

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 13 February 2025
Title:	Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund	
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change	
Report Author:	Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer vreed@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: Yes

Summary

1. It was agreed by Cabinet to allocate £125,000 from the Climate reserve to deliver the Zero Carbon Communities Fund in 2024/25.
2. Applications were invited for the third round of funding in September 2024. Community groups, parish and town councils were able to apply for grants between the value of £1k, and up to £20k.
3. As in previous funding rounds, applications were invited under the themes of carbon emission reduction; biodiversity restoration and enhancement; and community engagement in climate change.
4. The evaluation and selection of projects for the third-round funding took place in December 2024. Applications were independently evaluated and scored by Councillor Reeves, Councillor Pavitt, and Councillor Lemon. After collation of scoring by UDC officers, a moderation meeting was held on 17th December and sixteen projects were approved to receive grant awards.

Recommendations

5. To note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
6. To approve the list of successful projects agreed by the selection panel as listed in *Appendix 2*.
7. To note that the following applications will receive grant funding from the Climate reserve ringfenced water/river project fund, *Appendix 2 no. 9, 15 and 16*.

Financial Implications

8. A total of £165, 096 grant funding has been awarded in Round 3.
9. Funding from the Climate reserve for projects in round 3 has been allocated as follows:
 - a. £107, 068 Zero Carbon Communities Fund
 - b. £58, 028 Water/River Projects Fund

10. Grant payments will only be released to a project when Officers are in receipt of a signed agreement and any other requested information, to confirm that conditions of the funding have been accepted and/or met by the applicant.
11. A review of the Zero Carbon Communities grant fund will be undertaken in Q2 to consider whether there are any opportunities available to deliver a future funding round.

Background Papers

12. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:
- The [Council Climate Crisis Strategy](#)
 - The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund Criteria (see *Appendix 3.*)

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	<p>The delivery model for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund has been established after two funding rounds delivered in 2022 and 2023.</p> <p>Information on the fund and community projects that have been supported is shared widely via all Council communication and social media platforms.</p> <p>A webinar to launch the funding application round is held to showcase community projects and share information about the grant criteria and application process.</p>
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	Grant funding will be allocated so that we can support as wide a range of projects as possible across the district. All projects will need to demonstrate how they will engage with others within their community.
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Applicants will need to ensure any required permissions are gained ahead of installation of

	infrastructure projects such as solar panels.
Sustainability	The fund specifically supports enabling community groups to deliver sustainability and carbon reduction projects aligned to the Council Climate Change and Biodiversity priorities.
Ward-specific impacts	n/a
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

14. The closing date for the third round of grant applications was 2nd December 2024.
15. Applications for grants were invited under three themes:
 - 1) Carbon Emission Reduction
 - 2) Biodiversity Restoration and Enhancement
 - 3) Community Engagement in Climate Change
16. All projects were asked to provide a method for how they would evaluate and measure the impact of their project. For projects delivering interventions to reduce carbon emissions, the impact needed to be quantifiable.
17. At the closing date, a total of twenty-three applications for funding were received. Please see a breakdown of applications received in *Appendix 1*.
18. The selection panel independently scored and assessed each application ahead of a moderation meeting held on 17th December, where all applications were discussed, and the successful grant awards agreed.
19. A traffic light system was used to evaluate each application against the grant award criteria, please see further details at *Appendix 3*. Panel members were asked to declare any interests ahead of the moderation process, to ensure transparency and fairness in the assessment of projects.
20. Sixteen projects were selected to receive a grant award this year, see *Appendix 2*.
21. One of the selected projects (*Appendix 2, no.8*) had also applied for a grant from the UK Share Prosperity Fund administered by Economic Development and it has since been agreed this applicant will receive a grant from UK SPF for their project. Therefore, this application has been withdrawn from the Zero Carbon Communities Fund shortlist.

22. The Climate Change team will monitor and engage with all projects and share success stories and case studies via the Zero Carbon Communities Newsletter, Council communications channels and local media.
23. A celebration event for the Zero Carbon Communities Fund is planned for autumn 2025.
24. A networking group *Sustainable Uttlesford* has been created to support the projects and community groups enabled through the Zero Carbon Communities Fund.
25. In addition, a collaboration has been initiated by the Council which proposes to formalise *Sustainable Uttlesford* as a community organisation, with the intention to build on the legacy of the Zero Carbon Communities Fund. This community organisation would continue to enable the growing district network of community groups and projects. Objectives include, to share resources and expertise, create a directory of projects, groups and case studies, and support future fund raising.
26. Key milestones to be aware of are set out in the table below:

Activity/Milestone	Key Dates
<i>Cabinet Approval</i>	13 th February 2025
<i>Publication of Grant Awards</i>	20 th February 2025
<i>Outcome letters issued to applicants</i>	20 th February 2025
<i>Grant Award Funding Released</i>	1 st March 2025 onwards
<i>Zero Carbon Communities Celebration Event and Climate Conference</i>	Autumn (date tbc)

Risk Analysis

27.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Poor value for money secured, or value for money not sufficiently assessed	2	2	Applicants are required to demonstrate value for money in their project

			<p>proposal.</p> <p>Panel evaluation of proposals against key grant criteria.</p> <p>Further information requested if applicant has not given sufficient evidence to support grant value requested.</p>
Insufficient due diligence to ensure grant recipient is solvent and an appropriate organisation to receive funding	1	3	<p>Full due diligence checks are carried out before grant payment is made to an organisation. This includes UDC receipt and acceptance of a statement of accounts</p>
Risk of fraud, or loss of public money	2	3	<p>Grant agreement /contract must be signed by the organisation before payment.</p> <p>Any funding unspent to be returned to the Council</p> <p>Project Team make a visit to all projects.</p> <p>All grantees submit an end of project report with detail on what has been delivered and impact.</p>

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix 1 Summary of Applications

Total grants requested: **£329,362**

<i>Applications by Ward</i>	No.	Total Value
<i>Ashdon</i>	3	£43,797
<i>Elsenham and Henham</i>	3	£46,995
<i>Felsted and Stebbing</i>	1	£20,000
<i>Great Dunmow</i>	1	£20,000
<i>High Easter and Rodings</i>	1	£20,000
<i>Littlebury, Chesterford and Wenden Lofts</i>	2	£37,892
<i>Newport</i>	1	£20,000
<i>Radwinter</i>	1	£18,028
<i>Saffron Walden</i>	6	£65,191
<i>Stansted North</i>	1	£3160
<i>Thaxted and the Eastons</i>	2	£26,300
<i>The Sampfords</i>	1	£8,000

Number of applications by theme	No	Total Value
Carbon Emission Reduction	12	£193,937
Biodiversity Restoration	5	£69,527
Biodiversity Restoration, Carbon Emission Reduction and Community Engagement	2	£9,723
Biodiversity Restoration and Community Engagement	1	£20,000
Carbon Emission Reduction and Community Engagement	1	£8,000
Community Engagement	1	£8,175
<i>Grant Theme not met</i>	1	£20,000

Organisation Type	No of applications
Parish or Town Council	12
Village Halls or Associations	4
Sports Facilities	1
Community Group or CIC	6

Appendix 2 List of Successful Projects

Project No.	Applicant Name	Grant Theme	Project	Panel Award
1	Great Chesterford Parish Council	Carbon Emission Reduction	Replace street lights with LED	10,000
2	Henham Village Hall	Carbon Emission Reduction	Solar Panels for Village Hall	7995
3	Saffron Walden Town Council	Carbon Emission Reduction	Bridge End Gardens Green Housing heating upgrade + lighting	8316
4	Saffron Walden Town Council (joint application with Plantation Football Club)	Carbon Emission Reduction	Crabtrees Clubhouse Solar Panels and Battery	11500
5	Enterprise East CIC	Community Engagement	Revive and Thrive - community education and outreach workshops	5000
6	Elsenham Community Association	Carbon Emission Reduction	Solar Panels and Battery Elsenham Memorial Hall	15000
7	Thaxted Parish Council	Carbon Emission Reduction	Solar Panels	12,000
8	Dig It Community Allotment <i>Withdrawn</i> *	Biodiversity restoration and community engagement	The Earth Repair and Permaculture Project - restoration of allotment area, delivery of community eco-activities	15,000
9	Thames 21 (Rodings Farm Cluster)**	Biodiversity Restoration	The Roding and West Essex Farm Cluster continuation of support to farm cluster coordination - event hosting and river restoration delivery	20000
10	Hadstock Parish Council	Biodiversity Restoration; Carbon Emission Reduction and Community Engagement in Climate Action	Community rewilding activities; evaluation of community energy solutions; and delivery of energy, waste, repair and nature workshops.	6563
11	Sustainable Stansted	Biodiversity Restoration; Carbon Emission Reduction and Community Engagement in Climate Action	Implementation Stansted Mountfitchet Biodiversity Study Recommendations and Reducing Community Energy consumption via resident engagement activities	3160
12	The Sampfords Parish Council	Carbon Emission Reduction and Community Engagement	Green Sampfords - Community Energy Project	4000
13	Great Easton and Tilty Parish Council	Biodiversity Restoration	Burns Open Space Advice - Ecology survey and community engagement	6300
14	Hadstock Village Hall	Carbon Emission Reduction	Solar Panel and Battery System Hadstock Village Hall	17234
15	Newport River Group (CURAT and Newport Parish Council)**	Biodiversity Restoration	Upper Cam Chalk Stream Restoration Projects and Community Education- feasibility studies	20000
16	FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group) East CIC**	Biodiversity Restoration	Restoration of the River Pant catchment at Grange farm Radwinter	18,027.79
Total Grant Awards				165,096
*project 8 withdrawn as funded via UK Shared Prosperity Fund underspend			**projects 9, 15 and 16 funded via climate reserve water/rivers project budget	



Assessment Criteria

You need to read each application form and supporting documents to assess the following:

PROJECT PLAN

- Is there a clear project description, have they identified what the group wants to do and what the project will achieve?
- Has the plan clearly set out how the project will get the necessary people, support and resources? Do you understand the project objectives? Do the project objective/s align well to the grant theme?
- Did they submit a quote? Are you confident there is readiness and capacity to deliver the project?

VALUE

- Does the project represent value for money – is there a good impact for the amount of money requested?
- Does the project contribute additional value? this might include any of the following: other funding contributions; volunteer time/expertise from other sources; collaboration between organisations, and/or evidence of local support; communication of the project to the local community

MEASUREMENT AND IMPACT

- Has the applicant set out how they will measure and assess the difference that the project will make? For carbon emission reduction projects this should be quantifiable.
- To what extent will the project have a lasting impact on the local community?



Your Score and Comments

- For each application on the spreadsheet please complete Columns 'H' and 'I'.
- In column H: select one of the following to indicate your assessment of the application: **Green**, **Red** or **Amber**
- In column I: provide any brief notes and comments to support your assessment.

Quality Criteria – Traffic Light Assessment	
Please select your evaluation score (either RED , AMBER or GREEN)	
GREEN	The project meets all the requirements of the grant criteria The answers provided are regarded as excellent and fully relevant to the project outlined. I have full confidence in the capabilities or capacity of the applicant.
AMBER	The responses meet all the requirements of the grant criteria. The answers provided are regarded as good and are in part relevant to the project outlined. I have a good level of confidence in the capabilities or capacity of the applicant
RED	The responses meet some requirements of the grant criteria. The answers provided are of low quality. I have some doubts about the capabilities or capacity of the applicant.