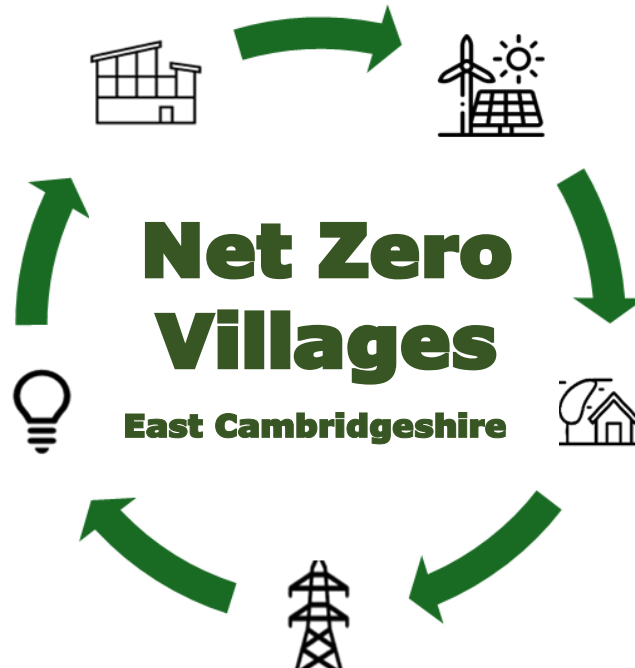


# Net Zero Villages East Cambridgeshire

*A carbon emissions saving grant scheme by East Cambridgeshire District Council*



## Grant Information Guidance

### Grant Aim

Grant funding to support rural communities to deliver capital projects that deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

### Who can apply?

Applicants must be one of the following:

- A Parish Council in East Cambridgeshire.
- A voluntary, community or social enterprise sector organisation, with the applicable asset to be improved being located in East Cambridgeshire.
- Other public sector bodies applying on behalf of an East Cambridgeshire community.

Applicants must also 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 [netzerovillages@eastcamb.gov.uk](mailto:netzerovillages@eastcamb.gov.uk).

## **What must the funded project deliver?**

The project must deliver at least one of the following (these criteria being set by the Cambridgeshire-Peterborough Combined Authority):

- Tackle energy use and/or support energy efficiency or energy generation retrofit to a community building; or
- Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport; or
- Nature based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings.

The project must be based in East Cambridgeshire.

## **What qualifies as a 'Community Building'?**

This is not always clear cut, and we will treat each application on its merits.

However, the following are likely to be eligible (and in each case, it must be demonstrated that community events, clubs or similar are regularly held in such buildings, at reasonable cost (with nil or negligible annual membership fees), and with a high degree of accessibility):

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

Whilst it is accepted the following buildings are often very important assets in a village community, the following are highly 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)

## **How will proposed projects be assessed?**

To measure the impact of your proposal, we will assess it against the following criteria (reasonable estimates and evidence of such will need to be provided):

- Carbon Emission reduction that will arise
- Reduction in energy consumption
- Reduction in running cost of community facilities
- Reduce overheating of a building (where overheating of the building is evidenced to be a current issue)

- Demonstrator project that can be replicated
- Number of the community engaged or ability to change behaviors.
- Value for money – is there a significant impact for the amount of money requested

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

**Example projects** (not exhaustive):

For grants associated with **community buildings**, the following example projects might be suitable, though we welcome alternative proposals which meet the criteria of this grant fund:

- Loft insulation
- Double/triple glazed windows
- Draft proofing
- Underfloor heating
- Internal/external cavity wall insulation
- Replacement lighting to LED lighting
- Solar panel installation
- Wind turbine
- Air/ground source heat pump installation
- Water harvesting/saving measures (provided there is a link to emission savings)
- 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)
- Information / interpretation boards, but only if associated with one of the above measures (for example, a display which provides live data of how much any installed solar panels are producing would be eligible, or any information boards to explain to local resident what has been installed would be eligible).
- 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)

Projects which are likely to be particularly favoured are those that demonstrate a ‘whole building’ approach to energy efficiency, and where it is demonstrated that the greatest carbon emission savings can be achieved by the proposal. For example, a proposal which simply seeks PV solar panels will not be supported unless evidence is provided to demonstrate why this is the best option for the building, the scale of electricity to be generated, and the scale of grid electricity to be reduced because of the panels. It might be that other measures, such as insulation, are better.

For grants associated with **helping access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport**, the following example projects might be suitable, though we welcome alternative proposals which meet the criteria of this grant fund:

- 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.

For grants associated with **nature-based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings**, the following example projects might be suitable, though we welcome alternative proposals which meet the criteria of this grant fund:

- 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). Tree planting or other similar measures which is for 'carbon offsetting' purposes is not permitted under this grant

**Excluded projects** (not exhaustive):

- Funding of electric vehicle charge points (alternative funding for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure is anticipated to be coming shortly via the Combined Authority)
- New gas or oil boilers
- Projects solely seeking to repair, maintain or renew due to normal wear and tear
- Projects on buildings that are not intended for community use
- Projects that have the potential to cause detrimental impacts upon the wider determinants of health
- Purchase of land or property
- Projects where the majority of the grant sought is for measures not eligible for grant funding. Only a small amount of the grant awarded might be eligible for additional matters, if it is demonstrated such measures are needed to deliver the main emission saving measure. For example, if a small proportion of the grant being asked for is to strengthen the roof of a building in order for it to accommodate solar panels, this would be eligible for funding in full. But if the majority of the funding being asked for was for roof strengthening rather than the panels, this would not be eligible in full (the roof strengthening would have to be met by alternative funding).
- Any on-going revenue costs or overheads (for example, salaries, rent, advertising, fuel, insurance, repair and maintenance). However, for the avoidance of doubt, if the project (such as PV panels or a wind turbine) results in excess electricity being generated at certain times of the day, which is subsequently sold to the local energy supplier, any such income can be retained by the organisation.
- Projects that have a medium to high risk of not being fully delivered by February 2026.
- Projects in Ely or Soham (However, villages within the parishes of Ely (Stuntney, for example) and Soham (Barway, for example) would be eligible).

**How much can be applied for?**

A total of £150,000 is 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. In very simple terms, this means that an asset must be created as a consequence of the project to be grant funded. If you are uncertain what these two types of funding are, then please seek advice before applying.

The minimum single grant award is £5,000, and the maximum is £30,000. If your project is slightly outside this range, please discuss with the council and we will see if alternative funding can be found or make up the difference.

All grants can be for 100% of the project's cost. However, for larger projects in excess of £30,000 you would be entitled to claim £30,000 from this grant and use alternative funding to pay for the remaining cost.

A critical assessment we will make when considering proposals is the likelihood of the project being delivered in full by February 2026. Please consider this before applying, and explain what consents are needed or already in place (such as, for example, planning permission and District Network Operators consent) and what challenges you might face for delivering your project by February 2026.

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.

### **When can groups apply?**

Applications can be submitted from the launch of the fund.

Applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) form. Full applications in advance of an EoI will not be accepted.

If you are successful with your EoI, we will send you the full application form to complete.

The end date for applications to the grant scheme is either (i) once all the budget is allocated or (ii) by 28 February 2025 at the latest.

Full applications received in the first phase to the 31 December 2024 will be considered and approved in early January 2025. Thereafter, full applications received in January 2025 (the second phase) will be considered in February 2025. The third and final phase will be applications received in February 2025 and these will be considered in March 2025. However, if funds have been fully allocated by the end of the first or second phases, then applications received in the subsequent phase will still be considered but only for placing on a reserve list should an already agreed project no longer be taken forward.

You are therefore advised to get your EoI application and subsequent Full Application in as early as possible (by 31 December if possible) in order to have the greatest chance of receiving funding.

Funding will be distributed from March 2025. Funding might be distributed on a phased basis, linked to progress with a project. Funding in advance of spending is possible, subject to safeguards in place for return of any unspent funds.

No spend can occur after 28 February 2026.

An organisation can apply for more than one grant during the lifetime of the scheme (e.g. two grants for two different projects). However, the same organisation will not be awarded more than one grant in any single phase (as described above).

### **Project advice**

Limited advice is available from East Cambridgeshire District Council.

At the Expression of Interest stage, we will arrange for a suitably qualified person to visit you and your proposed project location, to help identify whether your EoI should proceed to a full application. At that visit, we may advise whether an adjusted or alternative proposal might be more suitable and more likely to be awarded funding.

We will not provide full technical surveys or assessments.

It is likely you will need to secure your own independent advice to demonstrate the appropriateness and value for money for the proposal you intend to deliver. You will also need to provide a quote (or other reasonable and evidenced estimate) for the costs of the work at the full application stage.

## **What supporting documentation is required with the application?**

Very limited information is required at the Expression of Interest stage. Please just complete and return the short EoI form.

At the full application stage, you will likely need to provide:

- A copy of your organisation's constitution or mission statement.
- A recent bank statement for the account you would like the grant paid into. Statement must be dated within the last two months. Ideally, a copy of your latest accounts (audited if available) if you have one.
- Detail of the grant sum requested, and proportionate evidence to support that sum requested (likely as a quote for the project). Broad, but reasonable, estimates of some of the costs are permitted where the final cost is unknown. However, once a grant has been awarded, there will be no opportunity to increase that grant should the cost exceed the estimate.
- A copy of your safeguarding policy, if you have one. 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.
- A plan of the proposed work, including a project map and project outcomes.
- A timeline of the proposed work indicating mileposts and delivery dates.
- A brief management plan which describes how the project will be sustainable post implementation. For example, how will the project be maintained post implementation?
- Confirmation you are the landowner, or if not, you have clear consent from the landowner.
- Any other relevant material that would support your application.

Further guidance on completing a full application will be published shortly.

## **How will the grant be paid?**

If successful, the applicant will receive the grant payment once we have received acknowledgement of the grant offer and acceptance of the terms and conditions. Larger projects will likely receive interim payments.

## **Any additional terms and conditions of 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 spent by 28 February 2026 at the very latest.
- Any publicity must acknowledge the award provided.
- Unused grant must be returned to East Cambridgeshire District Council.
- A brief end of project notification must be submitted to East Cambridgeshire District Council within 3 months of project completion (or by 31 March 2026 if sooner). A photograph of the completed project is required.
- Any overspend or miscalculation resulting in increased costs will not be met by East Cambridgeshire District Council.
- Repayment of the grant will be required if the applicant has acted fraudulently or negligently at any time or fails to comply with any of the conditions of the grant.