



Carbon Action Fund – Guidance notes

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West Oxfordshire District Council secured capital funding from UKSPF and REPF to support small or medium-sized businesses on their carbon reduction measures and carbon-zero journey.

The council has secured capital funding via the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and as part of this funding is looking to invest in supporting carbon action and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy, by making grants available to local organisations to support carbon action projects.

This scheme will provide capital funding to:

- Support implementation of carbon action activities, including the purchase of equipment, premises adaptations, and establishment of net-zero infrastructure
- Support businesses to lower greenhouse gas emissions and adopt new processes and/or technologies.

Projects must evidence how funding would be used to help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to what extent emissions would be reduced (by kilo, or tonne).

Grants of between £10,000 and £20,000 can be awarded that match 50% of your total project costs.

All projects must complete before 28 February 2025. Examples of eligible projects include air source heat pumps, smart energy devices, energy efficiency fittings, cycle facilities, bikes/e-bikes, and new or enhanced green infrastructure at your site or building. Please note that we cannot support projects that include energy/building improvements for premises that also function primarily as domestic accommodation.

Who can apply for the scheme

- Small business of between 0 and 49 employees
- Medium business of between 50 and 249 employees
- Businesses in farming and agriculture are encouraged to apply.

Eligible projects

This scheme will provide capital funding to:

- Reduce energy use and remove fossil fuels through improvements in building fabric, installation of low carbon heating, renewable energy generation, and using materials with low embodied carbon. Electric Vehicle chargers, smart energy controls, (e.g. Hive or Nest thermostats).
- Support businesses to lower carbon emissions and adopt new processes and/or technologies, including the purchase of equipment, and establishment of net-zero infrastructure. Renewable energy equipment, such as solar panels or battery storage - air or ground source heat pumps. Insulation for your premises, glazing, building living walls, green roofs, or rain gardens - purchasing or building equipment that enables reduction of waste.
- Reduce carbon emissions in the supply chain, by connecting with local suppliers.

What documents do I need to apply?

Before the application opens, we thought it would be useful to let you know which documents you'll need (alongside your project details) to apply for the grant.

- A copy of recent statements for any bank/building society accounts in the name of the organisation, as identified in the application and on the constitution or company documentation.
- Evidence that the organisation has produced either a carbon action plan, sustainability plan or energy audit, or can otherwise demonstrate evidence of how funding would contribute to lowering emissions and quantify the anticipated reduction in emissions (in kilos or tonnes)
- Three quotes for project items or a professional estimate for any building work.
- A breakdown of the total cost for the project (including match-funded contributions).
- Evidence of secured match funding for the project (if applicable). This could be bank statements showing the funds available, or grant offer letters showing the amount of funding offered.
- Private sector companies and sole traders must provide a UTR number.
- Private sector companies must provide a company registration number and evidence they are actively trading (this may include evidence of recent invoices, a website or similar digital presence, business rates bills or other formal business documentation – due diligence checks are undertaken.
- If your organisation is registered for VAT, you must provide your VAT registration number. Please note: if you are VAT registered and can recover VAT for grant-funded projects, please ensure VAT is not included in your costs.
- For applications concerning land or buildings, confirmation of property ownership - either a freehold interest or a current lease.

Terms and Conditions

Appropriate consents and permissions, for example, from the landlord, listed building consents, planning permission, etc. must be obtained where applicable and are the applicant's responsibility.

The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud and any business caught falsifying their statements or evidence to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to clawback, as may any grants paid in error.

We will confirm receipt of your application via email. We are expecting a high level of demand and not all applicants will be successful. We will notify you of the outcome by email.

All projects must be completed before 28 February 2025.

Examples of eligible projects include smart energy devices, energy efficiency fittings, heat pumps, bikes/e-bikes, cycle facilities, and new or enhanced green infrastructure at your site.

Exclusions

The following businesses are not eligible for the grant:

- Businesses that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking of notice has been made.
- We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:
 - The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund
- Cost accrued before the approval of the grant funding
- We cannot support projects or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them.
- Businesses which have received grant payments that equal the maximum subsidy levels as set out in the Subsidy Act 2022.

Projects that include energy/building improvements to premises that also function primarily as domestic accommodation cannot be supported.

Subsidy control

Grants are subject to UK Subsidy Allowance rules.

To be eligible for a grant, all applicant businesses must demonstrate that they meet the UK Subsidy Allowance rules by completing the MFA declaration – grants can only be awarded to compliant businesses.

It is a requirement of UK Subsidy Allowance rules that a grant may only be awarded when it produces an incentive effect. The grant is considered to have an incentive effect if it enables the beneficiary to carry out activities or projects which would not have been carried out in the absence of the grant aid. Grant funding may only be awarded if it has an incentive effect. It shall be considered to have an incentive effect if, before work on the project has begun, the intermediary has verified that documentation prepared by the applicant establishes one or more of the following criteria:

- A material increase in the size of the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the scope of the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the total amount spent by the beneficiary on the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the speed of completion of the project concerned;

or;

- That the project would not have been carried out in West Oxfordshire in the
- absence of the aid.

Business identified in which are not compliant with UK Subsidy Allowance will not be awarded a grant, even if their project proposal is eligible.

Data Protection Statement

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) contains six data protection principles with an overarching accountability responsibility for data controllers to demonstrate compliance with these principles. This means personal data must be processed:

- Lawfully, fairly and transparently
- For specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not processed in a manner other than the purpose it was collected
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and where necessary kept up to date Not kept longer than necessary
- With the appropriate security and protection

By completing and submitting an application form, you are agreeing that your data will be stored and processed in accordance with current data protection legislation (UK GDPR and DPA18).

The Council will use your information for the purpose of the Rural England Prosperity Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund Capital Business Support Scheme. The Council may publish details about this application on our website (this may include all or some of the project and applicant details) as part of our efforts to promote the scheme to others.

Your information may also be shared with other government departments and agencies for the purpose of fraud prevention. The application and evaluation of grant funding is also subject to audit and reviews by internal auditors who may need to access the information you submit in your application.

The Council will not give or use information about your company for any other purpose, unless the law allows the Council to do so. For further information please see our Privacy Notices

We will not hold your information for longer than is necessary. We will hold the majority of your information for three years after the programme closure (currently expected to be 2028), unless we have a legitimate reason to hold this for longer, for instance in defending any legal proceedings brought by any person or body in relation to your application or any funding we have provided, or as required by law or any relevant code of practice.

If any information that we hold about you is, or becomes, inaccurate or incomplete, please tell us and we will correct it.

Application and award process

1. Council Officers will check the eligibility of the application (including the

additional checks if required) and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility. If eligible, officers will prepare a short summary of the application including key information from the application, merits, concerns, and recommended scoring to the relevant head of service.

2. Council Officers from the Climate Action Team and Economic Team will then make award decisions in consultation with the relevant cabinet members. Their decisions are final and aren't subject to appeal or call-in.
3. You will be invited to complete the [OxLEP Business Support Tool](#) before submitting your application. There OxLEP will ascertain if you could benefit from six hours of support delivered through the West Oxfordshire Business Spark or Cherwell Business Accelerator programmes. The amount of support you are expected to attend will vary depending on your individual business.
4. We'll aim to make our funding decision within five weeks of the scheme closing date.
5. Once the Economic Development team receive the award decision, they will contact the applicant directly.
6. A grant agreement will be sent to you along with a supplier form which needs to be completed, signed and returned to business@westoxon.gov.uk. Paper copy and returned
7. On receipt of grant agreement we will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter. All payments must be made by BACs to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.
8. The Economic Team will contact to follow-up on grant expenditure and to capture outcomes and outputs to ensure in line with fund policy.
9. Our Communications Team will be in contact to discuss how the fund has impacted your business and may request publicity around this.

Standard conditions of grant

We may add extra conditions to any grant if we consider it necessary. These conditions will be determined using a risk matrix, in consultation with the Cabinet member for any projects that appear to present a medium or high risk. They will then be presented to the head of service for consideration.

West Oxfordshire has delegated authority to remove any agreed grant conditions.

We will confirm applicants have met all the conditions before making any payment. Failure to meet all the agreed conditions may delay payment or, in extreme cases, result in us withdrawing our grant offer.

Payment of grant

We will only pay towards costs incurred after the date of the council's decision toward

a grant.

We will pay the grant in full when we receive a valid signed acceptance form and standard conditions. We will request a project update and will require before and after project photos to be uploaded, along with a short report on your project's outputs and outcomes.

The council needs for proof of expenditure (valid receipts or invoices). The grant may only be used for the project agreed.

Scoring and award matrix

Suggested Scores	Scores: The scoring thresholds which identify what priority level the project falls into can be amended, depending on the number of applications received and potential allocation of funds to ensure maximum community benefit. As agreed by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Executive Member for Climate Change and Nature Recovery.
5+	Project will be recommended for funding
0 to 4	Project will not be recommended for funding

Please note, as we have limited overall funding available, if all projects cannot be funded, and scores are tied, relevant applications will be decided by the overall level of carbon reduction achieved by the project and if still tied, in order of receipt.

Projects MUST score at least one point in the Project outputs/outcomes section to be recommended for funding.

Project outcomes and outputs

Applications will be assessed against the following outputs/outcomes:

Points	Adoption of new to the firm technology or processes
0	Adoption of no new to the firm technologies or processes
1	Adoption of 1 new to the firm technology or process
2	Adoption of 2 new to the firm technologies or processes
3	Adoption of 3 or more new to the firm technologies or processes

Points	Greenhouse Gas emissions reduced (per tonne)
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1	Up to 1 tonne per annum
2	1 to 5 tonnes per annum
3	5 or more tonnes per annum

Carbon Action Planning

Points		
0	No evidence of need for project has been provided	No evidence of carbon action planning has been provided.
1	Limited evidence of need for project has been provided	Non-organisation specific evidence has been provided, such as information from internet research (i.e., replacing a diesel vehicle with an electric vehicle would lower emissions).
2	Good evidence of need for project has been provided	Evidence of a light touch Carbon Action Plan has been provided such as those produced in-house using online tools, (e.g. the SME Climate Hubs Carbon Calculator Start measuring - SME Climate Hub or similar).
3	Comprehensive evidence of need for project has been provided	A premises specific energy audit and/or comprehensive Carbon Action Plan has been provided that demonstrates relevant and tested solutions (such as those involving on-site visits, engaging specialist consultant advice specific to business operations).

Climate objectives

Points		
-1	The project negatively impacts the Council's climate objectives	The project has a detrimental effect on the local environment. This could include wider increase in greenhouse gas emissions, commitment to use of non-energy efficient equipment and processes, or destruction of green space and wildlife habitat,

0	The project has a neutral impact on the Council's climate objectives	The project has a limited effect on the Council's climate objectives, such as benefits mainly limited to increased energy efficiency, and limited evidence of carbon reduction.
1	The project will have a positive impact on the Council's climate objectives	The project will positively impact the Council's climate objectives, such as reducing carbon emissions to achieve net zero and accelerating nature recovery.