Local Economic Partnership

CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAMME

for Micro, Small & Social Enterprises

Grant Guidance Notes

Deadline for Submission of Applications
Opening: 12noon on Monday 7th September 2026 **Closing: 5pm on Monday 5th October 2026**

Contents

1. Introduction

The Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme is a focused capital investment programme designed to support eligible local businesses and social enterprises to diversify, grow and improve their productivity and competitiveness.

Funding is available towards eligible capital investment that enables businesses to introduce new or improved products and services, increase productive capacity, improve quality or efficiency, and support business growth.

The programme prioritises impact over volume and will support a smaller number of higher-value projects capable of delivering clear and measurable improvements in:

- Productivity
- Market growth
- Business competitiveness

If you have any questions relating to the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme, you can contact a member of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Funding Unit.

Contact: Garry Cardwell
Email: grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk
Telephone: 07548 118854

Contact: Oisin Duffy
Email: oisin.duffy@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk
Telephone: 07395 600067

1.1 Purpose of Grant Programme

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Action Plan identifies the need for targeted capital investment to help address barriers to business diversification, growth and productivity.

The programme will provide outcome-focused capital grants to enable eligible businesses to undertake investments that can deliver a meaningful improvement in their capacity, products, services, productivity or market opportunities.

The programme is commercially focused and prioritises projects that can demonstrate clear and measurable economic outcomes.

The LEP Capital Grant Programme will support eligible investment contributing to:

- Diversification
- Product development
- Efficiency and productivity improvements

The programme will operate through a competitive application process, with eligible projects assessed against criteria including:

- Creation of new jobs and/or sustainability of existing jobs
- Market expansion and sales growth
- Productivity and efficiency improvements
- Contribution to Net Zero
- The business's capacity and experience to successfully deliver the project

Applicants must demonstrate a clear need for the proposed investment and explain how it will enable or significantly accelerate growth, diversification or productivity improvements.

Applications should clearly identify the measurable outcomes expected from the investment. These may include, for example, new or sustained jobs, increased sales, entry into new markets, improved productivity, increased capacity or increased turnover.

1.2 Strategic Fit

The fund links to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2026 – 2031 under the following theme:

Priority 3: Creating Conditions to Deliver Opportunities for Our Borough

This also aligns, and is funded through, the Department for the Economy's Sub-Regional Economic Plan 2024, which aims to increase productivity, create more good jobs, increase regional balance and enable decarbonisation.

1.3 Level of Grant Award

The Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme can provide funding of up to 70% costs up to a maximum of £30,000. Grant intervention will be as follows:

Maximum grant: £30,000

Minimum grant: £5,000

LEP Capital Grant Budget Available: £650,000

Grant rates have been developed so investments are material enough to change capacity, quality and offering.

Applicant businesses must be in a position to pay for items and claim the money from Council retrospectively.

This is a competitive process, and all grant awards will be determined on the basis of merit. Council reserves the right to reduce the amount of funding awarded if we do not consider that the amount applied for represents value for money or if there are insufficient funds available to meet the request.

Please Note: Successful applicants will have to provide all evidence requested once the project expenditure is complete. This will include original receipts, business bank statements, or any other documentation deemed necessary. This list is not exhaustive. If requested documentation is not supplied, payment will be withheld. Please do not apply for funding if you cannot supply these items.

1.4 General Principles

In line with Council's Grant Funding Policy, the overarching principle for all Council grant funding is that of meeting local needs which have been identified and prioritised by Council or by others and acknowledged by Council. Any activity that cannot be shown to meet the following basic requirements will not be provided with funding:

- Have a clearly identified need
- Can deliver outcomes which meet this need.
- In the case of this funding, deliver improved profits, increased employment, entry into new markets, cost effective or improved quality service provision, fitting with the purpose and remit of the funding.
- Be undertaken by a credible, viable business with the capacity to deliver the project as stated.
- Reflect the statutory remit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council aligning with the Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant service plan and meets the specific criteria of the fund.
- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to promoting Good Relations and Equality of Opportunity.
- In the interests of transparency, equality and accountability, all eligible applicants will have access to Council's Appeals/Review Procedure in accordance with the grounds set out in section 3.6, should their application be rejected.
- While all applications are treated on the basis of merit, Council would particularly welcome applications from young people, women and under-represented groups from Section 75 groupings.

All projects must be completed, paid in full, cleared the business bank account and claimed before Friday 19th February 2027. There is no provision for extending this deadline.

If your application is successful, you will be contractually obliged to provide information to Council's Economic Development and Funding Unit Officers.

This will include monitoring progress and expenditure incurred, discussing challenges or obstacles and fulfilling the reporting requirements stipulated in the Letter of Offer.

Please do not apply if you cannot fulfil these requirements.

1.5 Who can apply?

The initial criteria for application are as follows:

- Applicants must be one of the following:
    - A social enterprise
    - A micro business (fewer than 10 FTE employees)
    - A small business (between 10 and 49 FTE employees),
- All applicant businesses and social enterprises must be within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area and actively trading commercially.
- All applicants must have been trading for a minimum of two years by the application closing date.
- All applicants must have a business bank (or other financial institution) account for the sole purpose of their business – i.e., separate from personal finances.

Full list of eligibility requirements detailed in section 3.1 Eligibility Assessment.

Only eligible businesses and social enterprises that meet these criteria can apply to the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme.

Please note, a recent business bank statement dated within the last three months must be supplied at application stage.

1.6 What can be funded?

Examples of expenditure that can be funded through this grant include:

New equipment / capital works that enable new products, added capacity, quality improvements and market-readiness.

Applicants may include a maximum of five separate items of eligible expenditure. Applicants should contact the Funding Unit if they are unsure of this in any way.

Examples of eligible expenditure include:

- New equipment;
- New production or processing machinery;
- Specialist equipment required to develop or introduce new products/services;
- Capital equipment that increases productive capacity;
- Capital infrastructure directly required to enable business growth or productivity improvements;
- Specialist mobile productive machinery, where it is not primarily a transport asset

1.7 Who cannot be funded?

This funding programme will not award grants to the following: -

- Businesses whose address is outside the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area
- Businesses with charitable fundraising as their main focus
- Political organisations
- Businesses yet to commence trading
- Businesses that have been trading for less than two years by the application closing date.
- Any business where there are ethical or reputational considerations – e.g. gambling, money lending, adult entertainment, tobacco products or cannabis products not authorised as medicines, debt factoring, hire purchase financing; pyramid schemes; projects which have as their object the promotion of political or religious views; illegal or immoral activities
- Any other business that the Council may from time to time deem to be ineligible.

1.8 Exclusions

In general, the following will not be eligible for funding: -

- Retrospective expenditure where services/items have already been obtained and paid
- Applications received after the closing date as specified
- Costs that are not auditable e.g. cash payments unsupported by an approved petty cash system
- Costs towards ongoing running costs (e.g. electricity, rent, rates, insurance etc.).
- On-going licence fees
- Loan repayments
- Road going vehicle and general transport assets e.g. bicycles, cars, vans, lorries, boats, trailers, horseboxes.
- Second hand equipment including refurbished equipment
- General maintenance or refurbishment works
- Servicing of existing equipment
- Training costs
- Websites
- Standalone software purchases
- Consumable items that are used by the business and replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up e.g. printer ink, high-vis vests for staff, flyers, business cards
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt
- Costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere e.g. VAT
- Activities which are party-political in intention, use or presentation
- Salary costs
- Alcohol, gratuities, gifts and prizes
- Purchase of stock for general trading purposes
- Dedicated energy efficiency equipment

2.0 How to answer the questions

Applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens for Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme 2026 should be submitted online at:

www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/grantsandfunding

Guidance on completing the application online is provided via the web-site link.

All sections must be completed as fully and concisely as possible. Please note, maximum word limits per question.

Applicants must ensure the information provided in the answers is relevant to the specific question within the application and must be specific to the applicants business. Generic answers which are not related to the answe, make sure it is included in the answer to that question.

3.0 How we assess and score your application

Every application that is received will be assessed for the following:

- To ensure that the business is eligible to apply to the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme
- For reassurance of each applicant's capability to deliver the proposal, and
- How well the proposal meets the business's needs and tackles barriers to growth.

An acknowledgement receipt will be electronically issued to you on receipt of your grant application. The Funding Unit will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible for grant aid from the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme, it will be forwarded to the relevant service area for a full assessment and scoring against the stated criteria.

3.1 Eligibility Assessment

The assessments in respect of Part 1 of the application form are awarded a pass or fail eligibility rating.

If the business, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will progress to the next stage of the process.

If the business, based on the information supplied, is not able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will be advised of specific omissions / shortcomings and how these can be addressed to help prepare them for any future funding requests.

	Criterion		Pass	Fail
1	Located in CCGBC	Legal address of business must be within CCGBC		
2	Mandatory workshop	Applicants must have attended a mandatory pre-application workshop		
3	Business Type	Social Enterprise Micro business (fewer than 10 FTE employees) Small business (10 - 49 FTE employees)		
4	Length of time trading	All applicants must have been trading for a minimum of two years by the application closing date.		
5	Produces goods / Tradeable services	Must add value, not purely buying and selling. Exclusions include purely retail and mainstream agricultural activity.		
6	Procurement	Must be completed within programme guidelines and submitted with application.		
7	Match-funding	Must be secured and evidenced at time of application. This is the difference between grant amount and total eligible project costs. However, grant aid is retrospective. Applicants must be able to pay for the item in full prior to receiving grant aid.		
8	Business bank account	Must be in the name of the business. If it's a sole trader, must be for sole purpose of their business and separate from personal finances		
9	Accounts	Must supply most recent final accounts		
10	Planning Permission and Statutory Requirements	Must be in place and submitted at time of application		

3.1.1 Procurement Thresholds

Item Cost	Procurement Type
£0 - £4,999	2 written quotations or online quotations, and specifications
£5,000 - £19,999	3 written quotations, with email correspondence and Specifications
£20,000 - £49,999	5 written quotations, with email correspondence and specifications/tender documents
£50,000 and over	Must use a formal competitive tender process on a public tender Portal such as eSourcingNI, eTendersNI or In-tend

Procurement thresholds apply to the total value of the item, works or services being procured and applicants must not divide purchases into smaller values in order to avoid the applicable procurement requirement.

3.1.2 Match Funding

For match funding purposes, applicants need to provide at least 30% of the eligible costs of the items, or the difference between grant amount and total eligible project costs. Whichever is larger.

However, grant aid is retrospective. Applicants **must** be able to finance 100% of the project cost upfront. Grant funding is paid retrospectively following successful completion, payment and verification of the project.

3.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately, and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If a business is not eligible for funding through the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme, Council can help signpost to other sources of support.

3.3 Assessment and Scoring

If the business, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility for the Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme, they will be scored according to established assessment criteria shown in the table below.

3.3.1 Scoring Table

0 Unacceptable	Nil or inadequate response. Fails to address the question or demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.
1 Very Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally very poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. An unacceptable response with serious reservations.
2 Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. A response with reservations.
3 Average	Response is relevant and average. The response addresses a broad understanding of the requirement but may lack details on how the requirement will be fulfilled in certain areas.
4 Good	Response is relevant and good. The response is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled. Good supporting evidence supplied.
5 Excellent	Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.

3.3.2 Assessment Criteria

All questions will be scored out of 5 and weighting will be applied as detailed below:

	Criteria	Score (0-5)	Weighting	Possible Score
1	Business Overview		Not scored	0
1	Project description		Not scored	0
2	Project Need		X 5	25
3a	How the project will create new jobs or sustain existing jobs		X 4	20
3b	How the project will allow the business to increase sales / enter new markets		X 4	20
3c	How the project will increase productivity / efficiency		X 3	15
4	How will your project contribute to Net Zero		X 2	10
5	Detail skills / experience within the business to deliver a successful project		X 2	10

Applications must score at least <u>65%</u> in order to be considered for funding.

Applicants will be ranked according to score obtained and available funding allocated to highest ranking applications. Applicants who fail to achieve a score of at least 65% will be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Achieving the minimum score does not guarantee an award, as this is a competitive call with a limited budget available.

3.3.3 Breakdown of Assessment Criteria

	Criteria	Score (0-5)
1a	Business Overview	Provide a concise summary of the business, what it does, key products/services, customers, markets, current scale and recent financial performance, eg. turnover and profitability etc. The response should give assessors enough context to understand the business and the environment in which the project will be delivered.
1b	Project description	Clearly explain what the project involves, what will be purchased or delivered, where it will take place, the overall cost, timescale and what the investment is intended to achieve. The description should be specific enough for the assessor to understand exactly what grant funding would support.
2	Project Need	Answers should explain the problem, constraint or opportunity the project is addressing and why the investment is needed now. A strong answer should demonstrate how the project supports the organisation's growth plans. It should also highlight additionality by explaining what would happen without the grant, why the project could not proceed at the same scale or pace. Responses should clearly demonstrate strategic thinking, commercial opportunity, and how the investment will enable growth, diversification or improved productivity.
3a	How the project will create new jobs or sustain existing jobs	Answers should set out the expected employment impact of the project. Where new jobs will be created, provide realistic numbers, job types and anticipated timescales. Where jobs will be sustained, explain clearly why the investment is important to retaining those roles. Strong responses should provide evidence or reasonable assumptions to support the projected employment impact.
3b	How the project will allow the business to increase sales / enter new markets	Answers should explain how the investment will lead to increased sales, new customers or entry into new geographic or sectoral markets. A good response should identify the opportunity, expected sales impact and how the proposed investment will enable the business to take advantage of it. Evidence of customer demand, enquiries, market research or existing opportunities should be included where available.

3c	How the project will increase productivity / efficiency	Answers should explain how the project will improve the way the business operates. This may include increasing output, reducing production time, lowering costs, reducing waste, improving quality or increasing capacity. Strong responses should quantify the expected improvement wherever possible and explain the current baseline against which progress can be measured.
4	How will your project contribute to Net Zero	Answers should explain any environmental benefits arising from the project, such as reduced energy use, waste, emissions, material usage or more efficient production processes. The response should focus on benefits that arise from the eligible investment and, where possible, provide measurable or estimated improvements that directly result from the investment.
5	Detail skills / experience within the business to deliver a successful project	Answers should demonstrate that the business has the management capacity, technical knowledge, financial capability and relevant experience to deliver the project successfully within the required timeframe. Identify who will manage the project, their relevant experience, relevant team members and their experience and any external expertise or suppliers that will support delivery.

3.4 How decisions are made

When the scores are finalised, the outcome of assessments will be collated and presented to the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Local Economic Partnership for review and ratification.

Following this, successful / unsuccessful applicants will be notified.

3.5 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue a Letter of Offer which is a legal agreement with the business to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form.

Signed Letters of Offer must be returned within 14 days of receipt.

If successful, businesses can avail of support that will explain the processes and procedures that relate to programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting a change to the approved project, promoting Council's support for the programme, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification.

Council funding is paid retrospectively. All businesses must pay for items in full in advance. Payment will only be made upon successful submission of your claim.

Businesses are required to submit an end of project evaluation report. Council Officers may also arrange post-project site verification visits.

3.6 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the Council will be available to go through the application with the business and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process / Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review Panel that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or
- that the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

3.7 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme will be open for applications according to the timeline below:

Action	Date
Funding Workshops	Monday 24 August 2026 Tuesday 01 September 2026 Monday 07 September 2026 Monday 14 September 2026 Monday 21 September 2026
Opening Date	Monday 7 September 2026
Closing Date*	Monday 5 October 2026
Eligibility Checks	Early October 2026
Applications Assessment	Mid-October 2026
Letter of Offer / Rejection letters issued	November 2026
Claims submitted	February 2027

*No late applications will be accepted under any circumstances, and all required supporting documentation must be supplied at time of submission or the application will not be considered.

The Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme will follow this eight-step administrative process:

Step 1	Open call for applications is made
Step 2	Applications are submitted online
Step 3	Call closes and applications are assessed
Step 4	Results of the assessment process are ratified by the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Local Economic Partnership
Step 5	Notification of funding is issued to applicants
Step 6	Letters of Offer are issued and are accepted
Step 7	Mandatory Letter of Offer workshop
Step 8	Payments granted retrospectively to successful applicants on submission of all required documentation to verify expenditure and outcomes.

3.8 Application Process

All applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme 2026 should be submitted online via Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's online Funding Hub at: www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/grantsandfunding

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing. Applications received after the closing time/date will not be considered for funding. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

The deadline for submissions to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Local Economic Partnership: Capital Grant Programme 2026 is 5pm on Monday 5th October.

Appendix 1 Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.

- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.

- We may also share information with other government departments, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.

- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act, we will release it, subject to exemptions, although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk.