

Transforming Places Through Heritage Programme Guide

In a nutshell

The Transforming Places through Heritage (TPtH) programme supports projects that will contribute to the transformation of high streets and town centres in England. We can provide advice, support and funding to help more organisations take ownership of heritage assets and deliver innovative schemes with the potential to revitalise town centres as places for people, re-imagined and renewed. Applications are welcome from charities and social enterprises seeking new uses for empty or underused historic buildings in town centres. Most of our grants are for listed buildings though we will consider applications for unlisted historic buildings in Conservation Areas.

Our programme is part of a wider initiative to revive high streets in England, alongside Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones. You can find out more about Heritage Action Zones [here](#). Together these programmes form part of the Future High Streets Fund, administered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The overall aim is to help town centres become thriving places, strengthening local communities and encouraging local economies to prosper.

Grants of up to £100,000 are available to help your project through its early stages and development. **Please note: the programme closes in March 2023, with the final deadline for grant applications in January 2023.**

You can apply if:

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- Your project involves a heritage building (listed or in a Conservation Area) located in a high street or town centre in England **and:**
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- This location is the focus of a wider strategy or initiative which aims to revitalise the high street or town centre, **and:**
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- You are a not-for-private-profit organisation, **and:**
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- Your organisation has, or is intending to acquire, the freehold or a long lease on the building.
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This guide will help you decide if our support is right for you and help you make an application. If you think your plans have potential to fit this programme or you would like further advice, please complete our [Online Enquiry Form](#).

Please note that our grants cannot be used to fund work that is being grant-aided through a Future High Streets Fund, High Street Heritage Action Zone or Towns Fund programme. These strands of funding cannot partner each other but will fund projects that are complementary. These strands of funding may also separately fund different stages of one project.

What are the aims of the programme?

The aims of Transforming Places through Heritage are to:

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- Help regenerate high streets and town centres, making them fit for the future;
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- Find viable new uses for disused and underutilised historic buildings;
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- Maximise the positive social impact that results from restoring historic buildings: and
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- Build capacity within local community groups, social enterprises, and charities.
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In considering your application, we will want to understand how it will contribute to the successful achievement of these aims.

Who is eligible for funding?

If you can answer 'Yes' to the following questions you should complete an enquiry form.

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- Are you a not-for-profit organisation or town or parish council? (see page 9 for further information)
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- Does your project involve a historic building on or near a high street in a town centre in England? (see page 12 for further information)
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- Is this location the focus of wider plans to revitalise the high street or town centre? (see page 13 for further information)
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- Will your project involve a change of ownership or significant change of use? (see page 12 for further information)
-
- Does your organisation already have or intend to acquire the freehold or a long lease (minimum 25 years) of the building? (see page 12 for further information)
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What funding is available and which of our grants could be right for you?

Stage you have reached	Grant scheme	Deadline and decisions
<p>Just Starting Out You may be thinking about forming an organisation or have recently constituted, or be a longstanding organisation tackling a new project. You have identified a building - either already in your ownership or one you have a reasonable prospect of owning. You may have some ideas about how the building could be restored and used, but are wanting to explore the options and test whether these will work.</p>	<p>Project Viability up to £15,000</p>	<p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 8-10 weeks.</p>
<p>Ready to Move Forward You have already completed the feasibility and viability work needed, but you need to do more detailed work to develop your plans and secure capital funding to deliver your project.</p> <p>You need to be set up as a Community Benefit Society to apply for the Shares Booster.</p>	<p>Project Development up to £100,000</p> <p>Crowdfunding Challenge up to £25,000</p> <p>Community Shares Booster development up to £10,000</p>	<p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 8-10 weeks.</p> <p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 8-10 weeks.</p> <p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 6-8 weeks.</p>
<p>Ready to Restore Your Building Your plans are close to being fully developed and some of your delivery capital funding will already be in place, but there is a funding gap you need to fill.</p>	<p>Crowdfunding Challenge up to £25,000</p> <p>Community Shares Booster equity investments up to £50,000</p>	<p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 8-10 weeks.</p> <p>Quarterly deadlines. Decision within 6-8 weeks.</p>

Project Viability Grants

£15,000 maximum, up to 100% of the cost of work involved.

What is this for?

To explore different options for re-use of the building, or to test the viability of your preferred option.

This typically involves an initial assessment of the building's condition and repair needs, outline design solutions sympathetic to its heritage value that can accommodate the uses under consideration, and the outline cost of the works needed to repair and convert the building. It will also involve considering the outline business case for the possible uses, based on research and consultation, and how the project could be funded. In some cases, it may be necessary to obtain an independent property valuation, for example if the funding strategy may include Social Investment (loan finance) or to identify the conservation deficit, which is where the cost of the project will exceed the value of the restored building.

Equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 0 - 2

Points to note

If you do not already own the building, you will need to provide evidence that you have a reasonable prospect of securing ownership, for example, the owner has agreed to allow you time to raise the necessary funds.

You should generally be already constituted as one of the organisational types listed above, but if part of your work is to explore the best type to set up as, we will accept applications in advance of formally registering your group. We will want to see that you have an initial governing structure and constitution.

What will this grant help you achieve?

At the end of the funded work, you will need to bring the results together to produce a Project Viability Report. This will help you decide whether to commit to further cost, risk and effort in developing the project and provide a route map for the next steps. It will also be a document you can present to potential funders and supporters to help explain your plans. Please refer to our guidance on producing a viability report [here](#).

Project Development Grants

£100,000 maximum, up to 90% of the cost of work involved.

What is this for?

To enable you to take forward the development of your capital project to the next stage.

This could include developing the technical and design details, additional support such as a project manager, refining your business plan, building community engagement and preparing funding bids. Within the maximum above, this could be more than one grant over time, enabling you to move forward in stages.

Equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 2 - 4

Points to note

If you do not already own the building, you will need to provide evidence that you have a formal agreement to acquire it, such as Heads of Terms, which the owner cannot rescind without good cause.

You should be set up formally, as one of the organisational types listed below.

If you have not completed a Project Viability Appraisal funded by us, you will need to provide details of the work you have done to test the viability of your plans. We will consider how likely it is that your project will be able to go on to attract the capital funding required.

You will need to show that the proposals will be sympathetic to and not harm the historic character of the building. We want to know that there is no reason in principle why planning permission and listed building consent would not be granted. This will need to be backed by evidence that you have taken appropriate advice.

What will this grant help you achieve?

At the end of the funded work, or series of grants if more than one, you would be expected to reach the stage of securing capital funding to enable the delivery of your project.

Crowdfunding Challenge Grants

Up to £25,000, to match the amount raised through a crowdfunding campaign. We will match the amount raised from your supporters £ for £, so that you could achieve £50,000 in total.

What is this for?

To enable you to develop your plans for the project, once viability has been demonstrated, or to deliver your project (capital work), or a combination of the two.

Equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 2 - 5

Points to note

You will need to have a defined project proposal, having already completed a Project Viability Appraisal or otherwise able to show that you have tested that your proposals for the building are potentially viable. These grants cannot support crowdfunding for early stage work such as viability or options appraisals and getting set up as an organisation.

You will need to show that your fundraising target is realistic.

You may choose which crowdfunding platform to use. (You can find some helpful guidance [here](#).) The grant will match the total raised, subject to the maximum above, by an agreed end date for the campaign. If you do not achieve your full target figure, provided the crowdfunding platform allows you to retain the reduced sum raised, the grant amount will be reduced accordingly. We will want to agree to any resulting changes to the scope of the work you propose to undertake.

Please see our specific guidance for applying for a Crowdfunding Challenge Grants [here](#), and additional questions you will need to answer [here](#).

What will this grant help you achieve?

You will have increased your ability to move your project forward, with increased public awareness of your plans and a stronger community of supporters, plus funding that you can use flexibly to finalise your plans or help deliver your project.

Community Shares Booster Grants

Development grants up to £10,000 to develop community share offers and equity investments up to £50,000 to match the amount raised in Community Shares investment.

What is this for?

To enable Community Benefit Societies and Cooperatives to boost the amount of investment they raise from their supporters. This could enable you to develop your community share offer for the project, once viability has been demonstrated, or to deliver your project (capital work), or a combination of the two.

Equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 2 - 5

Points to note

Community Benefit Societies and Cooperatives are the only types of organisations able to issue Community Shares. This programme is run by our partner, Co-operatives UK – apply [here](#).

You will need to have a defined project proposal, having already completed a Project Viability Appraisal or otherwise able to show that you have tested that your proposals for the building are potentially viable.

You must apply for a grant before the launch of the share issue.

What will this grant help you achieve?

You will have increased your ability to move your project forward, with increased public awareness of your plans and a stronger community of supporters, plus funding that you can use flexibly to finalise your plans or help deliver your project.

How do we apply?

Before applying, please complete our Online Enquiry Form [here](#). One of our Programme Officers will then review your enquiry, confirm whether your project is eligible, and provide advice and support if needed.

To apply you will need to complete our online application form [here](#). There are Application Help Notes available [here](#) to guide you through the form.

Your application will be assessed and taken to a Grants Panel for a decision. Please refer to the application deadlines on our [website](#).

Further information and frequently asked questions

Who can apply?

Your organisation must be one of the following not-for-private-profit organisations or lowest tiers of local government:

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- Unincorporated charities (for Project Viability Grants only)
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- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)
-
- Charitable Companies Limited by Guarantee
-
- Charitable Community Benefit Societies
-
- Community Benefit Societies
-
- Not-for-private-profit Companies Limited by Guarantee
-
- Community Interest Companies (CICs) Limited by Guarantee
-
- Co-operatives
-
- Parish and Town Councils
-

We will not fund:

- Private individuals

- Local authorities and other public sector bodies other than Parish and Town Councils (unless applying on behalf of an organisation still in formation)

- Universities, colleges and other mainstream educational institutions including independent schools

- For-profit companies, unless in a partnership led by a not-for-profit organisation

- Unincorporated organisations (e.g. charitable trusts and associations) that are not intending to incorporate

- Organisations with fewer than three Trustees or Directors. If there are only three Trustees/Directors, none of these should be spouses or otherwise related to one another.

- Limited liability partnerships

- Churches or other places of worship, where the building or the space within the building you are enquiring about will remain in use primarily be used as an active place of religious worship – defined as hosting regular religious services or religion-based activities such as prayer or religious study. If you are unclear as to whether your project is eligible on the basis of religious activity taking place within your building, please reach out to one of our Officers who will be able to provide further guidance.

What viability and development work can be funded?

Any work that is essential for taking the project forward towards the goal of revitalising an historic building will be considered. Applicants must explain how a particular piece of work or activity will enable this.

You may have already undertaken or commissioned some work, but still have some gaps to fill in, or you may be starting from the beginning and exploring possible options for use of a building. Our funding can help you to complete the picture or to move forward.

Please note we cannot fund any work that has started or costs you have incurred before we issue a grant offer letter.

Examples of eligible costs include:

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- Employment of a project co-ordinator (either someone appointed externally on a consultancy basis or an existing employee(s) working additional hours or on this specific project).
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- Fees for consultants needed to help progress plans (e.g. architect, quantity surveyor, structural engineer, mechanical & electrical engineer).
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- Property valuation by a RICS registered valuer.
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- Fundraising consultants.
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- Business planning consultants.
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- Costs associated with developing a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund or other capital funders (e.g. Activity Plan, Training Plan, Conservation Management Plan).
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- Costs of community engagement work (e.g. outreach, pop-up events, consultations).
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- Legal costs where this is critical in establishing ownership or the viability of proposed uses (e.g. advice on restrictive covenants) or for advice on governance (e.g. to determine the appropriate constitutional model for delivering the project and operating the building following completion).
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- Specialist VAT advice to help identify the most tax efficient approach.
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- VAT costs that cannot be reclaimed.
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- Organisational overheads/administration costs (no more than 20% of the grant requested).
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- One year's membership of relevant organisations such as the **Heritage Trust Network**, **Fit for the Future**, and the **Heritage Alliance**.
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- Costs associated with converting an existing charity or social enterprise into a Community Benefit Society.
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What do you consider to be a high street or town centre?

We want to invest in places that are recognised by local people and local authorities as the high street or centre of the town. These centres will typically include a variety of uses, including retail, and provide a hub for the community.

The central business district of a major city is not a priority under this programme, nor is a single parade of shops serving a suburb or local neighbourhood within a city. However, distinct town centres and high streets within large cities may be considered. Small village high streets will not qualify, but we will consider rural settlements that are notable centres within a district, providing services for a wide hinterland that includes smaller villages.

What buildings can be considered?

Your building needs to meet these tests.

- **Potential for positive change.**
A change of use and/or change of ownership is proposed, or you have recently acquired the building. With a new use or by being brought into community ownership, the building and your vision for it must have the potential to increase the vitality of the place – increasing footfall, extending the hours when social and economic activity is taking place, creating a new offer for residents or visitors. We want to support projects that have potential to deliver heritage impact and social and economic outcomes. This will include job and business creation, plus floor space brought back into use. Social impact can include enabling the delivery of community or frontline services, an increase in volunteering, people developing new skills, increased pride of place, and improved wellbeing.
 - **Ownership.**
Your organisations should have, or be intending to acquire, the freehold or a long lease on the project building. Your lease (existing or proposed) must be a full repairing, fully assignable lease of the kind registered with the Land Registry. There should be at least 25 years left to run following project completion. In exceptional cases and where meanwhile uses are planned in preparing a longer term proposal, we may be able to consider projects with a shorter lease: if you are in this position please discuss this with us before applying.
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How can we identify and link to wider plans to regenerate the area?

In your application, you will need to tell us about how your project fits within a wider initiative, strategy or action plan for the high street or town centre where your project is located.

These are likely to be led by the local authority, neighbourhood planning group or a community-led organisation, such as a civic society or community land trust.

Some examples are:

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- **Future High Streets Fund.**
This scheme provides funding to local authorities. Contact your Town Centre Manager or local authority Economic Regeneration or Development Team, or your ward Councillor to find out if there is a FHSF scheme in place or planned.
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- **Heritage Action Zone.**
This scheme run by Historic England provides funding for town centre conservation area initiatives. Contact your local authority Heritage or Conservation Officer, or the contacts suggested above.
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- **Neighbourhood Plan.**
Many communities are now developing Neighbourhood Plans to help shape future development such as housing. This alone would not fit with our Programme. If the Plan also identifies priorities and measures that will revitalise the heart of a town, and your project has the potential to contribute to this, then this could be considered. Contact your Town or Parish Council or Neighbourhood Plan group to find out.
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- **Other:**
There could be other more local initiatives directed at the regeneration of the town centre or high street where your building is located. This might be the development of masterplan or an economic strategy for a town centre, Business Improvement District or local community-led initiative, such as establishing a Community Land Trust. There may be other area-based grant schemes running or recently completed such as Townscape Heritage programme.
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If you have difficulty in finding out what initiatives are planned in your area, we will advise further when you submit an online enquiry. We may be able to advise if a local initiative is planned and put you in touch with relevant contacts.

How should we address environmental sustainability in our project and application?

It is important that your project aims to address environmental sustainability challenges and minimise carbon impact, as appropriate for your historic building and its setting. This may include the materials and construction processes you propose, or consideration of use of renewable energy sources, minimizing of waste and use of recycling, supporting sustainable transport options, increasing biodiversity, and promoting environmental sustainability goals. These questions do not form part of the assessment criteria but we encourage you to consider these issues from the earliest stages of planning your project.

You can find more information about ways to address climate change through your project via our partners [Fit for the Future](#), and you can include one year's membership of Fit for the Future in your application costs.

How are applications assessed?

We consider the heritage value of your building, including particular importance within your community, and the social and economic outcomes that your project may deliver. We also look for business models that are likely to support buildings in sustainable reuse for decades to come. We also take account of your financial need for a grant, why the work needs to happen now, and your organisational track record and capacity. Particular priority is given to projects in areas of high deprivation, and to projects in [High Street Heritage Action Zones](#).

What happens when a grant has been awarded?

You will receive a formal grant offer letter, which includes terms and conditions. You will then need to confirm that you accept these before you start the funded work.

We provide additional guidance for grantholders, but key points to note at this stage are:

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- The work you would like us to fund must not start until after we have taken a decision to award a grant.
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- Our grants are normally valid for one year.
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- You will need to make regular progress reports during the work. Following completion, we may ask you to provide periodic updates for up to 10 years, so that we can understand the outcomes our funding has helped you to achieve.
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- We will ask you to publicise our support for your project, as a condition of the grant.
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- Grant payments are made in arrears, once work has completed: you will need to submit an online claim form and upload copies of invoices and evidence of work completed. We can make grant payments in stages to help you manage costs and cashflow.
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Where can I get more help and information?

There is more information and guidance available on our website at www.ahfund.org.uk. You can also find contact details for our team of Programme Officers [here](#), who will be happy to help.