of the call for applications.





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f. include with their application a copy of all applicable regulatory permits and, where such permits are still being obtained, commit to providing such permits within nine (9) months from the Letter of Acceptance. Agreement will not be signed until all the necessary permits are forwarded to AWD. The Application will be kept pending for nine (9) months.





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6. Funding Agreement

1. Successful applicants shall enter into a Funding Agreement with the Animal Welfare Directorate.
2. The Funding Agreement shall be subject to the conditions laid down in the set guidelines and also any other conditions laid down in the call for applications. The Funding Agreement shall also include any other specific conditions and arrangements required to ensure proper governance and enforcement of the grant conditions.
3. Project Green will be supporting the financing of the dog parks and cat cafés up to a maximum of €50,000 per park, with a total allocation of €750,000 for the scheme. Implementation will be carried out by Ministry for Agriculture Fisheries and Animal Rights.
4. The respective Local Council shall act as the Implementing Body and shall be responsible for the day-to-day project management, procurement procedures, and contractor supervision.
5. Ongoing maintenance, including cleaning, landscaping, and minor repairs, shall remain the responsibility of the Local Council.





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7. Appeals Procedures

1. Appeals in relation to the submitted projects can be filed the Malta Arbitration Centre through the following link www.arbitration.mt





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8. How to apply

1. A call for Applications will be published Online.
2. Only applications received through email by the stipulated date and time are accepted.
3. Applicants should ensure that they:
 - a. are eligible for funding;
 - b. full completion of the application form;
 - c. submit all required documentation;
 - d. submit the application with supporting documentation by the stipulated deadline being 30/04/2026

Any further queries regarding this scheme and application process may be referred to the Animal Welfare Directorate via e-mail to: awschemes.mafa@gov.mt. If applicants wish to be contacted by telephone they can write to the above email address leaving their contact details and they may be contacted accordingly.





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4. Normal registered mail to:

Animal Welfare Directorate,
Luqa Road, Qormi,
LQA 9041; or

3. Phone number: 22924135

