

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 9
October 2025

Title: Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme
(Round 4)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for the
Environment and Climate Change

Report Author: Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer
Ben Brown, Director of Climate and
Environment

Key decision: No

Summary

1. It is proposed to deliver Round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Scheme to support delivering the Council Corporate priority to provide community leadership and enable local action on climate change.
2. £80,000 has been allocated from the Climate Budget Reserve to enable delivery of the Fund in 2025/26. Individual grants have a maximum value of £10,000.
3. Round 4 of the ZCC Grant Fund will use a similar application and award process that was established in previous rounds. However, as the overall fund and individual grants are smaller, it will not be necessary to seek Cabinet approval of the successful bids. The grant awards will still be managed in a fair and transparent way with evaluation of applications against clear grant criteria, concluding with a moderation panel.

Recommendations

4. To approve the plan to launch round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund in October.
5. To note the timeline and milestones outlined for the application and selection of the successful projects.

Financial Implications

6. The total amount of funding awarded through the Zero Carbon Community Grant Fund to date is £476, 188, broken down as follows:

Year	Total Grant Funding	Source of Funding	No. Projects
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	Awarded		Funded
2022/23	£125, 426	Climate Reserve Budget	11
2023/24	£185, 666	Climate Reserve Budget UK Rural Prosperity Fund	15
2024/25	£165, 096	Climate Reserve Budget	15

7. £80,000 is identified from the Climate Reserve Budget to deliver round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund in 2025/26
8. In round 4 applicants will be able to apply for grants up to a maximum of £10k, with applicants needing to demonstrate a % of match funding available, depending on the value requested.
9. 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.

Background Papers

1. 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:

[Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund Projects](#)

[The Council Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Plan.](#)

Impact

10.

Communication/Consultation	<p>The delivery model for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund has been established after three previous funding rounds.</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 is held to share case studies of previously funded community projects and share information about the grant criteria and application process.</p>
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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 project delivery e.g. installation of infrastructure such as solar panels.
Sustainability	The fund enables community groups to deliver sustainability, biodiversity and carbon reduction projects aligned to the Council Climate Crisis strategy and priorities.
Ward-specific impacts	The council have a responsibility to lead and influence action on climate change and biodiversity restoration across the district.
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

11. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund provides an opportunity for the Council to continue to deliver a district programme of community engagement on climate action. The fund will enable the growing network of community Climate Action groups to establish themselves through engaging local communities and residents in delivering 'low carbon' and 'high nature' projects on the ground.
12. Engagement through the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund enabled the creation of a networking group Sustainable Uttlesford in late last year, and since then the Council have collaborated to formalise Sustainable Uttlesford (SU) as a community organisation, with the intention to build on the legacy of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund.
13. Sustainable Uttlesford and the Council will collaborate to deliver the Uttlesford Big Green Festival from 6th to 14th June 2026. A range of community events and activities will take place across the district to celebrate projects and the action being taken in Uttlesford to tackle climate change and protect nature.
14. As in previous rounds the fund will be open to community groups and parish/town councils delivering projects that reduce carbon emissions; projects

that restore or enhance biodiversity, and projects which engage communities in taking climate action.

15. To date the grant scheme has funded 41 community projects. These include net zero infrastructure community projects such as installation of solar PV and energy conservation measures on community buildings and facilities; alongside community projects that provide energy surveys, advice and support to residents to install retrofit measures via their own means or via available government grant schemes. Grants have also been used to deliver local biodiversity studies and projects, river restoration and wetland projects and support to a farm cluster.
16. 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.
17. All projects will be asked to provide a method for how they will evaluate and measure the impact of their project. For projects delivering interventions to reduce carbon emissions, the impact will need to be quantifiable. It is expected that all projects will engage with others in their community on climate action.
18. The below table sets out high level timeline and key milestones for delivering round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund:

Proposed Timeline & Milestones	Key Dates
<i>Launch Zero Carbon Communities Fund</i>	30 th September 2025
<i>Webinar including Community case studies</i>	w/c 13 th October 2025
<i>Closing date for applications</i>	4 th December 2025
<i>Moderation panel complete evaluation</i>	15 th to 31 st December 2025

Risk Analysis

19.

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

sufficiently assessed			<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.