



## **Rural England Prosperity Grants**

### **Application Guidance**

**2025 – 2026**  
**Newark and Sherwood**



**Funded by**  
**UK Government**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is a DEFRA scheme, integrated into UKSPF which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. For eligible local authorities, REPF is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations, supporting activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face.
- 1.2. The REPF supports capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

## **2. Rural England Prosperity Fund Grants**

- 2.1. This grant programme can provide **capital funding** to rural organisations in Newark and Sherwood including community organisations such as charities, community interest companies, and voluntary organisations to support local investment in rural communities and the visitor economy. Grant funding is also available for rural commercial organisations to help growth, diversification and support the rural economy.
- 2.2. The table below demonstrates the types of projects eligible for funding through this scheme:

Theme	Example projects
Capital funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism organisations e.g. creating event venues or farm tourism facilities or providing facilities for pet and equines.</li> <li>• Funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from flooding.</li> <li>• Purchase of equipment for food processing for non-farmer-owned businesses.</li> </ul>
Capital funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating multifunctional rural business hubs providing shared workspace and networking opportunities for rural organisations.</li> </ul>
Capital funding for capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing net zero infrastructure for rural communities to support rural tourism activity e.g. EV charging points or community energy schemes.</li> <li>• Supporting kitchens in community hubs to help food and drink entrepreneurs get accreditation for food production.</li> </ul>
Capital funding for cultural, heritage and/or tourism assets where it will benefit the rural visitor economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing local visitor trails and infrastructure such as tourism boards, visitor centres, visitor experiences and general tourist attractions.</li> <li>• Improving accessibility at heritage and culture sites.</li> </ul>
Capital funding for creation and improvements to local rural green spaces including active travel enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrading cycle and footpath links.</li> <li>• Creating or improving community gardens, green spaces, watercourses, embankments, greening of streets and paths.</li> </ul>
Capital grant funding for rural circular economy projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting up or enhancing rural community-led repair cafés or mend workshops.</li> </ul>
Capital funding for community assets where it will result in impactful volunteering and/or develop social and human capital in rural places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking physical improvements to volunteering and community premises including the provision of digital infrastructure for community use.</li> <li>• Purchasing large equipment to enable the delivery of volunteering and/or social action projects.</li> </ul>

2.3. All projects should also consider how they align to the wider objectives of net-zero and nature recovery. This includes:

- The UK's commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.
- Wider environmental considerations, such as resilience to natural hazards.
- The [25 Year Environment Plan](#) commitments.

2.4. We cannot support projects that have received funding from other DEFRA schemes, as listed below:

- [The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme](#) - funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies to deliver projects on climate, nature, people and place
- [The Farming Investment Fund](#) - grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits, covering 2 funds - the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and the Farming Transformation Fund
- [The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#) - grant funding over 3 years (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities.

2.5. We are not able to fund the purchase of equipment for food processing for farmer-owned businesses. Support for farmer-owned businesses is available under the Farming Investment Fund (FIF).

### 3. **Where in Newark and Sherwood is considered Rural?**

3.1. Not all areas of Newark and Sherwood are eligible to receive rural funding as determined by DEFRA. For clarification, projects that **MAY NOT BE ELIGIBLE** for rural funding include those based in Newark Town and Balderton, as well as parts of Clipstone that border Mansfield as they have been defined as 'not rural' for the purposes of the funding. If your project is based in these areas, you can contact us directly via email at [UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk) and we can advise further on eligibility.

### 4. **Who can apply?**

4.1. Any organisation with legal status, located in a rural area of Newark and Sherwood may apply for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, including:

- Local authorities
- Public sector organisations
- Higher and further education institutions
- Voluntary organisations, clubs and community groups\*
- Registered charities

- Arms-length bodies of government
- Commercial organisations with up to 50 employees

\*Unincorporated community groups must have a registered bank account and demonstrate governing processes.

4.2. Private Sector Companies must have a registered commercial address in a rural area of Newark and Sherwood and have no more than 50 full-time employees (FTE). A full-time employee is considered to work 30 hours or more. All projects must be located within eligible rural areas of Newark and Sherwood, as noted in 3.1.

4.3. Businesses must be registered with HMRC, and we will require your Company Reference Number when applying to verify your business. Businesses must have been trading for a minimum of 12 months to be eligible to apply.

## 5. What costs may be eligible?

5.1. **The minimum request per application is £10,000, with a maximum request of £40,000 per application.** Applicants may submit more than one application, however the total awarded to a single organisation will not exceed £40,000.

5.2. Private sector companies must contribute a **minimum of 40% funding** towards the total project costs. **This means your request from us should not exceed 60% of the total project costs.**

5.3. All other organisations must contribute a **minimum of 20% funding** towards the total project costs therefore the **grant applied for from us should not exceed 80% of the total project costs.** The applicant's financial contribution may be from any other funding source including grants such as private funds, loans and other grants (excluding those listed in 2.4). This funding must be secured rather than awaiting confirmation for the project to be considered eligible and excludes in-kind match funding

5.4. If you have previously received grant funding through Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), you may still apply for further funding, however the combined requests must not exceed £40,000. For example, if you have previously been awarded £20,000 through REPF, you will only be eligible to apply for a further £20,000.

5.5. Grant funding must be spent, and activity funded by the grant complete by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026. We will not retrospectively fund purchases that have already taken place prior to confirmation of funding.

**5.6. We can provide capital funding only.** We are unable to fund revenue projects or provide revenue funding to support a capital project. Capital funds can be used to acquire, build or upgrade physical assets, including:

- A one-time purchase of a fixed asset e.g. plant machinery and equipment
- Building and construction costs.
- Professional fees associated with building and construction (excludes early-stage development and feasibility).

**5.7.** The following costs are considered ineligible and must not be included in applications:

- Expenses categorised as revenue such as operational costs.
- Paid for lobbying, entertaining, petitioning or challenging decisions, which means using the Fund to lobby (via an external firm or in-house staff) in order to undertake activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, government or political activity including the receipt of UKSPF funding; or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action.
- Payments for activities of a party political or exclusively religious nature.
- VAT reclaimable from HMRC
- Gifts, or payments for gifts or donations.
- Statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties.
- Payments for works or activities which the lead local authority, project deliverer, end beneficiary, or any member of their partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources.
- Contingencies and contingent liabilities.
- Dividends.
- Bad debts, costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors, or winding up a company.
- Expenses in respect of litigation, unfair dismissal or other compensation.
- Costs incurred by individuals in setting up and contributing towards private pension schemes.
- Purchases made through credit, as well as lease or rental agreements.
- Improvements to residential premises.
- We cannot support projects or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them.

**5.8.** For any funding requests relating to improvements and works to rural premises, applicants must be able to confirm ownership or lease of the site/asset relevant to

the application, as well as long-term arrangements for maintenance and repairs. If the applicant leases the site/premises, the long-term security of tenure will be considered and reviewed as part of the appraisal and due-diligence process, relative to the individual request. This will generally apply for a minimum of 5 years security of tenure.

## 6. **Grant Funding Timeline**

6.1. The grant funding process will involve several stages, as detailed below:

Stage	Anticipated Date
Application submission opens	Wednesday 18th June 2025
Application submission deadline	Wednesday 16th July 2025
Appraisal and award process	July – August 2025
Applicants contacted regarding outcome of assessment	August 2025
Grant Funding Agreements issued	September 2025
Grant funding period ends	31st January 2026

## 7. **How are applications assessed?**

7.1. All applications submitted will first be assessed against the following gateway criteria to ensure eligibility. Any application that fails the gateway stage will not be taken forward for appraisal by the panel.

Gateway Criteria
Application completed in full and on time with all supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application form</li><li>• Quote(s)</li><li>• Evidence of financial standing</li></ul>
Organisation and project meet eligibility criteria considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nature of organisations e.g. size and age of business</li><li>• Location of project/applicant</li><li>• Previous DEFRA/REPF funding</li><li>• Subsidy control compliance</li><li>• Eligible expenditure against REPF interventions</li><li>• Minimum match thresholds met, with funding confirmed</li></ul>

7.2. Once you have passed the gateway stage, a panel will review and assess your proposal, and a decision will be taken as to whether a grant will be awarded. **All applications are subject to a competitive process and due to the limited availability of funding, funding is not guaranteed.**

7.3. The table below provides an overview of how the panel will score and assess applications. Each element will be scored 0 – 5 based on the quality and content of the answers provided in the application form, with consideration of how well the applicant demonstrates the points below.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Consideration</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
<b>Justification of Funding</b>	Explanation of the need/opportunity for grant funding to support rural economy/communities and address challenges or opportunities.	30%
<b>Strategic Fit</b>	Explanation of long-term benefits for the rural economy and/or communities as well as delivery of outputs and outcomes.  Alignment to the Council's Community Plan Objectives.	30%
	Consideration of environmental sustainability, equality and diversity implications	10%
<b>Deliverability</b>	Explanation of how the project will be delivered on time and in budget, including risk management and measure of outputs and outcomes.	30%

7.4. Awards will be made generally to those that score the highest, with consideration against both commercial and community benefits. The panel's decision is final and not subject to appeal due to the competitive process.

7.5. The panel may consider how projects displace or negatively impact other businesses. Any projects that are likely to result in displacement should refer to this in the application.

7.6. The Council reserves the right to not allocate some, or all, of the funding through this process and may withhold from delivering any potential future grant funding rounds. Where applications may tie on scores, the council at its discretion will determine additional assessment criteria to undertake further moderation.



## 8. What are the funding arrangements?

- 8.1. Due-diligence checks will be undertaken for successful applicants, prior to issuing a grant agreement. This may include, but not be limited, to financial, procurement, subsidy control and other legal checks required to fulfil the conditions of a grant agreement.
- 8.2. Where applicable, applicants must have all necessary permissions in place to undertake the planned activity prior to applying. This includes approval of any planning applications that may be associated with grant funded activity. This may be reviewed as part of the due-diligence process and the council may ask for evidence before a grant agreement is issued, however this is the sole responsibility of the applicant, and will not form part of the application process.
- 8.3. Successful applicants that have passed the due-diligence checks will receive a grant agreement setting out the terms and conditions of the grant which must be signed and returned to the Council, before funding is confirmed.
- 8.4. Grants are paid in arrears and can only be claimed after the work is finished and has been paid for by the recipient, or where sufficient evidence of expenditure is provided in the form of invoices due for works undertaken, and goods received. This may include payments in instalments in some circumstances, if eligible.
- 8.5. After an item/service has been paid for, evidence of payment must be sent to the Council, and we will arrange payment of the grant to you. If your purchase costs less than initially quoted, you will not be paid the full grant award and will be paid up to 60% or 80%, based on match requirements, of the total costs evidenced. If your purchase costs more than originally quoted, it is the responsibility of the Recipient to fund the extra costs, and the grant value will not be increased by the Council.
- 8.6. All projects must comply with UKSPF/REPF procurement procedures. For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-procurement-8>. This includes the requirement for 3 recent quotes for any purchases over £10,000 or an open tender for any purchase over £75,000. **At the point of application, we require at least one recent quote** (acquired within the past three months from the date of application) **to demonstrate proposed costs for each item and if successful, a further 2 quotes must be sought for purchases between £10,000 and £75,000.**

## 9. **How can organisations apply?**

9.1. To apply, please complete and return the following documents to [UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk) by no later than **23:59 on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025**. Applications submitted after the deadline or in any other format will not be considered.

- Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Application Form.
- A minimum of 1 quote to support the financial request (see application form for details).
- Copies of financial standing (see application form for details).

## 10. **Support**

10.1. For any queries relating to the application process, scoring criteria or funding arrangements please email [UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:UKSPF@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk) or for additional accessibility requirements call the Council's general enquiries number on 01636 650000. Support for completing the application form will not be given. Officers will aim to respond to queries within 5 working days and cannot offer support by any other means without good reason.