

Climate Action Fund - 2021/2022



Vale of White Horse District Council have a budget of £50,000 to award to projects across the Vale which support communities to take action on climate change.

We recognise the importance of our shared responsibility to protect the planet. Our Corporate and Climate Action Plans detail our aims and targets to help the District thrive and tackle the Climate Emergency. We want to inspire and enable our communities to take action and have developed this fund to enable groups across the Vale to do so.

Projects could focus on areas such as:

- The natural environment
- Energy
- Waste and consumption
- Transport and travel

You don't have to be an expert on these areas to apply, we are just as keen to hear from people who are starting to think about climate change and are at the beginning of their journey to take action to address the climate emergency, as we are to hear from more established groups.

Organisations that receive funding will be invited to join a learning network which will provide opportunities for groups to collaborate and share experiences.

Basic Rules of the Scheme:

- Projects must take place within Vale of White Horse district for the benefit of Vale residents
- The minimum grant you can apply for is £250 and the maximum is £5,000
- You can apply for revenue costs or capital items
- We can fund up to 100 per cent of the total cost of a project (budget permitting)
- The project must complete within 12 months of the award decision
- Any unallocated budgets at the end of the financial year will return to the council's general reserves
- The scheme will be open for one round
- A decision will be made within approximately six weeks of the scheme closing

Who is eligible?

- Town/parish councils and parish meetings
- Town/parish councils can collaborate with local unconstituted groups and apply on their behalf
- Local 'not for profit' organisations, this can include a company limited by guarantee which does not distribute any surplus it makes to its member, whose primary purpose is to benefit the residents of Vale of White Horse who can:
 - Provide with their application a copy of a recent bank statement in the name of the organisation applying (no more than two months old)
 - Provide on request a copy of the organisation's detailed financial records e.g. income/expenditure/reserves for the most recent complete financial year– or projections for new organisations
 - Provide on request a copy of their governing document (like a constitution, set of rules, articles of association etc) that demonstrates they are a 'not for profit organisation' and the project they are applying for matches the organisation objectives
 - Confirm their organisation has named officers, members, or trustees on a management committee/board.

To mitigate against any misuse of a grant or to the council's reputation from this relaxed criterion to apply for a grant, officers will request the governance and financial documents mentioned above for every fifth application, and any organisations who have not received council funding in the last 12 months.

Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies (for example Oxfordshire County Council, NHS trusts). Please note: Town/parish councils and parish meetings are eligible to apply
- Schools, colleges, universities
- Groups who raise funds on behalf of or will improve/create facilities that will predominately benefit an ineligible organisation
- Individuals (this includes making any payments to individuals on behalf of community groups)
- Profit-based businesses (private businesses)
- Political and lobbying groups
- Organisations who operate a grant scheme of their own or who budget for giving grants/donations in their annual budget. Please note: Town/parish councils and parish meetings are eligible to apply

- Nationwide organisations (except where they have a local constitution and/or local bank account. We may also make exceptions if a project clearly relates to a local hub/branch of the organisation)

What kind of work/services can we fund?

We will fund projects which inspire and deliver action to address climate change through community cohesion. Organisations must ensure that they have support from the wider community and projects should contribute to the achievement of the council's Corporate Plan priorities (2020-24): tackling the Climate Emergency, building healthy communities and working in partnership.

To meet the criteria for this fund, we would like projects to effect and drive change, making a positive impact on the climate through:

- Increasing awareness and knowledge of the climate emergency
- Encouraging residents and/or groups that are at the beginning their journey to take action to address the climate emergency. If you are an established group we would like you to support and encourage potential new members
- Building community connections and cohesion through working in partnership. For example, this could include doing a project in partnership with a local community sports team

Appropriate projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Organising a community clothes/toy/household items swap and/or loan scheme to support waste minimisation
- Building a community wildflower garden with signage which explains the importance of wildflowers and biodiversity to the environment
- Organising and hosting a community learning event on climate action
- Replacement of existing flood lighting at local tennis court to LED lighting
- Putting in cycle racks by the local shops/services and enhancing wayfinding in a local community to encourage walking and cycling as alternative modes of transport

What we will not fund:

- Retrospective funding for work/projects that will complete before our decision is made (We will consider projects that have started; however, we will not be able to fund any retrospective costs.)
- Projects that do not demonstrate a clear benefit to the community in which they are taking place
- Statutory activities/requirements that either the council or another public-sector organisation is responsible for delivering, such as schools, public

highways, public rights of way and road safety measures. We will consider activities that a parish council has the powers to deliver, but not a statutory duty to provide

- Litter picking activities
- Recurring revenue costs, like salaries, rent, rates and maintenance (like boiler servicing). We will consider salaries for a one-off pilot projects – lasting no longer than 3-6 months. We will also consider room hire to hold regular climate action group events or meetings.
- Costs that relate to other council services e.g. planning applications or building regulation fees
- Alcoholic refreshments
- Clothing such as uniforms. We will consider safety kit such as high-visibility clothing
- Projects that specifically benefit private businesses
- Political activities, lobbying or campaigning
- Projects that don't align with the council's equalities objectives and/or the Equality Act 2010

Opening and closing dates

The scheme will open in March and will have one round, closing six weeks later. We will publicise the dates on our website and through our social media platforms.

Application and Award Process

1. Organisations apply using the council's online grants management system ('the system'), accessible from our website www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants. Applicants should read the guidance notes on our website before completing an application.
2. We'll usually make our decision within six weeks of the scheme closing date.
3. Council officers will check the eligibility of the application (including the additional checks if required) and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility.

If eligible, officers will prepare a short summary of the application including key information from the application, concerns and recommended scoring to the relevant head of service usually within three weeks of the scheme closing.

4. The relevant head of service will then make award decisions in consultation with the relevant cabinet member. Their decisions are final and aren't subject to appeal or call-in.

5. Once the community enablement team receive the award decision, they will save it on the grants system, publish the decision on the council's website (in summary once the scheme closes) and either;
 - a. send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions and a grant acceptance form they must complete and return
 - b. inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful.
6. The applicant must sign and return the acceptance form to the community enablement team, confirming they will meet all our conditions and give the bank details for their organisation.
7. On receipt of the acceptance form the community enablement team will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter, following agreement from the relevant head of service. **All payments must be made by BACs to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.**

Standard conditions

- The organisation must spend the grant on the project listed in their application and within 12 months from the decision to award a grant or they will return the funding
- If requested, the organisation will return a proportionate amount of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding towards the project. The minimum request will be £50.
- The funding is non-transferrable unless agreed by the council in writing in advance of any spending. Any unspent funds will be returned to the council upon request. The minimum request will be £50.
- The organisation will comply with all relevant statutes and regulations related to its status, objectives and delivery of its core activities
- The organisation must have appropriate policies in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, and comply with equalities, GDPR, COVID safety, and any other relevant legislation.
- The organisation must consult the community enablement team before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant and officers will confirm with the councillor(s) that they agree to these changes before responding to the applicant.
- The organisation will acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project.
- The organisation acknowledges the council accepts no responsibility or liability for this project or the facilities it provides now or in the future.

Monitoring the grants

- The grants system will record all applications, decisions and remaining balances. We will publish grants awarded on the council's website.
- The community enablement team will monitor every grant awarded to ensure spending is appropriate.
- If the awarded project has not started by the expiry date (12 months from the award date) and is unlikely to do so in the next three months, the organisation must repay the grant in full to the council. If the project has started but is not complete the officers, at their discretion allow a single, three-month extension to the grant, by which time work/spending must be completed.
- If the project experiences delays due to COVID, organisations can request in writing a limited extension which will need to be approved by the Head of Service.
- All grant repayments will return to the council's general reserves.
- Any climate action fund budget not awarded by **31 March 2023** will return to the council's general reserves as carry forwards will not be allowed.
- If repayments are necessary, the community enablement team will liaise with the organisation to recover the funds, keeping the relevant ward councillor informed.

For more information about the scheme, advice on potential project or other possible funding sources, organisations are encouraged to contact climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk.