

Guide to Funders

For Village Halls and
Community Groups
2026 - 2027



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) supports the volunteers who manage village halls, community buildings and other community groups with guidance on: Governance, Funding & Project Planning, and People Skills.

Introduction

There are lots of different ways of raising 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; there are different lottery grant making bodies which make grants according to their area of interest i.e. National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England, National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Charitable Trusts; charities that are set up to give money away. Sometimes they've been established by a wealthy benefactor or are the charitable arm of a large company. They may raise money annually through holding events or requesting donations such as Children in Need or Comic Relief
- Public organisations such as Local councils or 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 on the immediate problem "*the roof is leaking; it needs fixing*" rather than explaining the difference that a comfortable, watertight village hall/community building will make to local people.

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

You will have to provide some sort of evidence that people need 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. ACT has Parish Profiles (2011 data) for nearly every parish in Cumbria on our website which could give you background information and statistics about your area to support your application:

www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/resources/parish-profiles

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

If your parish or community has produced a 'Community Led Plan' or 'Parish Plan' it's possible that people will have been questioned about the village hall or community facilities as part of the consultation.

Completed Community Led Plans are on the ACT website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/resources/community-led-plans and, if your area has one, it should be on your Parish Council website too. If your Plan is over five years old the consultation is likely to be out of date

What to put in an application

Many grant makers have application forms that you fill in. By answering the questions on the form you should have given them the information they need to decide whether to fund your project.

Ensure you read any guidance notes provided and answer the questions being asked. It can be tempting to copy and paste answers you've given in another grant application but if you do this, ensure it actually fits the question being asked.

Some funders don't have application forms, or any guidelines about how to apply, so you need to write them a letter which contains all the information they need.

These letters will be read by trustees who need to understand very quickly what your project is and how much money you need. Your letter should be clear and concise (ideally no more than two sides of A4 paper).

If there's little information about a Trust you're interested in applying to, search for the charity on the Charity Commission website and look at their annual accounts:

register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk

Their accounts should give contact details and may give an indication of the size of grant they make. You might need to address your letter to the Chair, the Secretary or a named contact or 'correspondent' whose role it is to sift through applications.

If you use the following structure for your letter or application then you should have provided the trustees with all the information they need:

- **A summary** - A few lines that summarises everything in the letter. Write this last. This could be the only part of your application a busy board of trustees will see.

- **A brief introduction about your organisation** - Whether it's a charity (include the charity number), how it's managed, how long it's been in existence for.
- **The problem you want to solve** - i.e. *older people in xxxx parish are becoming increasingly isolated due to loss of services.*
- **What you want to do about the problem** - i.e. *we want to create opportunities to bring people together and encourage different ages to mix.*
- **How we will do this** - i.e. *we will hold a volunteer-run community café once per week.* State whether your project is financially sustainable; after you've covered the set-up costs will it pay for itself? If it won't, how will you cover the running costs in the future?
- **Monitoring and evaluating the project** - How will you track the numbers/type of people using your project and assess whether it's worked? i.e. *we will record the numbers of people who use the community café and survey users about possible improvements once every six months.*
- **The budget** - What will you need to spend money on and how much funding are you looking for? How much money do you already have and where are you going to get the remaining money from?

Some funders will be happy to fund the whole of your project, but others will only want to contribute part of it and will want to see 'match funding' with some of the funds coming from other sources. They may want you to have raised some of it through community fundraising i.e. local fundraising from holding events etc.

Other funders will make grants for 'capital' projects such as equipment, building work, furniture, and others will want to make grants for 'revenue' projects such as salaries and running costs.

Finally, funders don't usually fund projects which have already started (retrospective funding), so please get all the funding you need in place before you get your project underway or commit to any spending. If necessary, break it down into smaller stages/phases and fund each stage as a separate project.

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 and they may have new deadlines for applications 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 by using databases like www.myfundingcentral.co.uk which is free to subscribe to for organisations with an annual income of less than £30,000 and a sliding scale of charges for organisations with a larger turnovers. Another one to try is www.getgrants.org.uk which has free resources.

If you can make contact with funders before you apply than this 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.

Email: info@cumbriacvs.org.uk

Website: 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.

Read: acre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Rural-Community-Buildings-Loan-Fund-Leaflet-2022.pdf

Contact ACT for further information (see back page for details).

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: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/community-buildings for details.

Awards for All (National Lottery Community Fund)

- Grants of between £300 and £20,000
- Apply at least 16 weeks before you want to start activities or spend any of the money
- Community groups, not for profit groups, parish or town council, health body, or schools are eligible. You do not need to be a registered charity to apply.

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 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, community centres and similar. This often includes disabled access, modernising kitchens, new storage space and updating toilets. The applicant needs to be a registered charity.

Capital funding only e.g. building project or equipment, not revenue e.g. salaries or running costs. Details of what they won't fund available at: bernardsunley.org/grants/what-we-dont-fund

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.

- Small grant (up to £15K) has a one stage application process
- Large grant (more than £15K) has a two stage application process
- Take the online eligibility quiz to see if your project and organisation is eligible to apply.

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

Copeland Community Fund

Copeland Community Fund 2022-2025 'Local Communities Fund' offers support for projects seeking funding in the borough.

- Enabling Fund - up to £10K to develop and strengthen projects. Rolling Application process
- Local Communities Fund - Small grants £5K to £30K and Large grants of £30K+. Application deadlines: 24th April 2024; 24th July 2024; 16th October 2024; and 22nd January 2025
- Community Resilience Fund –Small grants up to £5K and Large grants £5K+. Rolling Application process

Enquire by phone Tel: 07833048986 or online at: www.copelandcommunityfund.co.uk

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-council/community-panels/how-apply-investment-community-panel.

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. You don't have to be a registered charity to apply, 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)

Funds community projects within a 10 mile radius of Hespin Wood Landfill Site - CA6 4BJ. *(Update May 2026: No funds available for projects near to Flusco Pike Landfill Site - CA11 0JB, whilst the site is closed).* Projects within a 10 to 15 mile radius of these sites may be considered if there is a second fee paying landfill site within 10 miles.

Grants are open to Parish Councils, Community Groups and organisations which are non-profit distributing bodies and not under Local Authority Control.

Tel: 01228 822106 Email: enquiries@cwmet.org.uk Web: www.cwmet.org.uk

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: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/partnerships/easyfundraising

FCC Communities Foundation

The Foundation is the Landfill Tax Fund for FCC Environment and can fund capital projects located within 10 miles of the Bennett Bank Landfill Site near Barrow in Furness and the Lillyhall landfill site at Workington. There are a number of restrictions on what 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

Furness Community Donations

Donations of £150 to community groups can be applied for from Furness Building Society. Apply online at: www.furnessbs.co.uk/furness-community-donations

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

Particularly interested in projects that address social needs; youth and employment; help for older people; the arts and the environment. They make grants to Cumbrian organisations of up to £5,000 but most are between £1,500 to £3,000. 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's an application form on their website.

Web: www.haroldandalicebridgescharity.co.uk

Heritage Fund (The National Lottery Heritage Fund)

Supports projects across the UK that connect people and communities to their heritage. Web: www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding

Morrison's Foundation

Supports charities making a positive difference in local communities. Applications should deliver on (at least) one of three objectives: Tackling poverty and social deprivation; Enhancing community spaces, facilities and services; Improving health and wellbeing. Maximum £10,000 grant.

Web: www.morrisonfoundation.com

Moto Foundation

Grants for community organisations and schools operating within a 15-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 in the areas of education of young people in rural areas and relief of poverty within rural areas.

Grants are available between £1,000 and £50,000 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 [PWL B 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 physical activity;
- Enabling participation in the arts;
- Preventing or reducing the impact of poverty;
- Supporting marginalised groups and tackling inequality;
- Improving biodiversity and responding to the climate emergency;
- Improving greens spaces and increasing access to the outdoors;
- Providing support to improve mental health.

Web: www.postcodeneighbourhoodtrust.org.uk

Queen Elizabeth Trust

New UK-wide independent charity launched in April 2026 to honour Queen Elizabeth II's lifelong commitment to public service.

The website says: *"We will be funding community spaces, with an emphasis on restoring, renovating or updating existing spaces."* and *"We expect to make our first grant in spring 2027."*

Web: www.queenelizabethtrust.org

Reaching Communities England (National Lottery Community Fund)

Provides grants of over £20,000 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/programmes/reaching-communities-england

Tel: 0345 4 10 20 30 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, search 'Screwfix foundation' on their website: www.screwfix.com

Sir John Fisher Foundation

Funds work that serves needs and grows aspirations in the area around Barrow-in-Furness.

- Main grants up to £20,000 - deadlines 1st March and 1st September each year
- Small grants up to £4,000 - a decision typically within 3 months

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

SP Electricity North West - Social DSO Fund

Formerly the Powering our Communities Fund. Supports investment in clean energy, sustainability and climate-related projects by providing grants for initiatives such as community EV charging hubs, solar projects, battery storage and energy-saving ideas.

Grants of up to £25,000. Match funding required (no minimum amount). Round 3 is expected to open for applications in September 2026. Visit the website for more information.

Web: www.enwl.co.uk/future-energy/community-and-local-energy/social-dso-fund

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/suez-communities-fund-england

The Allen Lane Foundation

The Foundation focuses on funding 'unpopular causes'. Funding programmes are: Asylum seekers and refugees; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; Offenders and ex-offenders; Older people; People affected by violence; People with mental health issues; and Young People.

Trustees recently agreed a greater focus on specific areas of work for the elderly especially for those in rural and more deprived areas. The aim in this category is to reduce loneliness and isolation, improve physical and mental wellbeing, help maintain independence and a quality of life for older people.

Tel: 01904 613223

Email: info@allenlane.org.uk

Web: allenlane.org.uk

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 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:

- Community Grants Fund - Grants that contribute towards the setting up of new community initiatives or the purchase of new equipment or refurbishment costs for existing groups.
- 0 - 19 Services Fund - Grants to support projects and initiatives for organisations who deliver activities and projects for young people.

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

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

ACT Community Buildings Service

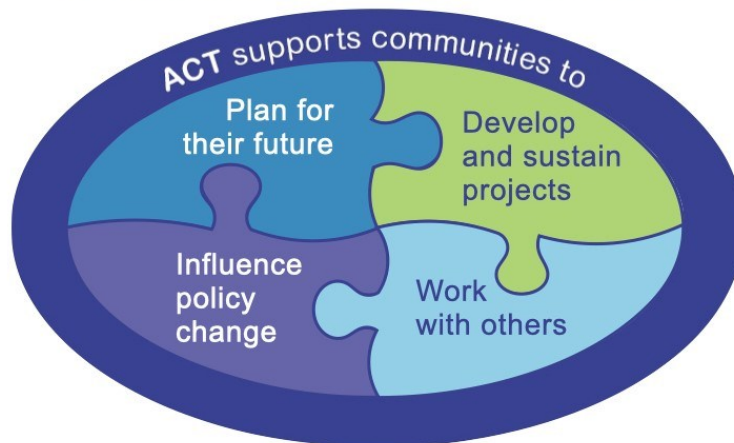
ACT's free Community Buildings Service offers the following throughout Cumbria:

- A place to come with any community building related query
- Community Buildings Events
- National Village Hall Information Sheets and model documents (on request only)
- Community Buildings Updates and ACT newsletter
- ACT guidance sheets, case studies and other resources
- Entry onto the Cumbria Community Buildings Directory
- 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: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/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
www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/about/join-us



For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on
Tel: 01768 425666 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria, Room 11, Redhills House, Redhills Business Park, Penrith CA11 0DT

T: 01768 425666 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us @ACTCumbria
Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria | Charity Registration Number 1080875 | Company Number 3957858



©ACT 2026. This publication may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as ACTion with Communities in Cumbria copyright and the title of the publication specified.