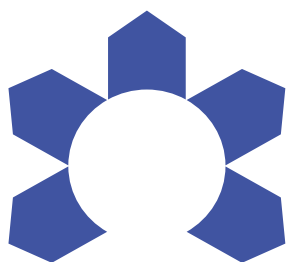




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# Village Catalyst

Community Focused Regeneration

## Guidance for applicants

February 2022



Village Catalyst is a partnership between DfC and:



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

**Housing**  
Executive

**AHF** Transforming  
Heritage

## Historic Environment Division's Aim

To help communities to enjoy and realise the value of the historic environment.

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# The Village Catalyst

This grant scheme is a partnership initiative between the Department for Communities (DfC), the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF), the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

Applications are invited from charities, social enterprise and other not for profit groups in rural villages of less than 5,000 people, who want to tackle rural poverty and social isolation in their area, by developing a sustainable use for a disused historic building<sup>1</sup> in their village. You can see examples of projects supported in the pilot on DfC's website.

With your agreement, we will inform the The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) of all applications to this programme as, in the preceding pilot, many projects also applied for their support. If you are thinking of applying to them, they recommend early engagement.

Awards will be made based upon an assessment of your application form and will be subject to the funds available to the partnership in each financial year.

## Three Routes of Support

This grant programme has been designed to support you through the work of identifying developing and delivering a suitable project.

- Funding of up to £10k is available to support you to carry out **project viability** work. This support is administered by the

Architectural Heritage Fund, on behalf of the partnership. This is to help your organisation look at potential uses for a building and at its current condition, and to produce a report to a standard template

- Funding of up to £20k is available to support you to carry out **project development work** covering some of the costs of developing and co-ordinating a project and taking it towards the start of work on site. This support is also administered by the Architectural Heritage Fund. To qualify, an organisation must have established that the end use of the project is likely to be viable
- Funding of up to £200k is available to support you to carry out **project delivery** i.e capital works on site to enable the historic building to deliver a sustainable use that helps to tackle rural poverty and social isolation. This support is administered by DfC. It seeks to make up an identified funding shortfall between project costs and community resources available to support the project. With limited annual funding available, communities that can show that they have exhausted all alternative support routes and do not seek the full amount available will be marked more highly at assessment stage

We envisage that most projects will take up to one year to work through each stage.

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<sup>1</sup> Listed buildings or historic buildings of merit within a Conservation Area



### Where are you on this three stage process of: Viability assessment; Project Development; or Project Delivery?

You can apply for support for any of these phases. We will consider your application and may ask you to carry out further viability or development work before accepting your application for detailed assessment. We will, however, only support applications that seek to tackle rural poverty and social isolation in villages by providing a sustainable community use for disused historic buildings.

#### Are you just starting out?

You should consider if you need support to develop and test your ideas and ensure that they will be viable.

- All applications for **viability support** must be made directly to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) via their online application process (**Northern Ireland | The Architectural Heritage Fund (ahfund.org.uk)**). You will receive an acknowledgement. We recommend that you engage with AHF’s NI Support Officer before submitting your application

#### Have you established that your project is Viable but need to develop the project further?

You should consider if you need support to develop your proposal.

- Applications for **development support** must be made to DfC using an application form that will be sent to you upon request. This will

then be considered by the partnership and if accepted your form will be passed to the Architectural Heritage Fund. We recommend that you engage with AHF's NI Support Officer before submitting your application. We may reject your application at this stage because it does not fit with the required outcomes, or is deemed a low priority relative to other applications. We envisage that up to five projects will be supported at this stage in each of the initial two years of the programme. If considered suitable to progress, AHF will be asked to consider your application relative to their grant standards. In some cases they may require you to undertake more viability work. Your award from AHF will be time bound with key milestones

- You may not need financial assistance from us for development work this year if, for example, you have received support from another funder for this purpose or have sufficient reserves, but, if you are considering applying for **delivery support** from us in future years we would still like to be aware of your project. Details should be provided to DfC using an application form that will be sent to you upon request. If we feel that it is likely to align with our required outcomes, we will pass your details to the AHF who will engage with you to support your investment readiness. In such cases a 'Terms of Engagement' letter may be sent to you setting out the key requirements of this engagement (i.e. level of commitment; time period- including alignment with other funder time requirements; procurement rules on appointment of consultants<sup>2</sup>; baseline wellbeing and economic data for later comparison; etc)

- As you develop your proposals we will expect your consultant to liaise with HED's architects to ensure that the detail of your proposal complies not just with planning policy but with our published grant standards (**Historic Environment Fund advisory standards | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)**)
- By the end of this stage you should have the following work completed:
  - A design that has been agreed in detail with HED and has received planning, listed building consent (as necessary) and building control approvals
  - A business case that has been reviewed by the AHF
  - All sources of potential funding have been sought and a funding package for the project has been identified
  - Working drawings for the project have been drawn up and the project is ready to go to tender

### **Are you ready to deliver your project?**

- Applications for **delivery support** that have engaged with the AHF during the development stage will be presented by them to the Project Board once they consider them to be sufficiently developed. You will not have to fill out a separate application form
- Applications for delivery support that have not engaged with the AHF can be considered by the Project Board. This must be made to DfC using an application form that will be sent to you upon

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<sup>2</sup> These need to be appointed following a competitive process. We will also require your lead consultant to be conservation accredited i.e. on the RIBA Conservation Registrant list or possessing an accreditation equal to or greater than this.



request. Your application must be able to demonstrate that you have completed the development stage, have all approvals and are ready to go to tender. If we feel that your project is likely to align with required outcomes but is not yet ready for delivery support, then we will pass your details to the AHF for consideration of a Project Development Grant. **We strongly advise that you engage with us in advance of submitting a delivery stage application, to ensure that your scheme has the best chance of success.**

We envisage that up to three projects will be supported at this stage in each of the initial two years and that this number will rise towards the end of the intended five year programme

- There are two possible outcomes from the Project Board assessment at this stage:
  - Project assessment ranks highly against scoring framework and merits funding
  - Project fails to meet the quality threshold for funding, or is of insufficient merit to justify award from funding available this year – application rejected
- Rejection in one year will not preclude the consideration of a revised or further developed proposal in subsequent years

## Successful Applications for Delivery Support

We will inform you if your project has been passed for delivery support. We will ask you to seek prices for the work to allow a Letter of Offer to be calculated. Please note that our offer will not issue to you until these prices have been received. We will remind you of the procurement rules associated with government

support – particularly the need to appoint builders based upon a competitive process and the provision of suitable insurance. We will remind you of your duties in respect of the Construction Design Management regulations, the Buildsafe NI Initiative, and the controls surrounding seasonal animals and bats. You may also need to provide data on your organisation for inclusion in the Government Funders Database if it is not already recorded on this.

With your agreement other funders identified for the scheme will be informed of the project's success at this stage.

On receipt of your tender information, we will draw up a letter of offer based upon the shortfall between identified funding for the project and the tendered price (including consultant's fees). This will be capped at £200k. We will require your consultant team to include a quantity surveyor to ensure that the sometimes complex payment arrangements between funders is efficiently managed once the project commences on site.

Work must not start before you have received a letter of offer from us.

## Site Works

We will ask you to arrange a funders meeting at the start of your project to arrange and agree payment protocols. In most cases it is expected that this will result in agreement that each funder will pay a standard percentage of the total cost at each interim payment request. This will be based upon the proportion each funder is contributing to the total cost.

Our Conservation Architect will monitor the progress of your works to ensure that they are being carried out to the agreed standard.

## Approach to Work

We will seek work that complies with BS 7913:2013 'Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings'. Proposals that are clear on this will be ranked higher than others. In summary:

- proposals should be based upon a clear understanding of the significance of the building
- proposals should demonstrate a full understanding of the constituent materials and the origin of the problem
- they should be the minimum necessary to stabilise and conserve the building
- they should seek to use traditional materials and matching repair techniques
- work should be legible i.e. repairs should be carried out without any attempt to disguise them, but should not be unduly obtrusive or unsympathetic

- alterations should be designed to minimise their impact on the significance of the building, and avoid losing features that contribute to that significance

## Application Forms

The following application forms are available upon request:

- Village Catalyst Viability Support Application, see electronic form at **Northern Ireland | The Architectural Heritage Fund (ahfund.org.uk)**
- Village Catalyst Development Support Application (use this also for applications that are not seeking financial support), please e-mail **villagecatalystsupport@communities-ni.gov.uk**
- Village Catalyst Delivery Support Application, please e-mail **villagecatalystsupport@communities-ni.gov.uk**



Thank you for considering the  
Village Catalyst Grant Scheme



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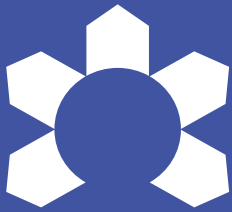
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**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**



**Village Catalyst**

Community Focused Regeneration

Helping communities to enjoy and realise  
the value of the historic environment.

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