

Mid Devon District Council Shared Prosperity Funding

Communities and Place

Love Your Town Centre: Vibrant Town Centres Guidance

Privacy Notice

We will process the information provided on your Expression of Interest/Application in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Data Protection Act 2018) for the sole purpose of administering the Fund. The information provided will be stored securely by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) and successful applications will be retained for the duration of the project plus three financial years. Unsuccessful applications will be destroyed after 12 months. The information provided will be subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, but personal information (names and contact details) will not be released in response to FOI requests. Data will be shared internally within MDDC for the purposes of administering the Fund and making funding decisions. Details of applications (including name of organisation, project description and amount awarded) are published / reported on our website. Personal details are not included in this information. Successful applications will be reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (as the Funder) for their monitoring purposes.

Introduction

Background:

Get up to £5,000 from Mid Devon District Council to help create a new 'must be there' buzz in your town centre.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF or the Fund) is part of the Government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda. Mid Devon will receive an allocation from the Fund to help our towns and businesses deliver enhanced outcomes to provide support and opportunities after leaving the European Union.

The Scheme invests in local priorities and targets funding where it is needed most.

Mid Devon District Council want to support ideas/projects that will help to revitalise our town centres through arts, cultural and heritage programmes and improved public realm. **For 2024, we are inviting Bampton to make applications for this scheme.**

Love Your Town Centre (Vibrant Town Centres) is a funding initiative to support ideas from local businesses, town councils or organisations with projects that will help revive our high streets and help them to flourish for the future.

Who can apply?

- **Event Organisers**

Organisers with an idea to bring a new event that will increase interest and footfall within the town.

- **Business Groups**

Business groups who are collaborating to make a difference. This might be something physical, or just a great idea which creates a stronger town centre community.

- **Town Councils**

With a project that will support the ethos of developing a great place.

Vibrant Town Centres Grant Scheme

The Fund aims to support projects that revitalise our town centres, transforming them into visitor destinations. This includes:

- Quick-win projects that are deliverable within 12 months in response to local town centre need.
- Actions that create resilience and sustainability of our town centres, increasing footfall and/or dwell time.
- Projects that revitalise the high streets; transitioning empty retail units into lively and/or attractive community spaces.

The Vibrant Town Centres Fund is intended to support cultural, arts and heritage programmes and events in our town centres and/or improve the public realm making our town centres an attractive and vibrant place to visit. A few examples could be:

- Literature: eg a literature festival celebrating local authors, bookshops and libraries or a literature trail.
- Heritage: events, experiences, activities or trails that celebrate the town's history and heritage.
- Arts: music, dance, cinema, theatre or arts festivals and events that encourage footfall and celebrate the local arts community.
- Culture: events and activities that celebrate local culture including seasonal events or food festivals.
- Walking Festival: projects that support the upcoming September 2024 Walking Festival through tie-in events and activities (eg guided tours, meet and greet experiences, visitor trails, character tour guides).
- Public Realm: functional improvements to enable greater accessibility, enjoyment and variety of use of public space in the town centres eg pocket parks, signage, seating and infrastructure (eg electric points to allow for provision of town centre entertainment).

This list is not exhaustive and proposals for other projects that support cultural, arts and heritage activities or public realm improvements in the town centres are also welcome.

What support is on offer?

The maximum grant will be £5,000 for any single project, per town. Any unallocated funding will be carried forward into a later round.

For individual businesses:

- The maximum total project spend is £1,000 (ex. VAT).

For groups of businesses:

- If a group of businesses want to collaborate in a venture to, for example, paint a parade of shop fronts or site some street furniture, then your combined individual application for grants can contribute up to 100% of the project, subject to the maximum £5,000 limit.

Eligible expenditure

We are open to creative solutions that can make short-term impact and have long-term goals. From the simple to the extraordinary, Mid Devon District Council welcomes applications for projects that will bring life to our high streets.

- Grants can be for capital (one off costs, costs of permanent items, structures etc) and/or certain revenue costs where they relate to one-off events or activities subject to restrictions (see section overleaf). The Fund cannot support ongoing staff or day-to-day operational costs.
- For large projects (or where projects will continue past the current financial year), the Fund can be used to support a pilot stage or distinct and identified phase of a project (such as sustainability appraisals, pilot projects or time-bound phase of a continuing project etc) but we need evidence of a forward plan to demonstrate financial stability.
- The fund is intended as seed or catalyst funding for a new project, therefore projects that have previously received LYTC Funding are not able to re-apply unless the application is clearly for a separate element or phase of that project.
- Applications from faith groups are eligible as long as the project/activity meets an identified need in the town centre and it concentrates on what the project delivers (such as what a religious building may be used for). The Fund cannot finance religious activities.

Where a project could be funded from alternative sources (such as S106 or another known active grant scheme), applicants will be advised of this. Mid Devon District Council reserves the right to offer either a reduced or zero grant award where projects have alternative funding sources available.

Please note that:

- The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all necessary permissions are obtained, such as planning permission, building regulation consent and leaseholder/landlord consents before any work can commence; and
- Mid Devon District Council cannot grant aid towards work that has been started prior to a formal written grant offer being issued.

Who can apply?

Applications are welcome from either businesses, charities, social enterprises or a group of registered businesses working together.

To be considered for a grant, organisations:

- Must have legal status ie:
 - Be a registered business with HMRC or Companies House; or
 - Be a registered charity with the Charity Commission; or
 - Be an arms-length body of government
- Must be prepared to cooperate with any due-diligence checks and to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant.

Examples of eligible organisations include:

- town councils

- charities and other not-for-profit enterprises
- Mid Devon town-centre based businesses
- constituted groups (such as a Chamber of Commerce) where the project is for the benefit of the community and not a profit-making venture (the lead applicant must be a registered business to qualify under Shared Prosperity Fund rules).

For applications from faith groups, we follow the same principles as those applied to the Big Lottery Fund; please see <http://bigblogscotland.org.uk/2014/10/29/funding-for-faith-based-organisations-a-quick-guide/> for more detailed information.

Businesses insolvent, in administration or without legal status are not eligible for Funding.

What can the Funding not be used for?

- VAT that is recoverable from HMRC;
- Payments for works or activities that the project deliverer has a statutory duty to undertake or that are fully funded by other sources;
- Funds cannot be allocated to solely benefit individuals or private/for profit enterprises.
- Funds must not be allocated retrospectively. This includes any activities that have started or occurred before a grant has been confirmed.
- Political, religious or other campaign activities (including but not limited to rallies, marches or campaign events).
- Purchase of alcohol, tobacco or other legal or illegal substances.
- Funds should not be used to support projects that are the direct responsibility or statutory obligation of another organisation.
- Loans or interest payments.
- Day-to-day running costs or any on-going staff costs (unless this is during a transition phase with documented evidence of how the project will become sustainable post transition).
- Services that are the responsibility of the Town Council (precept).
- Projects that do not benefit the Town Centre.
- As the fund exists to help identify new ideas to benefit town centres, existing town centre activities and events are not eligible for funding unless the application is specifically for a new element/phase of that project.
- Anything identified as ineligible within the Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

Grant Conditions

Bids will need to meet the following essential criteria:

- The proposal should be well thought out and realisable, with:
 - Clear actions with a realistic timetable
 - Detailed and realistic costings
 - Evidence to show other options have been looked into e.g. quotes from suppliers, other funding sources

- 10% match funding in place (particularly from businesses / traders), or a reasonable hope that match funding will become available in the near future
- Clear benefits for their town
- There should be commitment from other town centre stakeholders (such as the town council, trade organisations, business community) and cannot exceed maximum grant allowed.
- Projects must be delivered by 31 December 2024. Any unspent grant money must be returned promptly to Mid Devon District Council.
- Applications must be for projects delivered within designated Mid Devon town centres or within Mid Devon town boundaries with a demonstrable direct positive effect on the town centre.
- To qualify for the higher grant amount, applicants must explain how businesses are working collaboratively on the project.

In addition to meeting the essential criteria, proposals are more likely to be successful if they can show:

- The project demonstrates how it supports other town schemes e.g. masterplanning, neighbourhood plans, public realm improvement schemes and/or it reflects local design guides.
- The project is self-sustaining (i.e. it will create its own income stream) or has long-lasting effects (eg not just a one-off event that increases footfall for a day)
- The scheme can show a good return on investment, by showing maximum potential benefit against actual cost eg an improvement that will affect the whole town rather than a small number of businesses
- The proposal will make use of an empty shop(s) or disused town centre space
- The proposal could be replicable in other towns
- The proposal will increase footfall and/or dwell time in the town
- The proposal could be replicable in the other towns
- The scheme will improve leisure and entertainment opportunities in the town centre, helping to rebalance the mix between retail and leisure
- The scheme improves the appearance / attractiveness of the town centre (through aesthetic changes or proposals to tidy-up the town)
- The scheme will help the town centre lower its carbon footprint or achieve environmental benefits
- The project has created or improved public realm within the town centre
- The project supports the goals of the Shared Prosperity Fund

Where appropriate, applications should also include information about consultation and agreements that make the project permissible and sustainable. Although this doesn't need to be finalised at the application stage, applicants need to demonstrate that they have considered the permissions and agreements required. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Maintenance agreements
- Consultation with other key stakeholders such as Mid Devon District Council services (Property Services, Waste Services, Parking Services and Economic Development) and other local councils
- Permission or intent to apply for permission from relevant statutory services (Planning, Licensing, Highways)

Funding will not be released until the relevant permissions and agreements are secured and evidenced.

The Council reserves the right to pay awarded funding in staged payments upon delivery. Where projects are not delivered within an agreed timescale the Council reserves the right to withdraw the offer of funding.

As part of due diligence, you will need to:

- Undertake best endeavours to ensure best value for any spend against this funding (for instance if you need to outsource a task such as graphic design, you will try to get 3 quotes).
- Work with us to provide output monitoring data to DLUHC within the timeframes required.

As part of this funding, project deliverers are required to ensure the Funder logo(s) are used prominently in all communication materials and public-facing documents relating to funded activity (including print and publications, through to digital and electronic materials). We will confirm which logo(s) should be used.

Supporting Documentation

- Applications should provide letters/emails to evidence local support for the project. If the letter of support is from a parish council, this needs to come officially from the council itself and not from an individual councillor. Applicants should bear in mind parish council meeting dates when requesting support to ensure that they are able to consider the application prior to the funding deadline(s).
- Please note: if you do not supply all information required with the application, we cannot necessarily come back to you within the timescale to request additional information prior to the Funding Panel.
- Please provide a quote or similar evidence for the cost(s). For project costs with a single supplier above £2,500, we require three like-for-like quotes. For project costs below £2,500, this needs to be 'best endeavours', which is ideally three like-for-like quotes or evidence that this has been sought (eg email requesting a quote). Where only one supplier can deliver the project, please tell us why.
- We will conduct random sampling for evidence of project completion.



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- Other evidence as required by Mid Devon District Council.

Application Process

In order to make a decision on your proposal we will need some basic information on what you plan to do. There is no application form for the Vibrant Town Centres Scheme, but we expect applicants to be able to make a good case for their project. The more details we have the easier it will be for us to make a decision. Your application should be no longer than 4 sides of A4 and should include the following details:

Summary

Briefly tell us:

- The name of your activity or project, what you want to do and how it will improve the high street
- How much the whole project will cost
- Which town fund you are applying from (Bampton, Crediton, Cullompton or Tiverton)
- How much you are asking for from the Vibrant Town Centres Scheme

Details

Please give us a more detailed description covering the following:

Applicant

- Organisation applying for the funding
- Registered Business Number and Type (eg Company Registration Number, Charity Number, Unique Tax Reference Number)
- Contact details – contact name, telephone number and email

About the Project

- What do you want to do and how will it improve the town centre? (detail the activities you will undertake or services you will provide)
- What is the main purpose of the project? (why do you want to carry out the project and what difference will it make?)
- How do you know the project / activity is needed? Who will it benefit?
- What similar services already exist in the town and how will this improve on them?
- How do you intend to deliver the project?
- When are you going to do it? (with at least an outline timetable showing proposed project start and end dates)
- Is this activity part of a wider project? If so, provide details of the project's phases and forward plan.
- How will you measure the success of your project?



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Project Costs and Match Funding

- What is the total cost of the project? (with a breakdown of the different costs)
- How much are you asking for from the Vibrant Town Centres Scheme and what will this funding specifically cover within the total project costs?
- Where is the money going to come from? (if there are any other sources of funding please let us know and whether these are provisional or confirmed funding sources)
- Tell us about any other contribution / support either in-kind or financial.
- How will the balance of any gap in funding be filled?

Consultation and Agreements

- Who else is involved in this project? (list other organisations/businesses and their level of involvement eg if they have been consulted or are involved with the delivery of the project)
- Has any research or consultation been done to identify / confirm the need? If so, please give details.
- Have you consulted or sought permission from other services / authorities (as applicable)? (eg Planning, Licensing, Highways, Economic Development, Parking Services, Waste Services, other local councils)
- What other options have been considered and why is this proposal your preferred option?

Future of the Project

- Will the project continue after the Vibrant Town Centres funding comes to an end? If so, how?
- Does the project require any ongoing maintenance agreements and do you have these in place?
- Does this project complement other town centre schemes? If so, how? (eg masterplanning, neighbourhood plans, public realm improvement schemes)
- Could the project be rolled out to other towns?

Submission

Please submit your application (with supporting papers) direct to funding@middevon.gov.uk by no later than **Sunday 31 March 2024**. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Any questions on the Vibrant Town Centres Scheme should be directed to funding@middevon.gov.uk.

Tips

- i. Be specific and list project aims if you have them.
- ii. Remember to include a project timetable
- iii. Remember to include a cost breakdown for the project
- iv. Remember to attach quotes / evidence of costs
- v. List all non-financial support for the project eg gifts of goods and voluntary services or donation of business space
- vi. Attach any letters or emails of support for this project (as applicable)

Process and Next Steps

Application Stage	Deadline Date
Applications Open	01/03/2024
Deadline for submission of Applications	31/03/2024
Funding Panel	16/04/2024
Funding Awards/Notifications	30/04/2024
Deadline to Claim Funding	31/07/2024

Completed applications will go to a Funding Panel for assessment. The Council would like to make sure that projects funded through this Fund have a lasting impact on our town centres. Potential projects will be assessed against the essential and desirable criteria to decide which ones should be supported.

The funding pot is limited and not all eligible projects will be successful.

Conditional grants may be offered subject to additional consents required.

Please note: the Funding Panel can choose to support applications in full or in part, amending the level of money granted to the project depending on level of budget available. They can also choose not to support an application if they feel it does not meet the criteria, or to support an application dependent on the project meeting additional criteria. Where more information is required, the Panel can also defer applications to a later round.

Successful applicants will be contacted to complete the grant claim paperwork, which includes a Grant Claim Form (for payment information) and a Subsidy Declaration Form (as required by the Subsidy Control Act 2022). We require you to send us an invoice for awards exceeding £2,000 prior to payment.

Subject to meeting any conditions outlined in a Grant Funding Offer, a completed Claim Paperwork must be received by 31/07/2024 upon receipt of which payments will be made (payments can take up to 3 working days to show in an account).

Declaration and Monitoring

All projects will be monitored by the Council and we will liaise regularly with the successful organisations to ensure that the project will be delivered. DLUHC require six-monthly monitoring reports against scheme outputs, which include:

- Improvements to town centres & high streets:
 - Number of commercial buildings developed or improved
 - Reduced vacancy rates (%)
 - Amount of public realm created or improved
- Local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities:
 - Number of organisations receiving grants
 - Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support
- Open markets and town centre retail and service sector:

- Number of businesses receiving grants
- Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready
- Number of new businesses created

Not all of these outputs will be relevant to your scheme(s). We will circulate a simple form to be completed for monitoring against these outputs. Monitoring is required for the duration of the project (until April 2025).

Scoring and Assessment

All applications will be checked for eligibility and then scored for an award decision by the Funding Panel.

Eligibility

Applications must demonstrate that the **applicant** and **project** are eligible for funding against the scheme criteria. For instance:

Criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has legal business status, is solvent and currently trading 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will benefit one or more of Mid Devon's main market town centres 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project activities are eligible under the scheme guidance 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is not retrospective and the project is deliverable by 31/12/2024 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting paperwork has been provided 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project costs are eligible and have followed the required procurement process for cost thresholds 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will deliver at least one of the Vibrant Town Centre Scheme priorities. 	Pass/Fail

Need and Deliverability

How quickly and easily can the project be delivered? Does it have the appropriate consents / support in place?

Criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear business case and rationale for the project in terms of addressing a need or market failure 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is unlikely to happen in the same way, to the same timescale or extent without funding support 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed direct outputs are realistic and would not have occurred without the grant funding. 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has a clear and realistic timetable for delivery by 31/12/2024 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either the project will not require permission or the applicant has provided evidence of permission or intent to apply for permission from relevant statutory services (Planning, Licensing, Highways) as required 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrated that they have consulted other key stakeholders such as Mid Devon District Council services (Property Score 	Score

Criteria Assessment Services, Waste Services, Parking Services, Economic Development) and other local councils.	
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Alignment

How well the project aligns with the aims of the Vibrant Town Centres Scheme and the wider Shared Prosperity Fund programme.

Criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project delivers additionality (introduces something new) as a result of the investment. 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal does not offer potential displacement or substitution locally 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme can demonstrate good return on investment, by showing maximum potential benefit against actual cost (eg an improvement that will affect the whole town rather than a small number of businesses. 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal could be replicable in other towns. 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project demonstrates how it supports other town schemes (eg masterplanning, neighbourhood plans, public realm improvement schemes and / or it reflects local design guides. 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Either the project is for one-off purchases or it has evidenced a forward plan to prove the sustainability of the project once the current funding comes to an end. 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project demonstrates ability to create long-lasting effects (eg not just a one-off event that increases footfall for a day). 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Either the project will not require ongoing maintenance or the applicant has provided information about potential or provisional maintenance agreements (as required). 	Score

Value for Money

How well the proposal demonstrates value for money.

Criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All relevant costs for the successful completion of the project have been identified 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items specifications are appropriate to the project, and are not over or under specified. 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All quotes are authentic and independent quotes from qualified suppliers, and that quotes are comparable in extent and specification, to ensure competition and value for money 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has secured or identified match funding 	Score

Impact

How well does the project revitalise the town centre? What benefits will it deliver?

Criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vibrant Town Centre Scheme Priorities the project supports: 	Score

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will increase dwell time/footfall in the town centre • The proposal makes use of an empty shop(s) or disused town centre space • The scheme will improve leisure and entertainment opportunities in the town centre, helping to rebalance the mix between retail and leisure • The scheme improves the appearance / attractiveness of the town centre (through aesthetic changes or proposals to tidy-up the town) • The scheme will help the town centre lower its carbon footprint or achieve environmental benefits • The project delivers a town centre arts, heritage or cultural event and/or programme 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Prosperity Fund priorities the project supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates or improves commercial buildings • Increases visitor numbers • Increases footfall • Reduces vacancy rates • Support a local market • Supports local events and/or activities • Improves or creates public realm within the town centre 	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal does not negatively impact the environment or equality and diversity. 	Pass/Fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the applicant received funding previously through this Scheme? 	Score