



***Promoting and developing a vibrant third sector in
the Scottish Borders***

Village Halls Retrofit Fund 2024

Guidance for Applicants

July 2024



**Funded by
UK Government**

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1. About the Fund

Borders Community Action is the coordinating body for village halls in the Scottish Borders, working closely with the Four Federation of Village Halls. These community spaces comprise 96 venues across the Borders overall.

Following a successful CRF (Communities Renewal Fund) pilot project carried out in 2021/22, this project is a follow-up to the [Bridging the Gap – Knowledge Transfer](#) project aimed at building community capacity to upskill green skills and support decarbonisation of village halls/community facilities across the Scottish Borders.

This fund, managed by Borders Community Action is a capital investment to village halls established to support Net Zero/ retrofit developments. Grants will be allocated to support capital investment such as energy efficiency measures and can be used as match funding.

2. Fund Aims and Outcomes

The impact of COVID 19 on community life and the use of shared spaces, combined with high costs of energy have all exposed the fragility of our eco-systems in every sense. The journey to Net Zero and the responsibility towards a greener, more sustainable future is everyone's call to action. **This project aims to support local developments towards their Net Zero journey.**

This project supports Theme 5 of the RES (Regional Economic Strategy)¹ **'Green & Sustainable Economy'** by supporting communities to move towards the transition to net zero. The project will assist in providing the means to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the rural community Village Hall network, **reducing the carbon footprint and reducing energy costs.** It will improve community buildings to support fragile communities.

It will also support Theme 6 **'Thriving & Distinct Communities'** by empowering communities to take forward **green projects to sustain their community buildings for the future.** It will also support and grow third sector activities and services in rural communities, reducing the need for transport to outlying areas through the growth of small enterprises such as community shops, post office and coffee shops in Village Halls as well as digital inclusion, information sharing and infrastructure capacity.

¹ <https://www.southofscotlandrep.com/media/fsyhgtmv/south-of-scotland-regional-economic-strategy.pdf>

3. Who can apply?

This fund is dedicated to supporting village halls across the Scottish Borders. A village or community hall is a physical space that is used to meet the needs of people who live, work or visit the surrounding area. Village halls are used by a wide range of people, and the space is often rented out to different groups and individuals. They are generally run by and for members of the community²

Sometimes, these spaces are referred to as:

- Community hubs
- Community centres
- Town hall
- Community trust

We've chosen to use village or community halls to cover all of these kinds of spaces and groups.

Applicants must be constituted non-profit distributing community organisations, including organisations with charitable status, that are established and operating across a geographically defined community or faith groups. Some common community organisation structures include:

- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIO)
- Private Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG)
- Community Benefit Societies (BenCom)
- Community Interest Companies (CIC).

Applicants must demonstrate:

- how the building is used by the community
- through your constituting documents, that either:
 - anyone in the community can use the space or
 - that no-one is explicitly excluded from being able to use the building or
 - the building is used by vulnerable or defined groups stated in the charity's objectives, for example children, women, veterans, refugees etc.
- good levels of building utilisation/occupancy.

The building must be owned or leased by the applicant and, if you are a tenant, you must have:

- a valid and viable lease in place for at least a further five years following the completion of the project and/or has the right to extend for the equivalent period
- evidence of permission from the building owners (or the rights stated in the lease) to carry out all proposed works.

² <https://scvo.scot/support/village-community-halls>

To be eligible applicants must demonstrate:

- a minimum of three unrelated persons on the organisations' management committee or board that are local to the area served by the community building
- that their area of benefit is in the Scottish Borders
- a commitment to demonstrating the low carbon technologies in the building and raising awareness among building users and the wider community.

4. What improvements can be funded?

The funds available will be used to cover one or more of the improvement measures below:

- Energy audits/ energy efficiency assessments
- Insulation - any loft, underfloor or cavity wall insulation
- Upgraded windows/ doors
- A heat pump (air, ground or water source)
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels (if identified as an adequate measure by an energy efficiency measure)
- Solar battery storage
- Digital infrastructure improvement: broadband installation and smart devices – this is a key part of this work and needs to be aligned with any physical improvement of buildings (smart thermostat controls for example).

5. What measures cannot be funded?

The Village Halls Retrofit fund cannot be used to fund the following:

- Measures that do not result in carbon savings, or result in carbon increases, are ineligible for funding.
- The cost related to wider building renovations – if your building requires a major refurbishment, you must ensure you have sufficient funding for that project, including all design costs, preliminaries, and an adequate contingency budget.
- Improvements that are required to meet the building regulations – for example, new builds. If planning permission is required, please make sure this has been obtained.
- Village Halls with gas, oil, coal or LPG heating where the heating is not being decarbonised as part of the proposal.
- Retrospective work – for example, if the work has already started or has been completed.

6. How much organisations can apply for?

Funds will be allocated on a case-by-case basis as we recognise that all village halls are different and have different needs. Funds will be allocated based on fully submitted applications, with supporting information including your selected quotation.

Please **note this fund will prioritise village halls involved in the Bridging the Gap** – Greening your community space project and **village halls ready to progress with their retrofit plans**.

Funding is limited and successful applicants will be allocated grants on a first-come, first-served basis. Please note that your grants will not be allocated until you have submitted a full application and received a grant offer letter. To be approved you will need to submit a quotation showing an installation date from your preferred supplier – please prioritise getting a quote.

If your project is not ready for a full retrofit improvement, you can apply for funding to cover the costs of different stages of your improvement plan. For example:

Stage 1 – Energy efficiency assessment costs

Stage 2 - Insulation or windows and doors upgrade

Stage 3 – Energy efficiency measures: heat pump, solar panels, battery storage

Stage 4 – Digital Infrastructure

All project expenditures are required to be completed by 28 February 2025

7. Application and Monitoring Processes

Successful applicants will be asked to adhere to all monitoring, evaluation, and reporting requirements in the grant offer letter, providing information about the measures and improvements adopted and achieved, including photographs and case studies.

7. Resources Available

Local Energy Scotland – CARES (Community and Renewable Energy Scheme), which in addition to funding provides free and impartial advice and support in other ways too. For example:

- [local development officers](#) can help with funding applications and plan your project
- for complex projects, or where a more technical assessment is required, funds can be obtained to cover technical consultant's costs
- for higher cost projects, technical consultants can review quotes or contracts on your behalf

- Further resources are available on the website: [Local Energy Scotland Resources Overview](#)

Borders Community Action has a new dedicated Village Hall Development Lead officer to help with all enquiries. Please contact Jude Cormack via jude@borderscommunityaction.org.uk

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