



Net Zero Villages Grant - South Cambridgeshire

The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme aims to support rural communities to deliver capital projects that deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Total available	£362,547.90
Min/max grant	£20,000 - £100,000
Grant scheme open	Wednesday 11 December 2024
Application deadline	11.59pm Sunday 2 February 2025
Project spending deadline	Friday 28 February 2026

What can be funded?

The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme will fund CAPITAL projects.

There are 3 categories of projects:

1. Tackling energy use and/or supporting energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings.
2. Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport.
3. Nature based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings.

Projects must demonstrate and measure the following impacts as relevant to the project:

- Carbon Emission reduction
- Reduction in energy consumption
- Reduction in running cost of community facilities
- Reduce overheating of a building
- Demonstrator project that can be replicated
- Number of the community engaged or changes in behaviour

Projects must demonstrate value for money.

Who can apply?

Applicants must be one of the following:

- A Parish Council in South Cambridgeshire.
- A voluntary, community or social enterprise sector organisation, with the applicable asset to be improved being located in South Cambridgeshire.
- Other public sector bodies applying on behalf of a South Cambridgeshire community.
- Businesses are eligible to apply but the project must relate to a community asset for public benefit.

Assets within the Cambridge built-up area using the 2021 Census figures (<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/eastofengland/>) are **not** eligible.

Applicants must have:

- A written constitution or mission statement.
- An elected committee or representative steering group.
- A bank account associated to the group / organisation / council, where grants can be payable to, and be able to provide an up-to-date copy of their accounts or, as a minimum, a recent bank account statement.
- A Safeguarding Policy, or, if you don't have one, please make it clear what your organisation or group will do to keep children or other vulnerable people safe during the implementation of the project.
- An Equal Opportunity Policy, or, if you don't have one, please make it clear what your organisation or group will do to ensure equality of access to the project. If you have questions about these criteria, please contact us at climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk.

Example Projects

Please note, the following list is not exhaustive, and we welcome alternative proposals which meet the grant funding criteria.

Tackling energy use and/or supporting energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings.

- Insulation measures including:
 - Loft insulation
 - Internal/external cavity wall insulation
- Energy efficiency measures including:
 - Replacement lighting to LED lighting
 - Underfloor heating
 - Double/triple glazed windows
 - Draft proofing
 - Window shutters (especially on south facing windows if the building currently overheats, or north facing windows if the building has large amounts of exposed glass to cold winter winds).
- Renewable energy measures including:
 - Solar PV installations
 - Wind turbine
 - Battery installation (provided it is directly linked to a proposed or current renewable energy source on the building, such as rooftop PV panels or a wind turbine. Battery installation which is primarily for the purpose of being charged up using off peak electricity will not be eligible).
- Clean heating measures
 - Air/ground source heat pump installation

Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport.

- Low carbon public transport, such as a local community-led shuttle minibus. Evidence of need and sustainability of running costs would be needed.

- Cycling related facilities, which clearly provide greater opportunities or encouragement of cycling to local services.
- Micro-mobility hubs

Nature based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings.

- Green roofs and walls
- Tree / landscape planting (native only) which creates shade and/or cooling breezes (though these would need to ensure such measures don't have the effect of increasing cold winds/reducing solar gain in winter).

Exclusions

The following projects are **NOT** eligible:

- Funding of Electric Vehicle charge points.
- New gas or oil boilers.
- Projects solely seeking to repair, maintain or renew due to normal wear and tear
- Projects that are not intended for community use
- Projects that have the potential to cause detrimental impacts upon the wider determinants of health.
- Costs incurred before the project start date shown in the grant funding agreement.
- The purchase of land or buildings.
- Tree planting or other similar measures which is for 'carbon offsetting' purposes.

The following organisations are **NOT** eligible:

- Organisations previously awarded funding within 3 years, where the UK Subsidy Control limits will be exceeded.
- Private households, businesses premises or public sector buildings (i.e. local authority or blue light services. Parish Council owned facilities and buildings are eligible).

Funding levels

A total of £362,547.90 funds are available for distribution as grants from January 2025 to February 2026.

It is important to note that the grant is entirely 'capital funding'. This means it cannot be used for 'revenue funded' purposes. If you are uncertain as to whether project costs can be funded, please get in touch to discuss this.

The minimum single grant award is £20,000, and the maximum is £100,000. For funding less than £20,000 please get in touch and we will see if alternative funding streams may be available.

All grants can be for 100% of the project's cost.

The Council reserves the right to prioritise projects based on quality, value for money and deliverability of applications received. Eligibility does not guarantee grant funding.

Project timeframes

Applications can be submitted from the launch of the fund on the 11th December. The end date for applications to the grant scheme is by 11.59 on 2 February 2025.

No spend may occur after 28 February 2026.

How will projects be assessed?

Scoring

All eligible grant applications will be scored and assessed by an Officer Panel who will review eligibility of every application using a scoring matrix against the criteria. The outcome of the scoring be reviewed by the Grants Advisory Committee, who will make recommendations to the lead Cabinet Member for Finance for decision.

Project proposals will be scored and prioritised for funding based on how well they meet the criteria set out below.

Project Impact

How well and to what extent the project will result in on or more of the following impacts:

- Carbon Emission reduction
- Reduction in energy consumption
- Reduction in running cost of community facilities
- Reduce overheating of a building
- Demonstrator project that can be replicated
- Number of the community engaged or changes in behaviour

Value for money

To what extent does the project represent good value for money.

The application will need to show:

- That competitive quotes have been sought and costs represent value for money and that a minimum of three quotes is required for projects from £20,000-£25,000. For projects over £25,000, please email climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk to discuss the procurement process.
- That quotes received in advance of the grant, take into account inflation between grant application and grant approval.
- The amount of grant required to deliver the outcomes and outputs e.g. cost per kg CO2e.
- That other options have been considered.
- What difference grant aid will make when compared to what would happen without grant aid.

Project deliverability and sustainability

- How the project will continue to benefit people after funding comes to an end. Project should be sustainable and not dependent on future public funding.
- How the project will affect the community groups within the area.
- That the project does not disadvantage anybody in terms of age, gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity.

- That risks that have been identified are relevant to the size, scale and scope of the project and to the business/organisation in carrying out the project including how these risks will be mitigated

Permissions, consents, licenses and tenancies

A critical assessment will be made on likelihood of the project being delivered in full by February 2026.

If a project needs specific permissions, consents and licenses for the proposals to go ahead, the applicant must send confirmation that they are in place to the Local Authority. This includes:

- Planning permissions
- Environmental consents (such as an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency)
- District Network Operators consent
- Any other permissions required for the project.

Tenancies

In the case of tenancies, a landlord's written permission for the improvements must be obtained where this is a condition of the tenancy. In addition, the applicant must provide written evidence of the tenancy agreement, including the duration of the agreement remaining if it is a fixed term arrangement.

It is the applicant's responsibility not to make any substantial changes to the assets or how they are used and continue to use them for the purpose described in the application, for at least 5 years after receiving the final payment. In the event that the tenancy agreement ends within the 5-year period and is not renewed on substantially the same terms as the previous agreement, the applicant must contact the Local Authority as it may be necessary to repay some or all of the grant monies received.

For evidence of the tenancy agreement, applicants must send a copy (not original documentation) of the tenancy agreement sections that show:

- The holding address,
- Tenant,
- Landlord,
- Signatures and
- For fixed term agreements, the tenancy term

Agreement and award of funding

All applications will be notified in March 2025 if successful.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter explaining the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

A funding agreement will be prepared for all successful applicants. This will include arrangements for payment of the grant. If the applicant can meet all the timings and the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement, they must return a signed copy of the grant funding agreement within 30 working days of the date of issue. If they don't, the funding offer will expire.

Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

All successful applicants will be required to report on their progress at monthly intervals from the date of receipt of funds. Projects must set out how they will measure and report how they have met the objectives identified in their application.

Larger, more complex projects will be monitored closely to ensure that key milestones are achieved, and risks mitigated.

An end of project evaluation must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 6 months of project completion.

Project Change Requests

The applicant is expected to use the grant money to buy items as specified in the application and grant funding agreement. During the grant period, exceptional circumstance may arise where applicants need to change elements of a project, or senior personnel might change. The Council must be informed in writing immediately and where appropriate seek a variation. For example:

- Changes to use of buildings, equipment or any other assets bought with the grant.
- Disposing of or selling any of the assets.
- Closing, selling or transferring the business that's associated with the grant.
- Change of project manager

This applies during the project and for five years after the payment of the final claim. Agreement to an amendment is not automatic and if the applicant goes ahead with a change that the Council has not agreed to, there may be an obligation to repay part or whole of the grant.

Conditions of the funding

Organisations that are awarded a grant will be expected to comply with the following conditions as a minimum:

- Funding must only be used for the agreed purpose and must be spent by 28 February 2026 at the very latest.
- Publicity must take place acknowledging the award is provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- Any unused grant must be returned to South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- Project updates must be provided on a monthly basis.
- An end of project report must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 6 months of project completion.
- Any overspend or miscalculation resulting in increased costs will not be met by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Procurement and Subsidy Control

Procurement rules and regulations

Recipients of funding will be expected to comply with central Government regulations:

- If the value of individual items being purchased is less than £4,999 (net VAT) then you may place a direct award. (i.e., no need to secure multiple quotes)
- If the value of individual items being purchased is between £5,000 and £24,999 (net VAT) then you must request and supply 3 written quotes from relevant suppliers of goods, works and/or services.
- If the value of individual items being purchased is greater than £25,000 (net of VAT), please contact climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk to discuss your procurement process.

UK Subsidy Control Regime

You will need to declare all grant funding received in the last 3 years. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the 'Act') came into force on 4th January 2023. The Act sets out the UK's prevailing subsidy control rules.

Payments received by the applicant from any business grant schemes administered by local authorities or anything similar from the government, for all business properties they are responsible for, counts as Subsidy Allowance.

Full details can be read [here](#)

To qualify for this grant your business must not have received more than £315,000 of subsidy allowance in the last three years. You will need to include any Covid-19 grants you may have received.

Fraud

As part of the appraisal of each application, credit checks may be carried out which will include overdue creditors, bankruptcy, county court judgements and director disqualification. Deliberate manipulation and fraud will not be accepted. Any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can't be funded?

Please see the 'Exclusions' section on page 3 for information. If you have any further questions on this, please contact climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk.

Do I need match funding?

Match funding is not a requirement for this project; however, we do request that projects demonstrate value for money in their application. For more information on demonstrating value for money, please see the “How will projects be assessed?” section on page 4.

Can I collaborate with another organisation?

Collaboration between organisations is allowed, however, we would expect that all organisations adhere to the criteria and requirements set out in this document.

What qualifies as a community building?

The following buildings are likely to be eligible

- Village/community halls
- Meeting rooms
- Parish owned buildings

Each project should demonstrate that community events, clubs or similar are regularly held in the buildings, at reasonable cost (with nil or negligible annual membership fees), and with a high degree of accessibility.

Whilst it is accepted the following buildings are often very important assets in a village community, the following are unlikely to qualify unless it can be demonstrated that they are not for profit and have a very clear long-term community-led input into how they are run and funded:

- Pubs
- Hotels and other accommodation
- Restaurants and Cafes
- Public buildings owned by local authorities or other public sector bodies other than parish councils (for example, a County Council owned library is not eligible, nor a local NHS doctor’s clinic)
- Buildings primarily dedicated to sports or gym facilities (multi-purpose village halls which are occasionally used for sports or gym classes amongst other uses **would** be eligible)
- Churches or other religious buildings (community buildings in church grounds **would** likely be eligible, but not the main church itself)
- School buildings (community buildings in school grounds **would** likely be eligible, but not the main school itself)