

Guide to Funders

For Village Halls and
Community Groups
2026 – 2027



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) supports volunteers who manage village halls, community buildings, and other community groups. We provide guidance on governance, funding and project planning, and people skills.

Introduction

There are many different ways to raise money:

- Holding events that people will pay to attend (i.e. a ceilidh) or where they will spend money (i.e. a cake sale)
- Asking for sponsorship for taking part in a challenge (i.e. marathon or long-distance swim)
- Selling something; village halls 'sell' or hire out space but might also sell goods such as calendars or tea towels to raise money
- Requesting donations from local residents or companies towards to cost of a new piece of equipment or upgrading facilities
- Applying for grants

In this guide we're focusing on applying for grants. Funders, or grant makers, exist to give money to organisations which provide solutions to the problems they want to fix. If a funder is interested in fixing the problem of rural isolation, then a village hall or a community group which provides services and activities that reduce isolation, could offer them a solution.

Who makes grants?

The National Lottery: Grant-making bodies that fund different areas of interest, including the National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Charitable trusts: Charities established to award grants, sometimes by a wealthy benefactor or charitable arm of a large company. Some fundraise annually such as BBC Children in Need and Comic Relief.

Public organisations: Bodies such as local councils and National Park authorities.

The Basics

There are some fundamental questions to ask before you start to consider who to approach for funding. Without asking these questions, your project, and therefore your funding applications, won't stand up to scrutiny:

- Why are you doing this project?
- What difference will it make to people in your community?
- Is there really a need for it?
- If there is a need, how do you know? What evidence do you have?

The most common mistake we see groups make when they apply for funding is to focus solely on the immediate problem e.g. *"the roof is leaking; it needs fixing"*, rather than also explaining what difference a comfortable and watertight village/community hall having will make to local people.

How do you know there is a need for your hall or project?

You will have to provide some sort of evidence that people need and want your village hall or the service you provide. Try consulting 'user groups'; the groups of people that use the hall or service already, as well as local residents who may not use it. ACT has examples of survey forms that you can use.

See what other information exists to support your case.

The Nomis website, provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), has 2021 census data for parishes: www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021_pp

Check whether your parish or community has a Community Led Plan or Parish Plan. The consultation may include residents' views on the village hall and other community facilities, providing useful evidence of local needs and priorities.

When applying for capital funding for building improvements, you should also provide evidence of the building's needs. This often includes an appropriate professional survey, such as a Building Condition Survey, Energy Audit, Damp Survey etc. Contact ACT for more information about being capital funding ready.

How to apply

Using an application form

Many grant makers use application forms. Answering each question clearly should give them the information they need to assess your project.

Read the guidance notes carefully and respond directly to each question. If you reuse wording from another application, check that it is relevant and fully answers what is being asked.

Applying by letter

Some funders do not provide an application form or detailed guidance. In these cases, write a letter that includes all the information they need to consider your request.

Trustees may review many requests, so make your project and the amount requested easy to understand. Keep the letter clear and concise, ideally no longer than two sides of A4.

Researching a charitable trust

If you're applying to a charitable trust and are struggling to access information about it, do a charity search to find it on the Charity Commission's public [register of charities](https://registerofcharities.org/), and review its annual accounts and contact details.

The accounts may indicate the usual size of grants awarded, and the types of projects funded. Address your letter to the named contact where possible, often the Chair, Secretary or correspondent responsible for reviewing applications.

Suggested structure

Include the following information so trustees can quickly understand your organisation, project and funding request:

- **Summary:** Summarise your request in a few lines. Write this last, as it may be the only part a busy board of trustees reads.

- **About your organisation:** Explain what your organisation does, how long it has operated and how it is managed. Whether it is a charity and if registered, include the charity number.
- **The need or problem:** Describe the issue your project will address and provide evidence of need. For example: “Older people in [parish] are becoming increasingly isolated as local services disappear.”
- **Your proposed solution:** Explain what you want to achieve. For example: “We want to create opportunities for people to meet and for different generations to mix.”
- **How you will deliver it:** Describe the activities you will provide. For example: “We will run a volunteer-led community café once a week.”

Explain how the project will be sustained. Will it cover its own costs after set-up? If not, how will you fund future running costs?

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Explain how you will record who takes part and assess whether the project has achieved its aims. For example: “We will record attendance at the community café and survey users every six months to identify improvements.”
- **Budget and funding:** Set out what the money will pay for, the total project cost, the amount requested, any funds already secured and how you will raise the balance.
Some funders will cover the full cost, while others expect match funding from other grants, your own funds or local fundraising.

Things to remember

Check what costs are eligible

Funders usually specify which types of expenditure they will support. Capital costs are one off purchases or improvements, such as equipment, furniture, building work or accessibility upgrades. Revenue costs are ongoing expenses, such as salaries, rent, utilities, insurance, activities and other running costs. Some will support both types of cost, while others exclude particular items so check the funder’s guidance carefully before applying.

Secure all funding before you start the project

Funders rarely pay for work that has already begun. Ensure you have confirmed funding in place before starting the project or committing to any expenditure. Be clear on whether a funder pays grants up front; releases funds on receipt of an invoice; or on completion of the project. Plan ahead to ensure you have the necessary cash flow to pay invoices as needed.

Split larger projects into phases

Consider dividing a large project into clearly defined phases, each with its own costs, timetable and outcomes. This can make a larger project more manageable, and you may be able to go back to funders again for subsequent phases. Each phase must be able to stand-alone and deliver a useful result, even if later funding is delayed or unavailable.

The Grant Makers

The grant makers listed in this guide may be interested in giving you a grant, but you will need to take a careful look at them before you apply.

They are likely to have specific criteria about what they will fund, and your project might not fit. Others may have very broad aims but will have many more applicants than they can possibly fund and so the percentage of successful applicants will be small.

Information goes out of date quickly; they may have new application deadlines or change their priorities, so always find out as much information as you can about them, before you apply.

Finally, this list isn't exhaustive, but it is a starting point. You can do your own search using databases such as www.myfundingcentral.co.uk which is available to eligible small organisations in England. Subscriptions currently start at £100 plus VAT per year for those with an annual turnover of up to £30,000, with higher charges for larger organisations. Another resource to try is www.getgrants.org.uk which provides free resources.

If you're able to contact funders before applying it can help to build a relationship with them. You can meet local funders at the Funding Fairs organised by Cumbria CVS who also run funding training courses and offer funding advice. Visit: www.cumbriacvs.org.uk

ACRE Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund

The Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund helps community buildings fill temporary gaps in funding, either for specific projects or for urgent work connected with the building. The fund is managed by ACRE on behalf of Defra. Applications are submitted via ACT.

Further details in the [Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund Leaflet](#) and available from ACT.

ACT Bursary for Building Condition & Energy Surveys (National Lottery funded)

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery, ACT is offering a bursary to community buildings for up to 90% cost of a Building Condition Survey and/or Energy Audit.

Please note, funds are limited and interested halls are advised to apply as soon as possible.

Visit: cumbriaaction.org.uk/community-building-resources

Awards for All (National Lottery Community Fund)

Grants of between £300 and £20,000 for projects that bring people together to build strong relationships and improve communities in England. Apply at least 16 weeks before you want to start activities or spend any of the money

Visit: www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england

Awards for All - Environment (National Lottery Community Fund)

Grants of between £300 and £20,000 for projects that: help people to connect with and care for nature in their area and/or make a positive difference to the environment. Apply at least 16 weeks before you want to start activities or spend any of the money

Visit: www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england-environment

Baywind Energy Community Trust

Charitable Trust supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable communities. Grants between £100 to £5,000. Not-for-profits, schools, charities, SMEs (Small or Medium sized Enterprise).

Tel: [01229 821028](tel:01229821028) Web: www.bwect.org.uk (online application form)

Bernard Sunley Foundation

The Foundation gives grants in the following categories: Community; Education; Health; Social Welfare. Under the 'community' category they will fund new build, refurbishment and improvements of village halls and similar. This often includes disabled access, modernising kitchens, new storage space and updating toilets. Applicants need to be a registered charity.

Capital funding only e.g. building work, equipment; not Revenue e.g. salaries, running costs.

Email: office@bernardsunley.org Web: www.bernardsunley.org

Charity Bank

Loans of a minimum of £100,000 for charities, social enterprises and other organisations where the loan is being used for a social purpose. Contact - Tel: 01732 441919 Web:

www.charitybank.org

Clothworkers' Foundation

Working towards an equitable society where all can participate and thrive. 'Open Grants Programme' funds capital costs that support the infrastructure needs of small and medium sized charitable organisations working with disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities. Online eligibility quiz to see if your project and organisation is eligible to apply.

- Small grant (up to £15K) has a one stage application process
- Large grant (more than £15K) has a two-stage application process

Email: Foundation@Clothworkers.co.uk Web: www.clothworkersfoundation.org.uk

Copeland Community Fund

Copeland Community Fund offers support for projects seeking funding in the borough.

- Enabling Fund (up to £10K to develop and strengthen projects)
- Local Communities Fund (small grants £5K to £30K and Large grants of £30K+)
- Community Resilience Fund (small grants up to £5K and Large grants £5K+)

Visit the website for further information about funding programmes, eligibility criteria and application deadlines: www.copelandcommunityfund.co.uk

Tel: 07833 048986 Email: info@copelandcommunityfund.co.uk

Cumbria Community Resilience Fund

The fund supports community-led activity that helps local people prepare for, withstand, respond to and recover from incidents, emergencies and local risks (such as flooding, power loss, extreme weather, access disruption or isolation) and reduces the unequal impact these events can have on local communities and diverse groups. Grants for equipment and activities, usually up to £12,500. Managed by Cumbria Community Foundation:

www.cumbriafoundation.org/fund/cumbria-community-resilience-fund

Tel: 01900 511856 Email: joe@cumbriafoundation.org

The Craven Trust

A grant-making charity supporting community projects in the Craven area (parts of North and West Yorkshire, Cumbria and Lancashire, which make up the northern part of the former West Riding of Yorkshire). In Cumbria, this is the Sedbergh area. Grants are generally £100 to £1,500. For more information contact administrator Rowena Garton.

Tel: 07954 803327 Email: enquiries@craventrust.org.uk Web: www.craventrust.org.uk/

Cumberland Council - Community Panels

Cumberland Council is the unitary authority for the former districts of Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland. There are eight Community Panels covering Cumberland. Each is made up of the ward councillors for that area. The panels meet four times a year to decide what their communities need, and to direct investment towards projects that tackle those priorities.

For details of how to apply, criteria, guidance and application form visit:

www.cumberland.gov.uk/your-community/community-panels

Cumbria Community Foundation

Community foundations offer a variety of grant-making programmes funded by donations from individuals, families, businesses as well as grants from local authorities and Government.

Makes grants to a wide range of organisations; particularly keen to help grassroots community groups and small-to-medium-sized voluntary organisations. Applicants aren't required to be a registered charity, but the work you ask the Foundation to support must be legally charitable.

Tel: 01900 825760 Email: enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org

Web: www.cumbriafoundation.org

Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust (CWMET)

CWMET provides Landfill Communities Fund grants for eligible environmental and community projects near the Hespin Wood (CA6 4BJ) or Flusco Pike (CA11 0JB) landfill sites. Parish councils, community groups and other eligible not-for-profit organisations can apply.

Before applying it is important to check the current funding, location criteria, application process and deadlines on the CWMET website, or contact the Trust with your project postcode to confirm eligibility.

Tel: 01228 822106 Email: enquiries@cwmet.org.uk Web: www.cwmet.org.uk/grant-info

Easyfundraising

Easyfundraising doesn't award grants but can help you raise funds for your organisation. Register for free and encourage all your supporters to use the easyfundraising website/app when shopping from their usual online retailers. Over 7,000 online retailers will make a monetary donation to your organisation at no extra cost to you or the customer.

Visit the ACT website for details: cumbriaaction.org.uk/partners

FCC Communities Foundation

The Foundation distributes Landfill Communities Fund grants from FCC Environment. In Cumbria, projects should use the online pre-application eligibility check to confirm that they are within 10 miles of an eligible FCC waste facility, including the Lillyhall area near Workington. There are restrictions on the organisations, projects and costs that can be funded.

Visit the website for more information: fcccommunitiesfoundation.org.uk/

Frieda Scott Charitable Trust

The Trust makes grants to charities and community groups supporting beneficiaries who live in the Westmorland area of the Westmorland & Furness Council.

Trustees award around 30-40 grants a year, of up to £20,000. The average grant is around £15,000. By exception, larger grants will be awarded for projects that make a significant difference to disadvantaged groups.

Potential applicants are asked to phone the office before putting in an application to check the eligibility of their organisation and project.

Contact Liz Islam – Tel: 01539 742608 Email: manager@frieda-scott.org.uk

Web: www.friedascott.org.uk

Garfield Weston Foundation

Supports organisations and activities making a positive impact to the lives of the communities in which they work and driven by a desire to achieve excellence.

Capital grants are normally no more than 10% of a total project cost. However, for local community projects (e.g. village halls, community centres, places of worship), grants are likely to be no greater than £30,000 regardless of the project size.

Tel: 020 7399 6565 Web: www.garfieldweston.org

Hadfield Trust

Grants to Cumbrian organisations of up to £5,000 but most are between £1,500 to £3,000. Particularly interested in projects that address social needs; youth and employment; help for older people; the arts and the environment. Projects are encouraged to make contact to discuss their plans before applying.

Tel: 01539 823112 Email: admin@hadfieldtrust.org.uk Web: www.hadfieldtrust.org.uk

Hallburn Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund

Grants of between £250 and £20,000 for projects benefitting communities in the civil parishes of Arthuret, Hethersgill, Kirkandrews-on-Esk, Kirklington Middle, Nicholforest, Scaleby, Solport, Stapleton and Westlinton.

Web: grantscape.org.uk/fund/hallburn-wind-farm-community-benefit-fund

Harold and Alice Bridges Charity

Provides grants for capital projects and village halls. The primary geographical area covered is Lancashire and South Cumbria, particularly the River Ribble area and northwards, the Blackburn area, and South Lakes.

The application deadlines are 15th January, 15th May, and 15th September each year. There is an application form on their website.

Web: www.haroldandalicebridgescharity.co.uk

Heritage Fund (The National Lottery Heritage Fund)

Supports a broad range of projects across the UK that connect people and communities to their heritage. Grants from £10,000.

Web: www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding

Morrison's Foundation

Supports charities making a positive difference in local communities. Maximum grant is £20,000. Applications should deliver on (at least) one of three objectives:

- Breathing new life into local spaces: Upgrade and revitalise buildings and outdoor areas.
- Bring people together: Reduce social isolation and foster a strong sense of belonging.
- Secure the future: Ensure vital local services remain open and accessible for generations to come.

Web: www.morrison'sfoundation.com

Moto Foundation

Grants for community organisations and schools operating within a 25-mile radius of a Moto site for projects and activities that deliver benefits to local communities. Moto services in Cumbria on the M6 at Southwaite, Todhills and Burton-in-Kendal.

Web: moto-way.com/about-us/moto-foundation/grant-process/

National Churches Trust

Supports a variety of churches, chapels and meeting houses across the United Kingdom. Grants are available to any Christian place of worship in the UK that is open for regular worship.

Help to keep church buildings in good repair, open for worship and community activities, and allow them to continue to serve people, communities, and visitors in all sorts of ways.

Web: www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support/grants

NFU Mutual Charitable Trust

The NFU Mutual Charitable Trust supports charities working in agriculture, rural development and insurance. The Trustees are particularly interested in initiatives focusing on education, research, social welfare, and poverty relief within rural areas.

Grants are available between £1,000 and £75,000 with larger grants being reserved for projects which would have national significance.

Web: www.nfumutual.co.uk/about-us/charitable-trust

Parish & Town Councils - Public Works Loan

Parish and Town councils can use funds from the parish precept to award grants to local community groups. Councils can also access a Public Works Loan, with favourable interest rates, to use or gift as a grant e.g. to a village hall, for capital projects:

- The acquisition of land
- Carrying out works on land, including the construction or and undertaking significant works on buildings and other structures

The loan is paid back by the council with funds raised from the precept meaning all residents contribute to their improved community facilities.

The [PWLB lending facility](#) is operated by the UK Debt Management Office on behalf of HM Treasury and provides loans to local authorities. Parish and Town councils must first obtain borrowing approval via Cumbria Association for Local Councils (CALC) www.calc.org.uk.

Postcode Neighbourhood Trust

The Trust supports smaller charities and good causes in the north of England under these themes:

- Enabling participation in the arts
- Preventing or reducing the impact of poverty
- Supporting marginalised groups and tackling inequality
- Providing support to improve mental health

Web: www.postcodeneighbourhoodtrust.org.uk

Queen Elizabeth Trust

New UK-wide charity that supports communities to restore and sustain shared spaces that bring people together across generations from all walks of life. Emphasis on restoring, renovating or updating existing spaces.

Funding programme due to launch in Spring 2027.

Web: www.queenelizabethtrust.org

Reaching Communities England (National Lottery Community Fund)

Provides grants of over £20,001 for up to five years to voluntary and community organisations. Funding priorities to: Support places, people or communities experiencing poverty, disadvantage, or discrimination; and Support people and communities to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

Your project must achieve one or more of the following missions, to support communities to:

- Come together, through inclusive places, spaces, and activities (either physical or virtual) especially for communities where people are least able to come together
- Help children and young people thrive, by developing positive social and emotional skills
- Be healthier, by addressing health inequalities and helping prevent poor health
- Be environmentally sustainable by engaging with climate issues and having a positive environmental impact, and improving access to quality natural space

Web: www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/reaching-communities-england Tel: 0345 4102030 Email: general.enquiries@tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

Screwfix Foundation

Supports projects that improve, repair, and maintain homes and community facilities used by those in need throughout the UK. Offers local registered charities and not for profit organisations funding of up to £5,000. Applications are assessed in March, June, September, and December.

For information and to apply: www.screwfix.com/landingpage/screwfix-foundation

Sir John Fisher Foundation

Funds work that serves needs and grows aspirations in Barrow-in-Furness and the surrounding area. The maximum request to apply for is £20,000, however, the majority of the grants awarded are between £5000-£15,000. Application deadlines every year are 1st March (for decision in May) and 1st September (for decision in November).

For more information visit: www.sirjohnfisherfoundation.org.uk

Suez Communities Trust

Supports community and environmental projects through the Landfill Communities Fund. Projects must have secured all other funding required for the project before applying.

Eligible projects must be located within one of the active funding zones. In Cumbria, this is the area around Kendal Fell Quarry but eligibility can be checked using the online postcode checker.

Web: grantscape.org.uk/fund/suez-communities-fund-england

The Allen Lane Foundation

Funding programmes are: Asylum seekers and refugees; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; Offenders and ex-offenders; Older people; People affected by violence or abuse; People with mental health issues; and Young people.

The Allen Lane Foundation offers grants ranging from £500 to £15,000 to smaller charities and community organisations across the UK (excluding London). Funding is exclusively for organisations (not individuals) and supports core running costs, start-up expenses, or specific projects aimed at reducing isolation and discrimination for marginalised groups.

Tel: 01904 613223 Email: info@allenlane.org.uk Web: allenlane.org.uk

The Roselands Trust

An independent grant making charity which supports organisations and individuals throughout Cumbria and Lancashire. Awards are made to community projects and charitable groups helping people facing disadvantage, particularly those supporting older adults or people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Applicants are encouraged to make contact for an informal discussion before applying.

Tel: 07961 028995 Email: enquiries@theroselandstrust.org Web: www.theroselandstrust.org

Walney Extension Community Fund

Ørsted has committed to a Fund worth approximately £600K a year for the lifetime of the project to construct an extension to the operational Walney offshore wind farm.

Grants of between £500 and £50,000 are available to organisations in Barrow and specified coastal parts of Copeland and South Lakeland. Visit the website to check eligibility and apply online.

Web: grantscape.org.uk/fund/walney-extension-community-fund

Westmorland & Furness Council Community Fund

Westmorland & Furness Council is the unitary authority for the three Localities of Eden, Furness and South Lakes. Funded through Westmorland & Furness Council's Locality Boards, grant funding may be available from the following funds:

Local and not-for-profit groups running community projects for residents should apply. Previous groups that have received funding include village halls, play groups, community centres, environmental groups, residents and tenants' associations, parish councils, local history groups, sports groups, youth groups.

Funds can vary between localities and from year to year. Applicants are encouraged to make contact to discuss projects before submitting an application. For details visit:

www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/community-fund

ACT Community Buildings Service

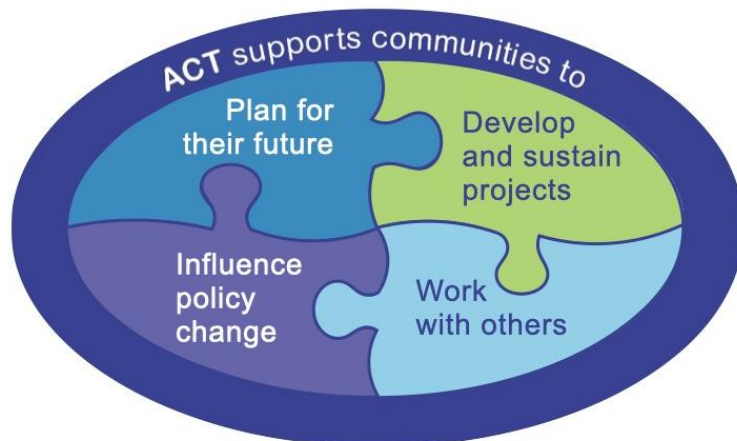
ACT's free Community Buildings Service offers the following throughout Cumbria:

- A place to come with any community building related query
- National village hall information sheets and model documents, ACT guidance sheets, case studies and other resources – visit: cumbriaaction.org.uk/community-building-resources
- Entry onto the [Cumbria Community Buildings Directory](#)
- Community Buildings Updates and [ACT newsletter](#)
- Community Buildings [Events](#)
- National voice for village halls, via [ACRE \(Action with Communities in Rural England\)](#)
- If our funding is limited, we also offer bespoke support at £50 per hour

For more information, visit: cumbriaaction.org.uk/about-community-buildings

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

champions community and rural issues



ACT's vision is that no one should be disadvantaged by where they live

Become an ACT Supporter!
Scan the QR code or visit us at
cumbriaaction.org.uk/join-us



**For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on
Tel: 01768 425 666 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk**

ACT champions community and rural issues

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