Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

STRATEGIC CAPITAL PROJECTS GRANT PROGRAMME 2026/2027

GUIDANCE NOTES

MINI COMPETITIONS – CATEGORY 2 ERNE NORTH AND OMAGH DEA'S

Introduction and Background

The Strategic Capital Projects Grant Programme is aimed at meeting the needs of the district with a view to fulfilling the outcomes of the Fermanagh and Omagh 2030 Community Plan, Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28, Inclusive Economy Action Plan 2024-28 and Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy. The funding will provide a mechanism for investing in rural/urban areas and is available to local community/voluntary organisations with a project plan to enhance existing facilities or to meet an unmet local need.

Indicative actions that Council is seeking to address and could be supported are:

- The vision of creating places which are sustainable, welcoming and accessible to live, work and relax. These include revitalisation, public realm, and comprehensive development schemes;
- Infrastructural improvements such as enhanced public realm, better footpaths, street furniture and lighting, and public seating;
- Projects relating to active travel, promoting connectivity and access to services, and/or creating and enhancing green/blue space. Potential projects could include cycle tracks or lanes, cycle parking;
- Connection pathways to access town centres and the centre of settlements and key services, adapting existing routes and/or creating desirable new ingress and egress routes;
- Dereliction and vacant site enhancement;
- Development of new community facilities and enhancements to existing;
- Environmental improvements;
- Conservations and upgrading of rural culture (natural and built);
- Walkways, play facilities and nature trails;
- Signage and local heritage features;
- Improving physical access to amenities or attractions;
- Gateway projects, entrance features and signage;

The Strategic Capital Projects Grant Programme aims to invest £5m over a five-year period within the community and voluntary sector and will see the quantitative development or enhancement of a minimum of 40 facilities that will align with the objectives identified as priorities in the Community, Corporate and Inclusive Economy Plans.

At least 40 groups/organisations will avail of the funding with a focus on inclusive wider community activity. The inclusivity of wider community participation will be required and evidenced at application and implementation stage with monitoring and evaluation returns a key requirement to ensure desired impacts are delivered. The scheme will see the future proofing of rural community facilities that have the potential to reduce feelings of rural isolation, enhance wellbeing, physical fitness and social engagement through the provision of shared spaces where people can meet, socialise, exercise and keep well in the company of other people.

This will be the second year of the proposed 5 year scheme with £1m funding secured to be awarded in 2026/2027. The scheme aims to operate annually until 2029/2030, but is contingent on securing annual funding of £1million in Council Estimate process.

The scheme will be delivered by officers working in the Economic Development & Investment Service Area with support from Community and Capital Programmes services.

A minimum of 10% match funding, based on total project cost, will be mandatory and will result in the leverage of a minimum additional investment of £500,000 in projects over the five-year period of the scheme.

Funding Approach

The Strategic Capital Projects Grant Programme will provide capital funding of up to a minimum of 8 organisations per year who are also required to match fund from other sources to a minimum value of 10% of the grant awarded. Grants will support the regeneration and development of communities, with proposed priority applied through a scoring allocation for groups with projects located in the top 30% most deprived small areas (7.5%) and groups in an area not in receipt of capital funding in the last 5 years (7.5%).

The grant scheme has been allocated £1m for 2026/2027 for two categories of projects:

- Category 1 – Larger strategic grants up to £300k with a maximum of one project at this scale. The project must robustly demonstrate how it serves communities across a District Electoral Area (DEA) or across several DEA's in the district.
- Category 2 – Medium Capital with grants up to £100k. A minimum of seven grants will be awarded and will be equitably spread across the district. If any underspend is identified in Category 1 within the financial year it will be added to the fund for Category 2 projects in the same financial year.

All grant recipients will be required to contribute a minimum of 10% match funding of the total project costs.

All applications must achieve a score of at least 65% in order to be considered for an award of funding.

The grant programme is a competitive fund and awards will be determined on a similar basis to the previous Strategic Capital Projects Grant Programme, with a minimum of one project per DEA, providing the 65% scoring threshold has been achieved. Groups must demonstrate their commitment to promoting social inclusion, equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). Groups will be required to complete an application to demonstrate eligibility, quality of the project and the need for financial assistance with the Council undertaking review of project promoter's financial status to ensure proper and efficient use of public funding.

Applicants will be required to submit evidence of match funding sources, ownership, statutory approvals (if applicable) and any other relevant supporting documentation as part of the application

process to the call. **All statutory approvals and full match funding must be in place at time of submission of application (refer to eligibility section).**

Payment of Grant

Please note this grant award is retrospective and only paid on completion of works and a fully vouched claim. Phased payments can be requested and considered in line with key milestones which are assessed, valued and confirmed by an Architect/Quantity Surveyor. Only those aspects of the project that have been defined in the Architect or Quantity Surveyor submission will be considered eligible for payment. Advance payments are not eligible.

Council will require all successful applicants to appoint, through a Council approved procurement process, a single Contractor to complete the construction. Approval will not be given to self-design or self-build. Details of procurement policy and process will be provided by Council.

Each applicant will be responsible for retention of information required for reporting to Council progress towards project objectives approved in the Project Business Case. Clawback of financial support can be applied where grant is not used as intended.

APPLICATION FORM

The application form can be accessed through the Council's online grants platform available via the Council website at https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/services/sponsorship-grants-bursaries/grant-aid/

The grant will be open for applications with effect from Wednesday 11 November 2026, closing on Wednesday 9 December 2026 at 5pm.

Applications received after the closing date and time will be deemed ineligible.

For further information on the application process please contact the Investment and Funded Programmes team on 0300 303 1777 or email grants@fermanaghomagh.com.

STAGE 1 ELIGIBILITY

Applicants will be required to demonstrate how they meet the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria require evidence to be uploaded with the application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure all evidence is submitted at time of application. No additional information will be accepted after the closing date.

- Application forms will only be considered from community projects geographically located within the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area.
- Attendance at a mandatory pre-application Information Event. Applications will be deemed ineligible where there is no evidence of attendance.

- Application Forms must be submitted from properly constituted not for profit groups, with the **Constitution/Articles of Association to be submitted with application.**
- Application Forms will only be considered from projects that can demonstrate alignment with the Fermanagh & Omagh Community Plan, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Corporate Plan, Inclusive Economy Action Plan and the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy which can be accessed via the Council website at www.fermanaghomagh.com
- Provision of evidence that the project has the support of the local community e.g. Letters of support including how those supporting will utilise the project, community surveys. **Evidence to be uploaded with application.**
- Demonstrates that the project will be able to complete within 2 years of the issue of the Letter of Offer.
- Provides evidence that there are no issues with ownership of the land/building where the proposed project will be sited/located including written permissions from owner where land/building/project area is leased. **Evidence of ownership or leasing arrangement , e.g. deeds/lease/solicitors letter to be uploaded with application.** Where applicable, **evidence of written permission for project from owner to be uploaded with application.**
- Provide evidence that all statutory approvals are in place at the time of submitting the application, to include Planning Permission, Building Control application/approval**. Evidence of all statutory approvals relevant to the project to be uploaded with application.**
- Provides evidence of full match funding in place at time of application. Bank Statements, Loan agreements etc. **Evidence to be uploaded at time of application clearly demonstrating full value of match funding; i.e., applicant match funding is calculated deducting the grant sum applied for, from the total independent quotation cost, and must be no less than 10% of the grant requested.**
- Groups must be able to provide an independent quotation validating detailed project costs (i.e from a contractor). **Quotation to be uploaded with application.**
- No applicant, group, project or facility awarded a grant through the current Council's Strategic Capital Project Grant Programme or the Small Settlements Regeneration Programme will be able to re-apply for a period of five years from the issue date of a Letter of Offer or three years from the Letter of Offer project end.

The Application Form is designed to identify how the applicant meets the eligibility of the Strategic Capital Projects Grant Programme by requesting evidence of how the following areas will be assessed. Groups will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their grant and how it will generate positive and measurable outputs and outcomes for the local community.

Proposed projects should add value to existing provision or opportunity, for example, identify and meet a currently unmet demand or provide additional services. Provision should not duplicate or cause displacement.

STAGE 2 – QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND SCORING

The project application will be assessed and scored against the following.

- Need for the Project (community need, identification of unmet demand, generates additional provision, benefits to the local community) 30%
- Value for Money 20%
- Environmental Sustainability 10%
- Route to Project Completion (Clear assessment and plan to achieve identified outcomes) 10%
- Socio Economic Needs Assessment based on project location 15%
- Priority areas based on deprivation – project located in top 30% most deprived (7.5%) and area not in receipt of capital funding in last 5 years (7.5%)

Need for the Project (30%)

- Clearly identified project proposal and detailed/evidenced the need.
- The need, where possible, should be supported by statistics, survey or other appropriate evidence such as a feasibility study, condition report, engineers report, health & safety report etc....
- Has a community survey been carried out? What evidence did this produce?
- Consideration must be given to the proximity of similar facilities/services or the likelihood of causing displacement of users from an existing project/facility.
- Improves facilities, access or services
- Increases the utilisation of a facility or service
- Attracts a new or larger participant group
- The project identified and exploited an opportunity or filled a gap in provision
- Identified the impact of the project on the local area.

Alignment with Fermanagh and Omagh 2030 Community Plan, Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28, Inclusive Economy Action Plan 2024-28 and Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy.

Value for Money (20%)

Financial Feasibility

- Project demonstrates value for money
- Evidence of a quotation
- Evidence of match funding including own resources
- Have all available sources of funding been considered?
- Level of community fundraising undertaken
- Demonstrates that the project/facility will be financially sustainable.

* As Capital Grant Aid usually forms part of a wider funding package, applicants must demonstrate at the time of application that the project is financially feasible. Where external funding is required applicants will have to demonstrate that sources of funding are in place. Groups will be required to demonstrate the need for financial assistance and provide appropriate evidence to support this need.

Environmental Sustainability (10%)

- Project promotes positive action on climate changes
- Does the Project contribute to reducing carbon emissions?
- Has the group considered the use of environmentally sustainable or friendly materials in their project?
- Will the project lead to long term sustainability of the project/facility?
- Will the project lead to a reduction in heat loss to a facility?
- Will the project lead to increased energy efficiency?

Route to Project Completion (10%)

- Has the group the capacity to deliver a project of this nature and scale?
- Has the group demonstrated that it has the skills, capacity and experience necessary to manage a grant aided project?
- Does the group have a governance structure in place and committee members assigned to deliver the project?
- Has the group delivered a successful funded project in the past?
- Has the group demonstrated future maintenance plans and upkeep of the project post funding

Socio Economic Need (15%)

- Desktop assessment of statistical evidence across a range of factors including deprivation, accessibility, economic inactivity, health and wellbeing and dereliction. A range of robust data sources will be utilised to provide this information at a local level. The data will then be analysed to provide an indicative 'socio-economic need' score and will then be ranked based on the socio-economic need.

Priority Areas (7.5%)

- Project location, based on deprivation
- Top- 30% most deprived areas

Not in receipt of Capital Funding in last 5 years (7.5%)

- Applicant, groups, projects or facilities NOT awarded a grant through the current Council's Strategic Capital Project Grant Programme or the Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.

Applications will be scored and placed in ranking order. Where applications exceed the 65% threshold, they will be ranked in score order within the relevant District Electoral Area (DEA). The top project in each DEA that exceeds the threshold will be allocated funding.

In the event that funding is not allocated to a project within a DEA (as a result of either no project being submitted or the submitted project(s) being unsuccessful) an additional call for projects will be opened, but only to that DEA with no project, and will only be allocated funding if it demonstrates the ability to complete within 2 years of the date of the Letter of Offer.

If the above process does not bring forward a project, the remaining funds will be allocated to the next highest ranked projects, inclusive of all DEAs, until funding has been expended

To ensure equitable distribution of funding across the District there will be a maximum of only two projects in any DEA per financial year.

OUTCOME

Following ratification by Council, successful applicants will be issued with a Letter of Intent detailing the grant amount to be allocated pending an appeals process. Groups who wish to appeal a decision of the Grant Aid Panel must contact the Council in writing outlining the reasons for appeal within 10 working days of the date of the unsuccessful letter/notification of application outcome. For DEA's where no appeals are received, issue of Letters of Offer to the successful applicant will be issued setting out all terms and conditions along with any other requirements associated with the project. In the event of appeals, they will be progressed through the Council appeal process, resulting in a delay of issue of Letters of Offer to the impacted DEA(s) and only issued on completion of the appeals process.

No work should commence until a Letter of Offer has been accepted.

Following issue and acceptance of a Letter of Offer, successful groups will be allocated a Council Project Officer who will work with the group throughout the project duration, including providing guidance on procurement, approval of procurement and award of contract, guidance on claims procedure and approval of phased payments, regular monitoring and site visits, and post project evaluation.

Groups will be expected to commence their projects as soon as reasonably feasible.

Following ratification by Council unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing. If your application is unsuccessful, or you are not satisfied with the recommendation, you can contact the Council's Grants & Investment Team to find out why your application was rejected. An appeal process is accessible to unsuccessful applicants. Further information can be found in the Code of Practice.

APPLICANT SUPPORT

Applications can be discussed with the Community Support Officers or members of the Grants and Investment Unit, by Telephone – 0300 303 1777, Textphone 028 8225 6216
Or by Email: grants@fermanaghomagh.com

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The direct grant recipient is responsible for checking with their insurance company that all appropriate insurances are in place for the duration of the project and that the completed project is appropriately insured thereafter. Minimum requirements are: Public Liability £10m for capital works being undertaken. Groups must contact their insurance provider to confirm the appropriate levels of insurance required for the project; £10m Employers Liability (if applicable); and Professional Indemnity – where the group is utilising professional or design services, for example; architect, solicitors, engineers, consultants then the requirement is £2m unless otherwise advised by insurance provider. These documents must be made available to the Council in advance of first claim payment.

The grant recipient is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate and relevant policies for the facility are in place examples include but are not limited to; Child Protection, Protection of Vulnerable Adults and Equality, Health & Safety. These must be made available to the Council if requested.

Applicants must comply with the Council's procurement guidelines. It is essential that "Value for Money" is sought for the purchases of goods/services for any grant aid awarded by the Council. Goods and services shall be procured on the basis of competitive quotation or tender from relevant, experienced and bona fide suppliers with review undertaken by Council to ensure compliance prior to award of contract.

Documentary evidence of match funding to be made available to the Council at the application stage. This will be checked again prior to the issue of Letter of Offer. If, following the procurement process has been completed the costs of the project have increased the group must be able to demonstrate that they can meet the costs of any additional works.

The scheme will be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that it considers lessons learned. The annual review will also take cognisance of any new funding opportunities available to the community and voluntary sector, including identifying how any funding might impact on scheme criteria for this programme. This may result in adaptations to the programme, to be approved by the Council on an annual basis.