



VACANT PROPERTY GRANT

Stage 1

Expression of Interest Application

Guide for Applicants

May 2024

Version 4



**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon**
Borough Council

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1. Introduction and Objectives

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, along with Department for Communities have committed to deliver the 'Fit for Future' grant scheme to help improve the vitality and vibrancy of all of our settlements across the borough, by supporting commercial property owners and tenants to invest in their buildings in order to reduce long term vacancy, attract new tenants and improve the external aesthetics of the streetscape.

The scheme is open to property owners with a property located inside the settlement development limits of our villages, towns and city. Applications are also welcome from potential new tenants seeking a minimum two year lease in an eligible property.

This grant is aimed at property owners or prospective tenants who wish to undertake internal property improvement works to enhance functionality and appearance of a property and making it fit for use. Small external works (if included as part of a larger scheme), such as improvements to the frontage or façade of the property can also be funded as part of this grant.

The maximum level of financial assistance is **80% of total eligible costs** with a maximum grant amount of **£20,000** per applicant.

Only properties which have been vacant for 2 years or more are eligible to apply for this grant. (properties that have been occupied by temporary meanwhile use/pop-ups will be considered).

A FULL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM IS MANDATORY FOR ANYONE CONSIDERING APPLYING FOR THIS GRANT.

Please note, if you have previously submitted an Expression of Interest in an earlier call of Fit for Future but did not proceed to submit a Stage 2 Application, you may be eligible to submit a Stage 2 Application without the requirement to submit another Expression of Interest. However, you will need to contact the Fit for Future office to discuss. This can be done via email: fitforfuture@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

We will use the information you provide in the Expression of Interest form as the basis for our decision as to whether or not you will be invited to submit a Stage 2 Grant Application.

In an attempt to minimise wasted effort and resources, we strongly advise that you undertake a self-assess eligibility check to determine whether an application will progress towards assessment. Council would recommend that you do not submit an Expression of Interest if your project appears to be ineligible without first discussing with a council officer.

Fit For Future Grant Allocation

The scheme has a limited budget and **grants will be allocated through a competitive process.**

The scheme cannot fund costs incurred or any commitment to costs incurred prior to any offer of funding from Council (retrospective funding). Projects that have already taken place or are already under way at the time prior to issue of an offer of funding and/or Permission to Start notice will not be funded.

The first point of contact for queries is the grant project officer who can be contacted via email at: fitforfuture@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Scheme Objectives

The Scheme outcomes will:

- Tackle prominent long-term vacant properties within the Borough's 'Settlement Development Limits'¹.
- Impact positively on the streetscape of our city, towns and villages.
- Provide high specification buildings.
- Create buildings that are fit for purpose and ready to occupy.
- Bring redundant/disused floor space back into use.
- Create employment.
- Aid business expansion.
- Enable retention of commercial properties.

Applications will be prioritised for:

- Proposals with the necessary statutory approvals already in place
- Vacant ground floor units within the town centre boundary

¹ Settlement Development Limits are set out within each Local Development Plan. These can be found at https://wayback.archive-it.org/11112/20190702142313/https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/development_plans/devplans_new_council_area.htm (select the development plan for your area, select map library (on the right hand side bar) and then choose the map for your settlement).

- Properties which occupy a prominent place in the town centre or along key gateways
- Proposals which can demonstrate the project will be completed to a high standard of works
- Proposals which can demonstrate that they intend to create new jobs and/or volunteering opportunities
- Proposals which can demonstrate sustainability

2. Funding - Eligibility and Criteria

Who Can Apply for Funding?

The Council will not consider applications from Applicants that discriminate against Section 75 groupings. Section 75 outlines the nine categories for which due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity must be paid, namely between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

Council **will not** consider applications from Applicants that:

- discriminate against Section 75 groupings (see above);
- are businesses which have been in deficit for the last two financial years without a justifiable reason;
- relate to land or property which is to be, or could be sold, within 12 months from the receipt of final payment of grant aid. Where an award under this Scheme has been offered and accepted, the full grant must be repaid to Council;
- have previously received funding through Fit for Future

In addition, Council **will not** consider applications for projects which:

- are located outside the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area;
- have an eligible total capital spend of **less than £5,000**;
- include or relate to repairs, improvements or construction of your own home / private dwelling.
- do not meet the objectives of the Scheme;
- have already taken place or are already under way prior to an offer of funding and permission to start notice being issued;
- have received funding for the property through the main Empty to Occupied Scheme;
- are seeking funding for a unit within a partially occupied property where there is no independent access to the unit being applied for;
- have received funding for the property through council's Small Settlements or Shop Front Grant in the last 3 years;

- duplicate what already exists;
- are deemed to be commercially unsustainable;
- are of a party political nature;
- promote a particular religion; or
- are contrary to Council policy.

From 4 January 2023, all subsidies provided by public authorities in Northern Ireland have to comply with either the European Union's State aid rules or the UK Subsidy Control regime.

Further information regarding these rules can be found at the following website:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/state-aid-and-subsidy-control-after-eu-exit>

It is an applicant's responsibility to check whether State aid or subsidy control clearance is required. Applicants should seek independent legal advice if they are unsure whether a project will require clearance.

What can you apply for?

This is a Capital Scheme only. There is no funding towards revenue costs such as training, IT/e-business and marketing expenditure.

The maximum level of financial assistance is **80% of the total eligible capital costs** submitted and approved through a successful application. **This is capped at a maximum of £20,000. Only one grant per applicant can be awarded.**

The scheme **will not fund**;

- late applications
- land purchase or leasing;
- costs incurred or any commitment to costs incurred prior to any offer of funding and Permission to Start Notice from Council (retrospective funding);
- non-project specific costs;
- costs representing poor value for money;
- items purchased outside of the Council procurement guidelines;

- recoverable VAT;
- an item which can or is already being funded through another grant source;
- professional fees;
- insurance costs;
- interest / banking fees;
- cash expenditure will not be eligible for refund from Council;
- projects where contractors have already been appointed to undertake the work; or
- ongoing maintenance costs (e.g. painting) or consumables - i.e. goods used by individuals and businesses.
- PC Sums
- Contingency
- Provisional Sums which are able to be specified

Please note: the above list is not exhaustive

Eligible Costs

Please note: No retrospective funding will be given.

Examples of eligible costs include;

- Fit-out of commercial units / retail units / commercial residential (e.g. renovations; service and utility upgrades; repurposing of existing space; fixtures and fittings integral to the project)
- Shop Frontage improvements (e.g signage, shutter and wire removal and replacement of toughened glass, lighting, painting, rain water goods
- Non-recoverable VAT

Please note – for commercial residential properties, only the property owner is eligible to apply. It must be let as a commercial rental property following completion of the project.

If you are unsure, please email fitforfuture@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk for guidance.

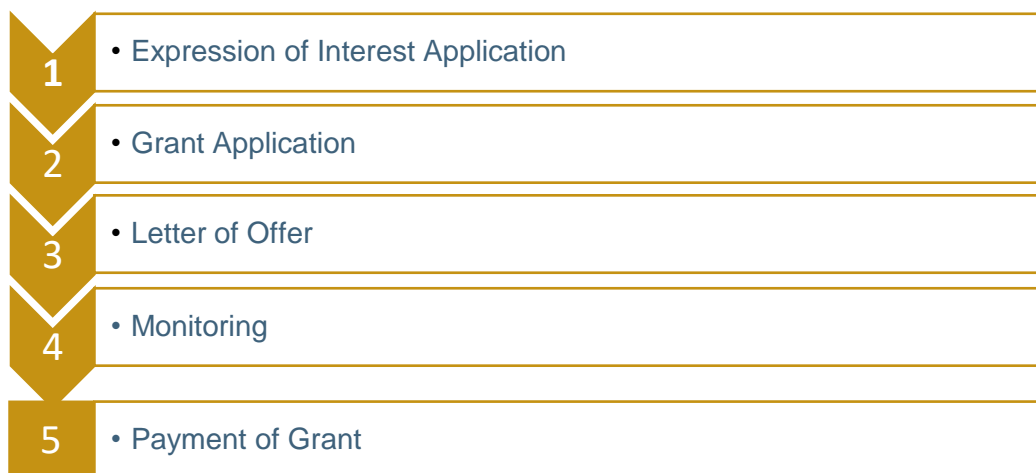
VAT

We cannot cover the costs of VAT that you can reclaim, it is therefore your responsibility to seek appropriate advice.

If your VAT status changes during your Project, we will reduce our contribution to the costs where you have managed to claim back the VAT.

3. Stage 1 – Expression of Interest

The Scheme will progress through five key stages.



Stage 1 – Expression of Interest (EOI) Application

The EOI is the first stage in applying for Fit for Future Vacant Property grant. **Completion of the Expression of Interest form is mandatory for anyone considering applying for this grant.** We, the Council, will use the information you provide at Stage 1 to decide whether or not to invite you, the Applicant, to submit a Stage 2 Grant Application.

EOI Applications will be evaluated using a two-stage process. EOI Applications must demonstrate how they meet all of the Eligibility Criteria at Stage A, before proceeding to be assessed against the EOI Assessment Criteria in Stage B.

The Eligibility Criteria in Stage A are Mandatory Requirements; therefore failure to meet all of the Eligibility Criteria in Stage A will result in the EOI Application being eliminated and the Applicant not invited to submit a Stage 2 Grant Application.

Stage A - EOI Eligibility Criteria

The following Eligibility Criteria will be assessed on a Pass / Fail basis as part of the Stage A evaluation process:

- I. The Property must be located within the Settlement Development Limits of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough. Settlement Development Limits are set out within each Local Development Plan. These can be found at https://wayback.archive-it.org/11112/20190702142313/https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/development_plans/devplans_new_council_area.htm. Select the appropriate development plan

for your area, select the map library (on the right hand side) and then choose the map for your settlement.

- II. Applicants must have, or be willing to have, a freehold or leasehold interest for a minimum of 2 years in the Property.
- III. The part of the property seeking funding must be vacant for a period greater than two years. Documentary evidence of this will be requested at the Stage 2 Grant Application Stage.
- IV. If funding is being applied for a unit within the property, the unit must have a separate access to any occupied units within the property.
- V. The project must have an eligible total capital spend of more than £5,000 (ex. VAT)
- VI. The Property must be occupied for commercial use at or below open market rent following completion of the project. Please note: works to your own existing home / private dwelling or to create a home / private dwelling are not eligible.
- VII. The Applicant will agree to the property being surveyed and assessed by the Council's Professional Advisors.
- VIII. The Applicant must provide a quotation / professional estimate of the project costs.
- IX. The applicant must provide a comprehensive photographic survey of the existing building including interior and exterior photographs (see footnote below)².
- X. The Applicant must provide a statement outlining the type of tenants they anticipate will occupy the Property following completion of the works.

The Council will assess all Stage 1 Applications against the above Eligibility Criteria.

All applications and supporting documentation must be submitted online at:

<https://funding.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/>

² Photographic survey must include: photographs of all interior rooms which will be altered through the proposed project works; photographs of interior halls or passageways that will provide connections to these rooms (including floors and ceilings); photographs of all visible exterior elevations of the building including the roof; floor plans of each floor within the building which will be altered through the proposed works. NOTE: All photographs must be clearly labelled with room names and a brief summary of proposed works to be undertaken in each room.

Stage B - EOI Assessment Criteria

All applications that PASS the above Eligibility Criteria will then be assessed using the following two 'Property Assessment Criterion'.

Property Assessment Criterion	Score Range	Weight	Max Score
<p>Prominence Vacant buildings that feature prominently on key routes will be prioritised. Focusing on these buildings will benefit overall vitality, in terms of providing attractive 'gateways' and encouraging visitors to explore and dwell in the area.</p>	<p>5 – Building or site located at 'gateway' 3 – Building or site is on a main thoroughfare 1 – Building or site is less prominent</p>	10	50
<p>Need and Long Term Impacts Projects which clearly set out how the proposed works will provide accommodation and be occupied by a type of tenant that has an evidenced need in the local area will be prioritised. Projects which can demonstrate measures to improve energy efficiency or how their project will reduce energy emissions will score higher.</p>	<p>5 – Excellent Response 4 – Good Response 3 – Satisfactory Response 2 – Poor Information 1 – Unsatisfactory Response</p>	10	50
TOTAL SCORE			100

The pass mark for Expressions of Interest is 60. Expressions of Interest Applications will be ranked in order of score. **The highest ranking properties will be invited by letter to move forward to Stage 2 Grant Application.**

Applications deemed unsuccessful in the current call will not be invited to submit a Stage 2 Grant Application, however may be considered at a later stage if additional funding becomes available.

Please note: Incomplete applications will not be assessed.

Completing and Submitting the EOI Application Form

Detailed guidance on how to respond to the specific questions is included at **Appendix 2**.

It is recommended that you take the time to read the guidance offered.

The following are important matters in relation to submitting your application:

All applications must be submitted online via the council's grant hub to make an application at <https://funding.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/>

Applicants will be required to register an account and then select the grant being applied for. Incomplete or late applications will not be assessed.

- **The funding call will remain open from 9am on Friday 10th May 2024 until exactly 12 noon on FRIDAY 21ST JUNE 2024, after which no applications or materials (unless specifically requested by Council) will be accepted.**

Please note:

- **It is essential that you avoid trying to submit your application at the last minute as any holdups may result in a late submission and your application therefore being deemed ineligible.**
- **Support to submit an application online will be available to applicants who request it. Anyone requiring such support should seek it at the earliest opportunity via fitforfuture@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk as it is not possible to guarantee the availability of assistance for everyone approaching the deadline.**
- **Incomplete applications, which do not include the necessary supporting material and/or applications received after the closing date will not be considered for evaluation.**

In **very exceptional** circumstances a paper alternative will be allowed but it is essential that:

- This must be agreed in advance with the Grant Project Officer.
- If agreed, then it must be hand-delivered to Craigavon Civic Centre before **12 noon on 21st June 2024** and a receipt from the Receptionist obtained as evidence of submission. No other form of submission will be accepted for paper applications.

Paper applications which are not approved for submission, cannot produce a receipt for their submission, or which are late, incomplete or delivered anywhere other than Craigavon Civic Centre, will be deemed ineligible.

Review/Appeal Process

Following the decision to reject an application at the Expression of Interest Stage, the Applicant will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the decision. The Applicant may make a written request to review the decision within 10 working days from the date of the rejection letter. The formal review will provide an independent process through which the applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate in writing to the Review Panel that either:

1. The decision was incorrect because the Council failed to take into account the information contained within the Application or took into account information that was not contained within the Application; and/or,
2. There was a failure in adherence to procedures and guidance issued with the call for applications or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision; and/or,
3. That Officers involved in the assessment process had a clear conflict of interest and had failed to declare this in the appropriate manner.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered. It should also be noted that no additional supporting documentation will be permitted at this stage.

4. Stage 2 – Grant Application

Applicants who are successful at Stage 1 EOI will be invited by letter to submit a Stage 2 Grant Application.

At this stage those who wish to proceed will be required to return detailed project information that will be assessed by the Council. **A detailed Stage 2 Application Grant Guide will be published prior to the opening of Stage 2**, however the application requirements at this stage will likely include the following information:

- a. **Detailed information about the project**, including written description, surveys, schedule of works and detailed planning or construction drawings.
- b. **Documentary proof of property ownership** including for example up-to-date copies of the Land Registry title register (with plan), leases and evidence of any existing mortgages (mandatory if applicable). For tenants seeking funding, a **Heads of Terms agreement** will be required.
- c. **Documentary proof that the part of the property seeking funding has been vacant for a period greater than two years** including for example copies of rates bills.
- d. **Evidence of project costs, project cashflow forecast and demonstration of value for money**. Project costs must be evidenced by providing:
 - i. one quotation for the work that the funding application relates to or;
 - ii. one cost estimate if produced by an appropriately qualified Quantity Surveyor.

Please note if an offer of grant aid is made the successful candidate must follow the Council's procurement process which will be provided with the Letter of Offer.

- e. **Evidence in writing that all required statutory approvals will be in place or have been applied for** and (including but not limited to; planning permission, listed building consent and building control consent) **or** evidence in writing from the statutory agency that statutory approvals are not required for the works being proposed in the application.
- f. **Evidence that the funding shortfall is in place** (i.e. the finance is secured to pay the balance of project costs). For example:
 - Cash - provide a bank statement clearly indicating the necessary level of funding.
 - Loan - provide an agreed loan offer from a financial institution.

Site Visit

Following the submission of the Stage 2 Application and prior to the application assessment a site visit (subject to any Government restrictions) may be conducted by the Council and/or its Professional Advisors in order to clarify any outstanding issues.

If additional information is required and cannot be provided at the site visit, you will be given 5 working days from the date of the site visit to provide this. Failure to meet the time limit will lead to the automatic rejection of the Application.

Stage 2 Grant Application Assessment Criteria

It is anticipated that Stage 2 Grant Applications will be evaluated using the following three criteria.

	Essential Criteria
1	Need for the Project (market need, need for specific capital works, benefits to the local economy) and Impact
2	Value for Money (cost versus benefit)
3	State of Readiness (position of statutory approvals, end user established)

To ensure consistency and equity the evaluation undertaken by the Assessment Panel will assign scores to each criteria based on scoring definitions that will be published prior to the opening of Stage 2 in the Stage 2 Application Guide.

The Scheme has a limited budget and grants will be awarded through a competitive process. Eligible Stage 2 Applications will be ranked in score order and awarded a grant amount until the available funding is utilised.

5. Stages 3, 4 and 5 – Letter of Offer, Monitoring and Payment of Grant

Stage 3 - Letter of Offer

Successful Stage 2 Grant Applicants will receive a Letter of Offer outlining grant value, programme and terms and conditions. It is anticipated that the letter of Offer will require an undertaking that:

1. All works will be carried out by the applicants appointed contractor. For applicants seeking more than 50% of the total contract value, the contractor must be Construction Line registered with active status.
2. The applicant will appoint suitably qualified professionals to supervise their project.
3. The Council's Professional Advisors will closely monitor project progress.
4. The applicant must commit to occupy the property within 3 months of practical completion. If this is not achieved, consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis to extend this to 6 months. If a property has NOT been occupied within 9 months, the final 10% grant payment will be revoked.
5. The award of grant will be properly acknowledged in writing.
6. Council's procurement policy must be adhered to.
7. No works can commence until applicant has received 'Permission to Start' approval from Council.
8. The Return of Information Protocol will be adhered to (See Appendix 3).

The following project timeline will also be outlined in the Letter of Offer:

- Grant award.
- Submission of Permission to Start Form (within 6 months).
- Project Start Date
- Project End Date
- Submit Post Project Evaluation within 3 months.
- Legally bound to the Standard Terms of Grant and the Grant Contract for 2 years or as otherwise stipulated (see section in this Guide titled Standard Terms of Grant).

To start your Project and be eligible for your Grant payment, you must complete a Permission to Start form.

You will be expected to submit your Permission to Start form within **six months** of the date of your Letter of Offer. If there are substantial delays and it has not been received within nine months we may decide to withdraw the offer of your Grant.

Before we are able to grant you Permission to Start, you will need to complete the following tasks (if applicable):

- Confirm that the funding shortfall is in place.
- Obtain and confirm that all statutory permissions are in place.
- Secure any necessary licenses, for example a newt or bat license.
- Confirm ownership of freehold or leasehold Property to meet our requirements.
- Provide evidence of all procurement carried out in relation to the project, in line with Council Procurement guidelines.
- Any other requirements set out in the Letter of Offer.

Once we have approved your request, we will confirm your Permission to Start. You can then start work on your Project. You should not start any work on your Project until you have our written permission to do so. If you do so it is at your own risk and the Project will no longer be eligible for funding.

NB: The Council will not retrospectively fund projects.

We recommend you;

- do not start your Project before receiving a Permission to Start instruction from the Council;
- acknowledge your funding and promote the Scheme;
- keep track of your Project spend and timetable;
- retain all original invoices and receipts;
- begin marketing and looking for a tenant from the outset;
- remember to claim your Grant; and
- make sure you communicate and make Council aware of any issues.

Grant Expiry Date

Your Grant Expiry Date will be given in your Letter of Offer. It will be based on the Project timescale as identified in your Application.

You must complete your Project and submit your Post Project Evaluation Report and Final Claim form by the Grant Expiry Date.

If you experience delays in delivering your Project, you can request in writing an extension to the Grant Expiry Date.

We will try to be flexible but cannot guarantee an extension and if your Project takes significant longer than set out in your applicant we may close your Grant and ask for the repayment of all or part of your Grant Award.

Please note that the programme has a long stop date of 31 March 2026. All capital works must be completed by this date.

Procurement

Procedures to recruit consultants and contractors must be fair and open and comply with the relevant equality legislation.

In all Projects regardless of the level of funding you will be required to provide details of the procurement (buying), tendering and selection process for all parts of your Project. If you are unsure about your obligations, you are advised to seek professional or legal advice.

Applicants must demonstrate value for money and adhere to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Procurement Policy.

Applicants must agree to Council's Terms and Conditions of Grant Award. These include an undertaking that:

- All works will be carried out and supervised by suitably qualified professionals; and
- Council's procurement processes will be followed when delivering the project ie:

<i>Estimated Value</i>	<i>Process To Be Used</i>
Where estimated cost does not exceed £1,500	A minimum of 2 competitive tenders required
Where estimated cost is up to £7,500	A minimum of 3 written competitive tenders required.
Where estimated cost is £7,501 - £30,000	A minimum of 4 written competitive tenders required.

Where estimated cost exceeds £30,000

Public advertisement required.

The above figures are exclusive of VAT and show the **minimum** number of tenders which should be sought.

For applicants seeking grant support of 50% or more of the total contract amount, the applicant must seek quotes from and appoint contractors who are Construction Line registered with active status.

All procurement must be carried out in line with Council Procurement Thresholds.

Your Project may be covered by procurement rules if it exceeds certain thresholds. This may require that all services for both fees and construction will need to be tendered in a specific way.

You do not necessarily need to appoint the contractor/supplier/consultant who provides the lowest quote. When deciding who to appoint for your Project you should look at the overall value for money the quote presents and the skills, experience and financial viability of the contractor/supplier/consultant.

Please note: However, your grant will be calculated based on the lowest quote received.

Fees for any consultants or other professionals that you recruit during the Project should be in line with professional guidelines and be based on a clear written specification.

If any of the contractors / suppliers / consultants you wish to appoint are linked, for example close friends or relatives, or if there is any financial link such as ownership or employee of these contractors, suppliers etc you will need to obtain written permission from Council at the outset.

Stage 4 – Monitoring

The Council's Professional Advisor will monitor each project to its completion and provide appropriate support for the applicant in relation to the scheme's operation throughout the period of the scheme.

During this Stage the applicant must as a minimum:

- Provide evidence of and confirm in writing that all stages of the goods/services procurement process is in line with the Council's Procurement Policy.
- Provide regular Progress Reports including updates on works undertaken, procurement, costs, submit interim certificates for review and monitoring and provide photographic evidence.
- Allow access for regular site progress visits by the Council and its Professional Advisors.

- Provide a Practical Completion Certificate.

It is important that submitted documents are legible and are given names that usefully describe their contents.

All documents should be in PDF format, with the exception of spread-sheets which should be in their original format.

As part of the monitoring process the Council's Professional Advisors will require access to the project site at all times.

Photographic Record

You will be required to capture photographs throughout your Project showing your progress which you should submit with your Progress Report (where relevant). You will need to provide a photographic record of your Project with your Post Project Evaluation Report and Final Claim form which includes at least five high-resolution digital images in electronic format (jpegs) showing different aspects of your Project.

The images should show your Project occupied. You will need to provide a sample of images that show your Project before, during and after it is finished. When completing your Progress Report and Post Project Evaluation Report and Final Claim form you can let us know if material from your Project is available on the internet and where it can be found.

We may make use of your images in publicity material. Before you provide us with any images, you must ensure that the necessary consents are in place and the images are free of copyright constraints. This is particularly important where images include young people or vulnerable adults and where specific permission must be sought in advance. If you require any guidance on this, speak to us.

Progress Report Form

When you have spent the first 50% of your works budget you will need to submit a Progress Report. You will also be required to submit a progress report along with each subsequent claim.

We will monitor the progress of your Project to confirm that it is being delivered as identified in your Application and the stipulations set out in your Letter of Offer. In between submitting your Progress Report, it is important that you keep us informed of progress in reaching key milestones, for example appointment of contractors, or issues arising so that we can respond and support you as appropriate.

Stage 5 – Payment of Grant

Your Grant will be paid in three instalments based on the following percentages:

- **45%:** Once the works associated with your Project is 50% complete.
- **45%:** Once the works associated with your Project is 100% complete.
- **10%:** Once the property has been occupied, business is operating and final evaluation report with all supporting evidence has been submitted and approved.

Once you are in a position to submit a claim, the online claim form must be completed and submitted. You will also be required to provide the following information:

- Invoices
- Evidence of payment (including a copy of cheques, a copy of bank statements)
- Evidence that work has been completed (e.g. payment certificate from QS/Architect)

Once the work associated with your Project is complete and the property has been occupied, you must submit the Post Project Evaluation and final claim form which can be completed online.

This final claim form **must** be submitted within **three months** of completing your Project. If we do not receive the report within this timescale, we may withhold your final payment or reconsider the sum of some or all of your Grant.

By complete we mean;

- your Project is finished;
- you have a Practical Completion Certificate;
- you have evaluated your Project and created an Evaluation Report; and
- you can supply Project photographs (jpegs).

Please note that we will not make your final payment until we have received and reviewed all the required information including your Completion Report.

Once you have made your final grant request, we will not accept any further requests for payments from you. You should therefore agree your final accounts with your contractors and suppliers before you apply for the final grant payment.

We will continue to keep in contact with you at intervals after the Project is completed including through Surveys.

The Post Project Evaluation you need to provide must include:

- Certificate of Practical Completion;
- Project invoices received during reporting period;
- Confirmation that contents and buildings Insurance is in place to cover;
- Photographic record of your Project;
- Evidence that the property has been occupied;
- Project achievements and lessons learned

We aim to release the Payments of your Grant within 30 working days of receiving your completed claim form and all the mandatory supporting documents (see Appendix 1).

This submission of this Post Project Evaluation will, subject to assessment of its content, allow you to claim the payment of the outstanding element of your Grant. We recommend that you do this as soon as you can gather all the information together and while the Project is still fresh in your mind.

Payment will be made to the bank account identified in your Permission to Start and Payment Request form.

Projects Completing Under Budget

If you spend less than your agreed costs and your Project completes under the budget of your Grant we will adjust your Grant accordingly. Your final payment will be calculated based on your overall Project costs and the Grant Percentage identified in your Letter of Offer.

Project Completion Date & Grant Contract Duration

The formal Project Completion Date is the date of the letter we will send you at the end of your Project letting you know that we have received all the necessary documentation to record the Approved Works of your Project as complete and pay 90% of your Grant.

Your Letter of Offer states the duration that the Grant Contract will apply to your Project during which you must maintain your ongoing Project commitments. This starts once we have signed your Permission to Start form and will last for two years after the Project Completion Date.

A delay in submitting your Post Project Evaluation and Final Claim form will extend the duration of the Grant Contract.

Appendix 1 – Standard Terms of Grant

‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’ – Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

‘you’, ‘your’ – the Applicant(s) awarded the Grant as set out in the *Letter of Offer* and any organisation which agrees to comply with the *Grant Contract*.

Additional Grant Conditions – any additional grant conditions set out in your *Letter of Offer*.

Application – your completed Stage 1 Expression of Interest Application and Stage 2 Grant Application forms and any documents or information you send us to support your request for a *Grant*.

Approved Project – the *Approved Project* summarises the *Project* described in your *Application*.

Approved Usage – how you said you would use, market and seek a tenant for the *Property* in your *Application* (allowing for any changes that we may have agreed up to the release of any of the *Grant*)

Approved Work – the construction works and fixtures and fittings we approve as set out in the *Application* and *Grant Contract*.

Grant – the amount set out in the *Letter of Offer*.

Grant Contract – made up of the

- *Letter of Offer*;
- *Standard Terms of Grant*;
- *Any Additional Grant Conditions*; and
- *Signed Permission to Start Form*.

Grant Expiry Date – the date by which you must achieve the *Approved Project* as set out in the *Letter of Offer*.

Letter of Offer – the letter confirming our *Grant* to you.

Permission to Start Form – the form you submit to us requesting permission to start the *Project*.

Permission to Start Notice – our written confirmation that you may start the *Project*.

Post Project Evaluation – the report you must send us before we pay your grant (or for Vacant Property Applicants, the last 10% of the *Grant*)

Project – the *Approved Work* as set out in the *Application* (taking account of any changes we and you have agreed in writing up to the date of our decision to award you the *Grant* and any changes that we tell you about in the *Letter of Offer*). This includes the commitments made to actively market the *Property*.

Project Completion Date – the date of the letter we send you letting you know that the *Approved Works* for the *Project* is recorded as complete.

Property – the property as set out in your *Application* to which the *Grant* relates.

Standard Terms of Grant – the standard terms set out herein.

Term of the Grant Contract – the duration of the *Grant Contract* set out in the *Letter of Offer*.

Delivering the Project

1. You must use the *Grant* only for the *Approved Project*, unless you get our approval beforehand.
2. You must not start work to achieve the *Approved Project* before *Permission to Start*. The Council will not retrospectively fund projects.
3. You must achieve the *Approved Usage* and make your final *Grant* drawdown by the *Grant Expiry Date*.
4. You must complete the *Approved Works* needed to achieve the *Approved Project* and actively market the *Property*, or let the *Property*, following completion of the *Approved Project*.
5. As well as these *Standard Terms of Grant*, you must follow the *Additional Grant Conditions* (if any) set out in the *Letter of Offer*, address any issues we identify in the course of monitoring, and meet the requirements set out in any other guidance we issue which is relevant to the *Grant Contract* or your *Approved Project*.
6. You must carry out the *Approved Project* in line with current best practice and to a standard that is appropriate to the *Project* and any statutory designations. You must follow all legislation and regulations that apply.
7. You acknowledge that the *Grant* comes from public funds and you will not use the *Grant* in a way that constitutes unapprovable State Aid. In the event that it is deemed to be unapprovable State Aid, then you will repay the entire *Grant* immediately.
8. You must adhere to the Return of Information Protocol at all stages of the grant process.

Project Monitoring

9. You must give us any progress reports and financial or other information and records we may need from time to time on the *Grant*, the *Property*, the *Approved Project* and the *Approved Usage* of the property.
10. You must allow us (or anyone we authorise) to have any access we may need to:

- a. inspect the *Property* and any work to it;
- b. monitor the conduct and progress of the *Approved Project*; and
- c. monitor the *Approved Usage*.

In these cases we will give you notice. You will report on the progress of the *Approved Project* at times agreed with us.

11. We may ask you to provide proof that you have taken action to reduce the risk of fraud. We may ask you to let us examine your accounting processes and procedures to check the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures.
12. We will monitor the progress of the *Approved Project* and will carry out checks at and after the end of the *Project* to confirm that it is delivering the outcomes expected. If we (or anyone we authorise) make any recommendations on matters relating to the *Approved Project*, you must take those recommendations into account when meeting your obligations to us.
13. You must take appropriate steps to monitor your own success in achieving the *Approved Usage* of the *Property*. On completing the *Approved Project*, you must submit your *Post Project Evaluation Report* before we will release the final *Grant* payment.

Procurement

14. Before you start any phase of the work needed to achieve the *Approved Project*, you must put in place all necessary contracts with appropriately qualified contractors and professional advisers to allow you to finish that phase of the work. Building contracts must contain a clause which allows you to retain part of the contractors' fees on practical completion of the works. If you want any contracts to be on different terms, you must get our approval beforehand.
15. If the *Approved Works* involve buying goods or services or getting work done, you must carry out a tendering exercise in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

Property

16. You must continue to own/lease the *Property* and keep exclusive control over what happens to it for a minimum of two years following the final payment of the *Grant*. You must not sell, let or otherwise part with it or any interest in it, or give any rights over it to anyone else (or take any steps to do so) without our approval beforehand. If we give you our approval, it may depend on any of the following requirements.
 - that you pay us a share of the net proceeds of selling or letting the *Property* within one month;
 - that you sell or let the *Property* at its full market value;
 - any other conditions we think fit.

We may claim from you an amount in the same proportion to the sale price as the *Grant* is to the original cost of the *Approved Project*. You must pay whatever we decide

is appropriate in the circumstances. We may decide not to ask you to repay the *Grant* (or any part of it as we think fit) for any reason but it is for us to decide that.

17. You must maintain the *Property* in good repair and condition after the work has been done.
18. You must insure the *Property*.
19. You must tell us, in writing, within five working days about any significant loss or damage to the *Property*.
20. All fixtures/fittings/equipment bought as part of the grant scheme must remain within the *Property* at all times. You must not sell, let or otherwise part with them or any interest in them, or give any rights over it to anyone else (or take any steps to do so) without our approval beforehand.

Publicity and acknowledgement

21. We may make the purpose and amount of the *Grant* public in whatever way we think fit.
22. Once we have announced the *Grant*, you must meet any other acknowledgement or publicity requirements we may tell you about from time to time. Before we make any public announcement of the *Grant*, you must not issue any public statement, press release or other publicity in relation to the *Grant* or which refers to us, other than in a form we have approved beforehand.
23. You must also provide us with digital images in electronic format of the *Project* or hard-copy photographs or transparencies. You give us the right to use those you provide us with at any time, including putting them into a digital format and altering them. You must get all the permissions required for you and us to make use of them before you use them or send them to us.

Grant Payment and Repayment

24. We will, up to the *Grant Expiry Date*, pay you the *Grant* or any instalment of it in line with these *Standard Terms of Grant* and the procedures explained in the *Grant Contract* as long as we are satisfied that you are achieving (and will continue to achieve) or have achieved the *Approved Project* in line with these *Standard Terms of Grant* and that you are spending the *Grant* in proportion to any other funds you receive from other sources.
25. We will only pay you each phased payment of the *Grant* when we have received a completed Claim Form accompanied by the following documentation or any other documentation or evidence we set out in the *Grant Contract*.
 - a. Evidence of quotes sought and value for money in accordance with the Council Procurement thresholds.
 - b. Copies of original invoice/s for works and materials
 - c. Evidence of cheque/BACS payment to contractor/s & supplier/s

- d. Copy of original bank statement showing associated cheque number/BACS payment leaving applicant's account
 - e. Contractors practical completion certificate
 - f. Proof of statutory approvals and sign off
 - g. Councils Advisory Team completion certificate and project report
26. We will only pay you the final phased payment (10%) once the property has been occupied and we are provided with documentary evidence to show this.
27. We will only pay the *Grant* to the *Applicant* via direct BACS payment.
28. You acknowledge that the *Grant* is the total amount of funds we will provide and will not be increased as the result of you overspending or for any other reason.
29. You must repay to us immediately any *Grant* that we have paid you (and we will stop any future instalments of the *Grant*) if:
- you no longer operate, or you are declared bankrupt or placed into administration, receivership or liquidation;
 - you have, in our opinion, given us fraudulent, incorrect or misleading information;
 - you have acted negligently in any significant matter or fraudulently in connection with the *Approved Project* or the *Approved Usage*;
 - any competent authority directs the repayment of the *Grant*;
 - there is a significant change in your status;
 - you knowingly withhold information that is relevant to the content of your *Application*;
 - you do or fail to do anything that brings us into disrepute, or which we consider for any reason puts public funds at risk, or we terminate or suspend any other grant we have given you;
 - you fail to make good progress with the *Project* or are unlikely in our view to complete the *Project* or achieve the *Approved Usage* agreed with us; or
 - you fail to keep to any of these *Standard Terms of Grant*.
30. If you complete the *Approved Project* without spending the full amount of the *Grant*, you must pay back the part of the *Grant* you have not spent. We will treat you as spending the *Grant* in proportion to other funds you were due to spend or receive from other sources for the *Approved Project*.
31. If you sell or otherwise part with all or part of the *Property* without our permission under paragraph 15, or you receive money in some other way as a result of you not following these *Standard Terms of Grant*, you may have to pay us immediately a share of the net proceeds if that share is more than the amount we would otherwise be entitled to under paragraph 24.
32. We will only pay the *Grant* if the contractor used for the work needed to achieve the *Approved Project* is Constructionline Registered with active status (applicable to projects receiving grant monies equal to or greater than 50% of total project costs).

33. You must pay for the work needed to achieve the *Approved Project* via BACS and not cash.

General Terms

34. You may not, and must not claim to, transfer the *Grant* or any rights under these *Standard Terms of Grant*.
35. You must take all steps and sign and date any documents as may be necessary to carry out your obligations under these *Standard Terms of Grant* and to give us the rights granted to us under them.
36. If there is more than one of you, any liability under these *Standard Terms of Grant* will apply to you all together and separately.
37. We may rely on any of our rights under the *Standard Terms of Grant* at any time, even if we do not choose to do so immediately. If we decide not to rely on one right, we may still rely on any of our other rights under these *Standard Terms of Grant*.
38. If you need our approval for anything, you must write to us to ask for it. You may only rely on any approval needed under these *Standard Terms of Grant* if we (or anyone we authorise) give it to you in writing.
39. Any notice, request or other document we or you send to each other under these *Standard Terms of Grant* shall be in writing and shall be deemed to have been given if personally delivered by hand or post (first class postage prepaid) to the address for service of the relevant party. If hand delivered all such communications shall be deemed to have been given when received (except that if received on a non-working day or after 5pm on any working day they shall be deemed received on the next working day) and if posted all such communications shall be deemed to have been given and received on the second working day following such posting.
40. Any documents you need to send us under these *Standard Terms of Grant* are for our own purposes only. If we approve or accept any documents, this does not mean that we have approved or accepted them for any other purpose.
41. The *Term of the Grant Contract* will last for the period set out in the *Letter of Offer*.
42. These *Standard Terms of Grant* cannot be enforced by anybody other than you or us.

Appendix 2 – Guidance on Completing the EOI Application Form

Completing the Stage 1 Expression of Interest (EOI) Application Form

This section offers help regarding the type of information we are looking for when answering specific questions. It is designed to help you - so reading it and referring to it when completing the application form is likely to improve your chances of securing funding.

Before you start

Before you start your application, here are some important reminders:

- This form is an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** for Grant assistance from Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and does **NOT** constitute a full application for funding. However, submission of an **Expression of Interest is a mandatory part of the application process.**
- The information provided in the EOI form will inform the Council's decision as to which applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage 2 of the application process.
- Please ensure each question is answered. A checklist has been provided in the application form for this purpose.
- Answer each question as fully as possible and do not be reluctant to repeat part of an answer given in response to one question, when answering another question if the answer is relevant.
- Please answer the questions on the basis that the assessing officer has no knowledge of our project or organisation.
- **Sell us your idea.** Explain really clearly what your project is and how it will benefit the local area. It is difficult to make a case for an award of grant if we do not fully understand your project.
- **Do not ask for the full amount if you do not need it.** Although you may be able to secure funding for example for 80% of your project costs, please do not ask for that amount if you do not need it. Provided you remain below the maximum, you can request whatever rate of grant you is most beneficial to you (as this offers better value for taxpayers' money).

SECTION 1 – APPLICANT DETAILS

Applicant Details

Please give us the details of the grant applicant. Please confirm if you are a landlord/owner or potential tenant.

If you are a potential tenant, please confirm that you will be willing to hold a minimum of 2 years lease in the property.

Contact Details

Please give us all the details of the main contact for this application.

If you're a sole trader, give us your details. If you're filling out this form on behalf of a bigger business or organisation, we'd normally expect you to be a director or partner.

Please ensure the accuracy of the contact details for the Contact Person as this will be the only person we will contact regarding your application. If your Contact Person changes during the application process or you know the Contact Person will not be contactable during that period, you must provide us with an alternative Contact Person.

We will use your email address as our main way of contacting you. Please provide an email address that you check regularly.

SECTION 2 – PROJECT

Description

Title of Project

Please give the name of your project that will be included in correspondence and in any publicity. This should be concise and clear, and ideally no more than 50 characters, it will be used in any correspondence with you so should be something short that you will recognise.

Project Address and Postcode

Please give us all the address details of the property that the grant you are seeking will relate to.

Please describe the Project Works which you are seeking funding for in order to put the vacant property back into use.

This response should provide sufficient detail to enable Council Officers to understand what your project is about and what you will do.

Please detail the need for the project

Describe in detail why there is a need for the project, including why there is a need for this particular type of property in the area it is located and how it will benefit the local community. This is also where you can provide any information regarding how your project will improve energy efficiency or how it will reduce energy emissions

Please refer to the objectives of the scheme and detail how your project will meet these objectives.

Sell us your project as we'll decide whether or not to invite you to submit a full application based on what you say in this section.

Please provide a statement outlining who will occupy the Project Property following completion of the works, any evidence that these tenants have a need for this type of space and how the works proposed will help achieve this.

Think of this as a summary of how the works will help secure a tenant for the property.

Briefly outline the market demand and provide detail of the type of tenants you know are seeking the accommodation that will be created through the works.

You also need to check whether there are any similar business nearby that might be affected (negatively or positively) by your project. Give details of these businesses and explain how your project will affect them.

You will also need to confirm that the property / unit will be occupied within 3 months of project completion. (NOTE: Projects which can't commit to this will be deemed ineligible)

Do the project works require statutory consent?

Please confirm if you anticipate that statutory consents will be required to deliver the project works. Please also confirm, if required, whether a planning application has already been submitted for the project works.

Please provide a detailed description of the current internal condition of the vacant property/unit?

Please describe the current internal condition of the property/unit seeking grant funding, including the status of utilities, walls, ceilings, floors and joinery.

Please provide a detailed description of the external condition of the vacant property?

Please describe the current external condition of the property, including the condition of windows, doors, roofs and other structural elements.

Please upload a Photographic Survey which must include:

- a. Photographs of all interior rooms which will be altered through the proposed project works (including floors and ceilings).
- b. Photographs of interior halls or passageways which provide connections to these rooms (including floors and ceilings).
- c. Photographs of all visible exterior sides of the building.
- d. Floor plans of each floor within the building with annotated room names or references.
- e. All photographs must be clearly labelled with room names and a brief summary provided of works to be undertaken within each room.

Project Costs

Estimated Project Costs

Please provide an estimated total project cost and upload a quotation of professional estimate for the work you intend to carry out.

Detail each of the items/works you are seeking funding for?

This does not need to be a highly detailed breakdown at this stage. Please:

- a) Detail each specific cost on a separate line. Rather than writing in one line 'Project costs' you must detail the costs of your project each on a separate line (eg construction costs, fit out costs, M&E costs etc) giving a cost estimate for each separate item.
- b) You can add as many rows as you want
- c) Bear in mind that including any costs for work which will have commenced before a Letter of Offer is issued will result in the application being ineligible

Please confirm the the amount of financial assistance you are seeking through this scheme?

The maximum percentage of eligible costs that can be covered is 80% up to a maximum of £20,000.

Please confirm you will be able to provide match funding for your project?

The grant can only be used to cover some costs. Please confirm that you will be able to fund the rest of the money for the project (the 'match funding').

Please provide any additional information which you feel is relevant to your application

While Council is under no obligation to use the information provided in this section, and it is unlikely to form part of the scoring of applications, you may wish to provide additional information to explain or clarify any issue raised above.

In particular, if you have applied to another funder for the same costs you are applying to us for, then you must detail this information in this section.

Section 3 - Other Information

Eligibility

You must complete this checklist indicating which documents you can supply immediately.

In response to consultation feedback, as a rule Council will seek limited documentary or other evidence at the Expression of Interest stage. You will only be asked to provide most information if your application is successful, unless it is required specifically for clarification or is essential for assessment. However, failure to provide this information when requested would result in your application being rejected. If you cannot provide these you should check with the Council Officer to determine whether these will be required and to consider how you arrange to have such evidence should your application be successful.

Submission

Please read this section and make sure that you are in agreement with and can meet the requirements set out in it. By submitting and/or agreeing to the submission of the expression of interest form, you will be agreeing to the declaration.

Appendix 3 – Return of Information Protocol

Stage 1: Expression of Interest

As per guidance, Expressions of Interest will not progress to the next stage of the application process if all information requested has not been provided. There may be instances, however, when clarification is required in relation to some of the information provided. If this is the case, the applicant will be contacted by a Fit for Future Officer to request the relevant information. This information must be provided **within 5 working days** or the Expression of Interest will not proceed to full application stage.

Stage 2: Full Application

As per guidance, applications will be deemed ineligible if all information requested has not been provided by the application deadline. There may be instances, however, when clarification is required in relation to some of the information provided. If this is the case, the applicant will be contacted by a Fit for Future Officer to request the relevant information. This information must be provided within **5 working days** or the application will be considered ineligible.

Stages 3 – 5: Letter of Offer, Monitoring and Payment of Grant

Once an applicant has accepted a Letter of Offer, there will be an expectation that the applicant will communicate with the Fit for Future team in relation to all aspects of their project. Applicants will be expected to provide regular progress reports at all stages, throughout the delivery of their project. If any information relating to your project is requested, this must be provided within **10 working days** or your Letter of Offer may be withdrawn. We understand that in some cases (e.g. statutory approvals), it may not always be possible to return information within this timeframe. However if this is the case, the applicant must still provide a response to acknowledge the request and provide a rationale for any delay in providing the requested information.

Appendix 4 – Freedom of Information, Planning, Building Consent, Insurance and Data Protection.

Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

Council is committed to meeting our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). All information supplied by applicants as part of this grant scheme will be treated as commercial in confidence until the Stage 1 EOI and Stage 2 Grant Application assessment process has been completed and all Letters of Offer have been issued. Subsequently, Council may be required to disclose information permitted by applicants in response to a request received under FOIA. Council may also be required to disclose details of unsuccessful applicants.

If your organisation considers that any of the information included in your application is commercially sensitive, then you must clearly identify it in the box provided in Section 3 of the application form and explain what harm may result from its disclosure if a request is received, and the period of time that is applicable to that sensitivity.

You should be aware that even where you have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, Council may be required to disclose it under the Act if a request is received. Please also note that the receipt of any material marked 'confidential' or equivalent by Council should not be taken to mean that Council accepts any duty of confidence by virtue of that marking. If a request is received, Council may also be required to disclose details of unsuccessful applicants.

Planning Permission / Statutory Consents

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all statutory approvals are gained and complied with. A 'Certificate of Lawful Use or Development' may be requested to prove that planning consent is not required if there is any uncertainty.

Please contact the local planning office to enquire if your project will require planning consent / listed building consent / road service approval etc. as Council cannot fund any projects without statutory consent if we are advised it is necessary.

You may also contact your local planning office to identify if your property is within the settlement development limits.

Building Regulations

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that each project complies with Building Regulations and approvals are sought.

Listed Buildings

To find out if a building is listed in Northern Ireland, you can search the Northern Ireland Buildings Database.

Please contact the Historic Environment Division (HED) for information in relation to any matters relating to a Listed Building.

Insurance

The applicant, agent and/or contractor is responsible for all risks in connection with public or employer liability associated with the building works. All works funded through this grant will be required at all times to be fully covered by relevant insurance policies.

Data Protection

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. We at all times try to be open about the reasons why we collect, hold and use your personal information. We collect information about you in order to fulfil our statutory obligations and provide you and other people with services. Some of the information we gather may be used to help us provide you with improved services. We at all times aim to comply with the Data Protection Principles, ensuring that information is collected fairly and lawfully, is accurate, adequate, up to date and not held any longer than necessary. If your personal data needs to be used for purposes other than those mentioned, we will contact you to seek your consent. You have a right to see information held about you (with a few exceptions allowed for in the Data Protection Act 1998). If you wish to see any personal information held on you please put your request in writing, stating clearly who you are and what information you would like to see to the address below. A fee is chargeable up to £10.00 which covers the cost of gathering, copying and redacting the data.