

Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund (small grants fund)

FAQs

1. Why are small grants now available?

Defra has listened to requests for smaller grants to be made available. This capital grant fund is designed to help the volunteers running village halls make easy steps towards capital improvements. The minimum grant available has been set at £2000 and the largest grant at £5000. Note: As the grant can only be 20% of eligible project costs your committee must have the 80% match in hand or identified at the point of submitting the application.

2. Why is the fund only designed to assist improvement work, not repairs and maintenance, which can be costly on an old hall?

The project is to fund capital improvement projects rather than routine maintenance. We are looking to fund schemes that will enhance, upgrade, extend and improve halls, rather than schemes looking to repair, maintain and replace existing structures. The [Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund](#) is available to fund such work.

3. How important are the Funds stated outcomes? e.g. We just need to modernise our hall so that it is fit for purpose and we can maintain hire income, e.g. new toilets and kitchen equipment, redecoration

While we understand the need for halls to refresh facilities from time to time, the Fund outcomes are very important, and priority will be given to projects which address more than one of them.

The funding for the Fund has been provided by Defra and is restricted to capital works that enhance, upgrade, extend, improve, and construct rather than repair and maintain.

The Funds intended outcomes align with what village halls do in practice, bringing communities together through a range of activities from toddler groups to youth clubs, exercise classes, whist clubs and lunch clubs. As a result of such improvements new activities can take place such as community cafes, drop-in centres and dementia friendly activities. Improving energy efficiency measures will address climate change and improves the financial sustainability of halls. Halls contribute to the local economy by increasing footfall into the community, providing space for small business providers and employing local contractors to undertake the works.

4. Our hall is run by a Community Association, are we eligible?

Yes, a hall or community centre run by a charitable community association is eligible, providing it meets all the other eligibility criteria.

5. Are Village Halls run by Parish Councils acting as sole trustee eligible?

Yes, but they must be able to demonstrate that the hall is run and managed according to charity law. Applications will not be accepted from Parish Councils where the hall is not a charity and is run and managed according to local authority rules and regulations. Parish

Councils would not be able to include the VAT in the eligible project costs section of the costs and funding form as they can reclaim it.

6. Are Village Halls run by Parish Meetings eligible?

We will consider such rare situations if the hall is the only community facility in the parish because we understand that it is the smallest, often most rural parishes, that do not have a Parish Council and instead have a Parish Meeting once a year. The Fund is otherwise only available to charitable halls.

7. Is a church or church hall eligible? What about Women's Institute halls, scout and guide halls?

Improvements to church halls or to guide or scout halls, WI halls or similar charitable halls which serve as the local village hall and can demonstrate they are available for, and used by, a wide variety of community activities and improvements to non-listed churches to bring them into use as a village hall will be considered if they will form the principle village hall type facility in the parish as a result of their scheme. Note that in such cases any grant would be subject to a condition that the premises are made available for a wide range of community use for a minimum period of 21 years and would be repayable if this ceased to be the case.

8. Do we need to submit a separate application in order to apply for a loan from the Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund (RCBLF)?

Yes. Although both Funds are administered on behalf of Defra by ACRE and the forms are similar, each Fund has its own procedures. You may find you can copy and paste some information requested by this fund to the RCBLF form.

9. Why is there a population limit of 10,000 and how does it work?

This funding comes via Defra and is limited to rural areas, which are [generally](#) defined as having a population under 10,000, so halls situated in parishes of under 10,000 population will be eligible.

Most village halls in rural areas have historically been provided and managed by charities and they often provide the only multi-purpose community meeting place. These halls are the Fund's priority target. Some parishes have more than one village or include a small town in which different areas have their own distinct identity, problems or focus. If this is the case for your scheme please make it clear in your comment on the application so that we have a better understanding of the community served by the hall. In urban areas community buildings were historically often provided by local authorities and can qualify for funding from other targeted grant schemes.

10. What is the last date when applications can be submitted?

The Fund will be open for applications from 1st February 2024 and will be open until December

2024 depending on availability of funds.

Projects must be fully funded and able to demonstrate spend and draw down their grant by the date set out in their terms and conditions. **All project work must be complete before the end of March 2025.** Applicants should keep in touch with their local ACRE member and check the [ACRE website](#) as updates will be available.

11. Can we apply if our lease expires in under 21 years? Can we apply if we are still negotiating lease extension or renewal terms?

You will not be eligible if your Lease is less than 21 years. Please speak with your local ACRE member for support and guidance.

12. How do we find out if a hall is leasehold or freehold?

Usually the governing documents will include a lease or, for freehold property, a conveyance or Deed of Gift or Indenture. If the governing document is a Charity Commission Scheme it should contain a reference to the property itself and the documents which give the charity title to the property. Alternatively, a search could be done of the Land Registry.

13. When will we receive the grant, how long do we have to spend it, and will you need to see invoices for the work or other proof of payment and completion of work?

The grant offer will be subject to conditions that will be set out in the Terms & Conditions provided to you with your grant offer. When we are satisfied these are met the grant will be paid in full.

You will need to submit invoices as evidence of spend but these need not be receipted.

All work must be completed, invoices submitted for audit purposes and any other requirements met.

All projects supported under the scheme will need to have completed the funded activity by 31 March 2025.

14. Where can we find the population of the parish, town or village?

ACRE Network members may hold the OCSI data, from the 2011 census, which we can accept. The Parish or District Council may have a more recent figure. It is also possible to use a search facility (such as Google) or look it up on Wikipedia.

15. Is a School Hall eligible? Is a village hall charity that uses a school eligible or village halls which are used by local schools?

School halls are not eligible. They are outside the scope of this Fund including schools that are held on a charitable trust. Where a village hall charity has use of a school, the hall charity would need to satisfy the usual criteria of having a minimum 21 years left to run under a lease on that part of the property used by the hall charity. Village halls which are used by local schools for lunches and performances for example are eligible.

16. What kind of answer is expected to the Project Management question?

This will depend on the nature of the project. Clear lines of communication, delegation and financial accountability are required. It is important to show how spending will be managed to avoid cost over-runs. Trustees usually set up a working party or sub-committee to oversee a building project and people with relevant skills should normally include the Treasurer. For a larger project an architect or surveyor supervising builders and other contractors would normally report to the working party or sub-committee, via a nominated trustee who acts as contact point for small decisions/adjustments. If a project is rejected at Stage 1, can it re-apply?

17. Is there any flexibility on planning consent being in place, if needed?

While an application could be submitted without planning consent, we do not wish to encourage applicants to do so unless there is a clear timescale of only a few weeks for an application to be determined, as otherwise it could raise false expectations and cause wasted effort if it were forwarded to ACRE and then not capable of consideration.

18. Why are you asking about other village or community halls and other facilities in the parish?

The reason is that we need to understand what the business case is for the project. This is particularly relevant in situations where there is more than one community hall and a range of other facilities available in the local area. If distance to other facilities and very infrequent public transport services are an issue this can be covered in making the case for a grant.

19. Will a grant cover Fixtures and Fittings?

A grant will only be awarded towards eligible capital expenditure. Removable fittings and equipment are not classed as capital expenditure. The priority for this Fund is assisting with capital buildings works, which tend to be harder to fund, whereas match funding and donations in kind tend to be more easily obtained for such smaller items. Please see the 22. below.

20. Can we sign the application using an electronic signature?

Yes.

21. What are eligible and ineligible project costs?

Eligible project costs:

- Capital works/eligible items (this may include fixtures, refer to) excluding VAT
- VAT on capital works/eligible items (do not include if your organisation is able to reclaim VAT)

Ineligible project costs

- VAT on capital works/eligible items if you are able to reclaim VAT i.e. your organisation is VAT registered

- Fees: planning, building regs, legal costs etc including VAT
- Equipment and fittings including VAT
- Contingency (up to 10%)

22. ELIGIBLE AND NON-ELIGIBLE ITEMS OF EXPENDITURE

The emphasis is on capital improvement work which makes a difference to the use and/or energy efficiency of a hall. Only where items that would ordinarily be classed as maintenance form an integral part of a larger improvement project, or making good, can these be included.

HMRC Notice 708, section 13, will normally be the point of reference for determining whether an item would ordinarily be incorporated in building work.

Eligible items of expenditure include:

- Extensions
- Internal reconfigurations
- New roof and roof refurbishment which includes insulation
- Refurbishing toilets and kitchens including fixtures
- Damp proofing
- Electrical works and installation of broadband or Wi-Fi
- Guttering, repointing and drainage as part of an improvement project
- Replacement of external and/or internal doors, floors and windows
- Fixtures installed as part of improvement works (eg electric sockets and light fittings, security alarm systems, TV aerials and satellite dishes, central heating boilers and radiators, plumbing installations, fitted kitchen units, fitted hobs and oven, kitchen tiling, wall mounted plumbed in hot water boilers, toilet pans, sinks, urinals, cubicles and tiling, built in cupboards or shelf units)
- Energy generation equipment (eg Heat Pumps, PV panels, wind turbine)

Non eligible items include:

- Purchase of land or buildings
- Architects, surveyors, and other specialist fees (including feasibility studies, planning fees or project management fees)

- New builds: Most new charitable village and community halls are eligible for 0% VAT and therefore will not be eligible for this fund
- Building projects which have already started
- Routine maintenance normally associated with regular and general upkeep of a building (except making good, or addressed as part of, an improvement project). Removable fittings and equipment e.g. carpets, curtains and curtain rails, mirrors, plug in or battery-operated appliances, microwave ovens, refrigerators, freezers, tables, chairs and other free-standing furniture, lamps and lampshades.
- Improvements to car parks, parking areas, adjacent recreational areas, landscaping, except where making good the consequences of eligible improvements e.g. laying drains across a car park.
- Projects which do not show a clear outcome other than updating a building
- Buildings where the ownership is not established or where there is a lease in place of 21 years or under
- Expenditure which is not part of a physical improvement of the hall building, e.g. fixtures and fittings in part of the building which is not being improved.