



## High Street Building Grants Guidance for Applicants

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 City centres and town high streets serve as crucial economic and cultural hubs across the country, attracting residents, workers and visitors alike, however the pandemic, working and buying habits and ongoing cost of living pressures have significantly impacted these areas, leading to reduced footfall, business closures, job losses and a decline in overall economic activity.
- 1.2 In light of these challenges, we recognise that in order to support our high streets and businesses, organisations need the confidence to invest in their properties again. In order to support investment, Cumberland Council is offering High Street Building Grants to businesses looking to expand into vacant spaces, landlords looking to improve vacant spaces to allow new tenants to move in and existing businesses to improve their shop fronts. This fund supports our high streets by reducing vacancy rates, making them more attractive places to visit, encouraging investment and stimulating growth.
- 1.3 Following the successful roll out of the High Street Business Growth Grant Scheme in Carlisle, the Town Facelift Scheme within Allerdale and the Pride of Place Building Grant Scheme within Copeland, we are launching this new combined grant scheme to support the Cumberland area. The scheme will now be available to applicants within our defined high streets in Cumberland North, Central and South.
- 1.4 This is a scheme for the financial year 2023/2024 and is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (E1). There is a fixed budget and once the funding has been allocated the grant programme will close.

### 2.0 Terms and Conditions

- 2.1 This grant is split into two separate prioritisation groups in which applicants must apply for one or the other.

#### **Priority A (Empty Property Scheme)**

This is a capital grant up to a maximum value of **£35,000 or 50% of the costs (whichever is the lower)** for new or existing businesses looking to occupy vacant buildings or spaces within the defined boundary areas listed in section 2.2. Property owners can also apply for this grant if they have a prospective tenant.

## Priority B (Facelift Scheme)

This is a capital grant of up to maximum value of **£5,000 or 50% of costs (whichever is the lower)** for new or existing businesses for facelift schemes to enhance their existing or new property within the defined boundary areas listed in section 2.2. Property owners can also apply for this grant.

Applications can only be made under one of the priority schemes.

## Eligibility Criteria for Businesses Premises

Priority A - Empty Property Scheme (up to £35,000)	Priority B - Facelift Scheme (up to £5,000)
<p><u>Premises Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property being applied for must be vacant or have vacant ground floor space in which the applicant will be occupying.</li> <li>Property must be held freehold by the applicant or by a lease with a minimum of a 3-years remaining.</li> <li>Must be brought into use by the applicant's business or the applicant must have a prospective tenant lined up.</li> <li>Must be within the eligible areas.</li> <li>If required must have relevant planning permission in place or submitted before applying.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Premises Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be a new or existing business or landlord within the eligible area.</li> <li>Property must be held freehold by the applicant or by a lease with a minimum of a 3-years remaining.</li> <li>Has not received a building grant from the council under a previous facelift scheme in the last 8 years.</li> <li>If required must have relevant planning permission in place or submitted before applying.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Eligible Works</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible works will include physical improvements to the premises, including improvements to the internal layout and services, frontage of the building and signage.</li> </ul> <p>The scheme will not fund the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any works of repair or improvement that are not undertaken by a professional contractor.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Eligible Works</u></p> <p>The grant will only fund works to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties:</p> <p>Eligible works include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repair or reinstatement of all or any part of a ground floor shop front;</li> <li>New signage or refurbishment of existing signs;</li> <li>Re-painting of external frontages;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any works that have already been completed or commenced.</li> <li>• Any works to residential accommodation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-pointing, repair and cleaning of external stonework and brickwork;</li> <li>• New ground floor windows and shop doors;</li> <li>• Physical improvements to a shop entrance to improve disabled access in conjunction with property repairs;</li> <li>• New or replacement awnings and blinds.</li> </ul> <p>The scheme will not fund the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any works of repair or improvement that are not undertaken by a professional contractor;</li> <li>• General pedestrian access improvements;</li> <li>• Externally mounted security features.</li> <li>• Any works that have already been completed or commenced.</li> </ul>
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2.2 The Cumberland High Street Business Growth Grant is a capital grant for businesses looking to occupy vacant spaces in the following areas:

Cumberland North - Carlisle, Brampton, Dalston and Longtown.

Cumberland Central - Wigton, Silloth, Aspatria, Maryport, Cockermouth, Workington and Keswick.

Cumberland South - Whitehaven, Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.

City/town centre boundary maps for these areas can be found on the website.

2.3 Applications from businesses outside of the defined areas will not be considered for this stream of grant funding.

2.4 The award of the grant is subject to an appraisal process. This is a discretionary grant and the decision to award a grant is entirely at the council's discretion.

2.5 Businesses must demonstrate that they contribute to the vitality of the high street.

- 2.6 Any financial arrears to Cumberland Council will be taken into account, as will any previous financial assistance provided by the council to the applicant or linked businesses.
- 2.7 We require the use of the funds to be fully transparent and traceable in order to award a grant, therefore all works funded by the grant must be undertaken by a professional company with quotes for works provided alongside the application. We require the applicant to provide two quotes for the works, to ensure value for money. If the works are to be split into several packages (i.e. electrical, plumbing, painting), we require two quotes for each package of works. For any package over the value of £50,000 we will require three quotes.
- 2.8 Applicants will be expected to contribute to the project themselves, therefore we expect the applicant to cover at least 50% of the cost of works, through their own revenue. Where the applicant is receiving other grants/subsidies towards the works, if those grants/subsidies are more than 50% of the costs, the council will not provide any grant funding under this scheme. Where the grants/subsidies are less than 50% of the costs the council will only provide funding at a rate which brings the applicants contribution down to 50%.
- 2.9 Cumberland Council may seek to reclaim some or all of the grant within three years of the award should the applicant's business close or relocate out of the council area. If the freeholder receives the grant and then disposes of the property (by way of sale or long lease), the council may also seek to reclaim some or all of the grant. This will be done on a pro rata basis as follows:
- 100% repayable within 12 months from payment of grant
  - 60% repayable within 2 years of payment of grant
  - 30% repayable within 3 years of payment of grant
- 2.10 Where required, applicants will need to provide copies of planning permission and landlord/owners approval for the works prior to commencing and a building control sign off on completion.
- 2.11 Applicants will be required to show they have access to enough funds to complete the whole of the project. For Priority A projects, grant will be paid in two instalments and applicants will be required to provide all invoices and proof of payment before the grant will be paid. For Priority B projects, grant will only be paid on completion of the works and again applicants will be required to provide all invoices and proof of payment before the grant will be paid.
- 2.12 Retrospective applications for work already started or completed will not be considered.

2.13 **For Priority A - Empty Property Scheme** the following additional terms also apply:

2.14.1 Businesses are asked to identify when they expect to start trading from the premises. The council will follow up with businesses that experience delays with the opening. If there is no business trading from the premises within 12 months of the grant being paid, reclamation action will be taken to recover 100% of the grant.

2.14.2 An assessment of the viability of the project will be made. If the council deems the project to be unviable, a grant will not be awarded.

2.14.3 The type of business and how this will contribute to diversifying the mix of businesses on high street will be considered. We will not award grants to businesses under A5 use classes (takeaways) or certain other uses, including betting shops and adult shops. We will prioritise the uses that support the maintenance of active frontages and face to face business customer interactions.

2.14.4 For businesses moving from one property to another property within an eligible area, they must be able to show the move is a business expansion and not purely a relocation.

2.14.4 You will be required to sign a Grant Agreement a copy of which can be reviewed in Appendix 1 to this guidance.

2.14 **For Priority B - Facelift Scheme** you will be required to sign a letter confirming acceptance of the terms and conditions of the grant. A copy of the terms and conditions are set out in Appendix 2 to this guidance.

### 3.0 **Application Process**

3.1 Application forms are available on our website at [Improvements to Town Centres & High Streets | Cumberland Council](#). Please ensure your form is returned with all sections answered fully and with **ALL the relevant documents attached**, we will be unable to consider incomplete applications. Please return your application to:

[highstreetgrants@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:highstreetgrants@cumberland.gov.uk)

3.2 Following submission of a complete application form, we will aim to review and process applications and notify you of a decision within 15 working days. For more complicated applications the decision may take longer and we may require further information in order to award a grant with confidence. In such circumstances prompt and fully co-operative responses are required from applicants to help move the process along as quickly as possible.

- 3.3 This is a limited fund and will be allocated on a first come first served basis, once the allocated budget has been committed, no further grants will be awarded.
- 3.4 It will be important that you provide **ALL** of the information accurately and truthfully in addition to providing **ALL** the supporting documents that are requested. If the council suspects any business is attempting to fraudulently claim the grant, it will investigate accordingly.
- 3.5 Decisions on approving the grant applications for payment are made by the Director of Place Sustainable Growth and Transport or such other officer nominated by the Director.
- 3.6 There is no right to appeal and the decision of the council is final.
- 3.7 The council's interpretation of this document is at its own discretion and it will be the final arbiter of the definitions contained within this policy.

#### **4.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 4.1 Cumberland Council is required to monitor and evaluate the scheme and report outputs to the government. By making an application, organisations and businesses consent to take part in the evaluation process and verify how their grant was used and the benefits that the fund has helped the business realise.

#### **5.0 VAT**

- 5.1 If applicants are VAT registered and able to reclaim VAT, grant will only be paid on the net costs of any works.

#### **6.0 Subsidy Control**

- 6.1 The council is a public body and subject to the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.
- 6.2 By accepting the grant, organisations and businesses confirm that they have not received more than £315,000 in financial assistance for the period elapsed of the current financial year, and the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year and are within the subsidy allowance for this period, it is advised that businesses/organisations will be asked to confirm this in writing that they have not exceeded their threshold to enable the council and organisation to record and demonstrate that they are within the minimal financial exemption prescribed under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

6.3 The council will require each business to confirm that by accepting the grant payment, they are eligible for the grant scheme, this includes that any payments accepted will be in compliance with subsidy control requirements.

## **7.0 Data Protection**

7.1 We will use your information to assess your application for financial support. We will confirm information about you and your account from referencing agencies to confirm account validity and your identity. If you provide false or inaccurate information, we will record this and a grant will not be awarded. All personal information will be processed in accordance with the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation. For full information on how any personal information we gather will be processed, please visit our privacy notice at <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-and-privacy/privacy-notice>

## **8.0 Right to update our policy**

8.1 The council reserves the right to update or change this policy without notification or prior warning in the event that the government updates or changes its guidance to us or in the event of an error or omission.

## **9.0 Publicity**

9.1 From time to time the council will publicise its grant schemes and its successes, which may include details of projects that have been completed, including grant amounts, company names and before and after photographs. By accepting the grant, you will be agreeing to take part in such activity.

9.2 Applicants must comply with the schemes Acknowledging Your Grant and publicity requirements.

9.3 Please note The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 requires the council to publish information regarding all transactions with a value over £500.

## **10.0 Site Inspections**

10.1 If requested the council shall be granted access to inspect the property prior to and on completion of the works and at other reasonable times, subject to prior notification.