AHF Reimagining Heritage Transforming Communities

GRANTS FOR SCOTLAND 2025-2028 PROGRAMME GUIDANCE

The Architectural Heritage Fund

ahfund.org.uk/scotland

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Supported by:

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

WILLIAM GRANT FOUNDATION

Contents

WHAT DOES THE AHF DO? 3

WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS DOES THE AHF SUPPORT? 3

WHO CAN APPLY? 4

WE WILL NOT FUND 5

FUNDING PRIORITIES 5

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSESSED? 6

PROJECT VIABILITY GRANTS (PVG) 9

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GRANTS (PDG) 12

WILLIAM GRANT FOUNDATION – TAILORED SUPPORT FUND 14

EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE COSTS FOR ALL GRANT TYPES 16

HOW TO APPLY 17

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION 18

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A GRANT HAS BEEN AWARDED? 20

WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP AND INFORMATION? 20

DO YOU OFFER OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT? 20

What does the AHF do?

The AHF helps communities across the UK find enterprising new ways to revitalise old buildings. We do this by providing advice, grants, and social investment loans. Our grants are targeted towards early-stage project development, while loans may be used at any stage in a project. Our social investment loans (repayable finance) is also available for the acquisition of buildings, to provide working capital, for bridge / cashflow funding, or to kick-start enterprising activities.

Our aims are:

- delivering targeted investment that leads to the sustainable reuse and management of historic buildings.
- supporting charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings.
- championing the impact of heritage and community-led regeneration.

What kinds of projects does the AHF support?

We want to help communities take control of and find sustainable new uses for derelict or neglected historic buildings in their local areas, particularly in areas of high deprivation.

In general, your project will be eligible if **all** of the following apply:

- your project involves an historic building, which we define as:
    - nationally listed – Category A, B, or C; or
    - unlisted but in a Conservation Area; or
    - unlisted but highly valued by the local community for its demonstrable historic interest
- your project is being led by a not-for-private-profit organisation
- your project involves the building changing its use and/or a change of ownership, or looking to support improving the energy efficiency or mitigate environmental impacts on a historic building
- your organisation owns, or plans to own or acquire the building on a long lease (usually of at least 25 years following project completion)

Things we **cannot** normally fund:

- work that has started before a decision to award a grant
- on site capital works
- repair costs that are not part of a larger scheme to find a new sustainable use
- ongoing maintenance costs
- match funds to monies already provided by Historic Environment Scotland or the William Grant Foundation

Who can apply?

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

- Unincorporated organisations and charities (for Project Viability Grants only)
- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs)
- Charitable Companies Limited by Guarantee
- Community Benefit Societies
- Not-for-private-profit Companies Limited by Guarantee

- Community Interest Companies (CICs) Limited by Guarantee. The CIC's activities should align with recognised charitable purposes.

- Community Councils
- Independent secular organisations seeking to take ownership of a place of worship that will retain some religious use.
- An organisation associated with a worshipping community that is seeking to establish an independent secular organisation to take ownership of the place of worship, while the space may retain some religious use. Until ownership/long lease is confirmed, we will only fund governance and legal costs related to taking ownership or setting up an independent organisation to do so. In either

circumstance, ongoing worship must account for less than half of the proposed use of the space.

We will not fund

- Private individuals
- Local authorities and other public sector bodies (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 formal partnership led by a not-for-profit

organisation

- Community Interest Companies (CICs) limited by shares (Schedule 3)
- 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 will remain in use primarily as an active place of religious worship – defined as hosting regular religious services or religion-based activities such as prayer or religious study – unless your application relates to establishing community ownership or control of the building, as described above.

If you are unclear whether your project is eligible on the basis of religious activity taking place within your building, please contact one of our Support Officers.

Funding priorities

We will prioritise projects that:

- Involve a new use of a vacant historic building
- Are in the top 20-30% most deprived areas (with reference to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)

- Involve and support diverse and marginalised communities
- Have a strong focus on environmental sustainability and energy efficiency
- Contribute to local regeneration schemes

How are applications assessed?

1. We consider the heritage value and condition of your building, including whether it is at risk. Is it of clear historic, architectural, or cultural significance? Is it of particular importance within your community? Does your project have the potential to improve its condition, and/or increase access?
2. We look at the social and economic impact that your overall project may deliver. The building and your vision for it must have the potential to increase the vitality of a place – for example by increasing footfall, creating a new offer for residents or visitors, supporting jobs and skills development, or providing volunteering opportunities. We will look at whether it contributes to a local regeneration scheme or place-based initiative such as the Heritage & Place Programme. We aim for at least 50% of grants awarded to be in the top 30% most deprived places according to the Indices of Deprivation. We are also prioritising places that are in or supporting communities highly rated on the Community Needs Index, where available. Where appropriate, priority is given to projects led by and/or benefiting Black, Asian or minoritised ethnic communities or disabled communities, which have been traditionally under-represented as owners and users of historic assets.
3. We consider the environmental impact of the project. Are options for improving the environmental sustainability of the building and its use being explored or in place?
4. We take account of your financial need for a grant and why the work needs to happen now. For example, is a building at risk of being lost, or do you have time-limited match funding? We are keen to understand how a grant offer from us would help move the project forward.
5. We will assess the potential risks to your project, and your organisational track record and capacity to deliver the work proposed.
6. Where applicable, we consider the extent to which your proposed project is taking a conservation-led approach to the adaptation of your building. More guidance on how we consider design can be found here.

Please note that the AHF uses AI to support our assessment by summarising key facts about your project. Information put into the AI system will not be used for training the AI,

so that your application remains fully confidential. Assessment recommendations and decisions continue to be made by real human Grant Officers, Managers and Trustees.

Subsidy Control

Following recent refreshed legal guidance, the AHF is adopting a revised approach to ensuring we are compliant with the Subsidy Control Act (2022). For all grants funded by public authorities (all grants funded through our main Scotland programme), the grants we award must comply with the Act. (Subsidy Control is not applicable to grants made through the Tailored Support Fund.)

Given the volume and scale of our grant activity across the UK, and the fact that we specialise in supporting projects that will generate at least some of their income through economic activity, we have been advised to proceed as though every grant we award with public funding may potentially be considered a subsidy under the Act.

This means that we will award all grants (where they are funded through a public authority) in line with the Act. The specific process will vary depending on which type of grant you receive, as we have sought to be proportionate in our administration.

Project Viability Grants (where they are funded through a public authority) will be awarded as 'Minimal Financial Assistance' (MFA). Each organisation is eligible for up to £315,000 of MFA across a three-year period, which must be formally agreed via a signed declaration. The purpose of this MFA allowance is to enable organisations to receive small-scale subsidies with minimal administrative burden. As part of your application, the AHF will ask how much MFA your organisation has received in the current and two previous financial years. Provided there is sufficient scope within your £315,000 allowance, any Project Viability Grant will be awarded as MFA and you will be asked to sign a declaration.

Project Development Grants (where they are funded through a public authority) will be awarded through the Arts & Culture Streamlined Scheme. The Grant Officer assessing

your application may be in touch with you during assessment to ask how much subsidy funding your project has received to date.

The AHF has been advised that our approach is proportionate to the scale of different types of grant we award.

If you do not wish to take up your grant as a subsidy, you may request a review. We may also ask the relevant public authority providing the grant funding for their assessment of whether it would constitute a subsidy. This review will necessarily take time and will result in a delay in the consideration of your application. We may ultimately decide that we are only able to offer an award as a subsidy, and it will be up to you to decide if you wish to accept the grant on those terms or decline it.

Project Viability Grants (PVG)

Grant amount: Up to £15,000 (*average offer: £10,000)*
Project length: Up to one year

Funding covers: Exploring options for re-use
Match-funding: We can fund up to 100%

Location: Anywhere in Scotland
Project stage: equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 0 – 2

What kind of work can be supported with an early-stage PVG grant?

These grants should help you to establish whether a project is feasible. Work can focus on understanding the condition of the building, how it might be used, and whether that intended use is appropriate for the building and likely to be sustainable.

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. We need to understand how the particular piece of work or activity you are proposing will help you move forward and contribute towards revitalising a historic building.

Grants typically support 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 many 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.

Points to note

We can fund up to 100% of the cost of work involved, although the overall package of work required will often be more than we can afford to pay ourselves. In that case, we prefer but do not require to see some evidence of match funds having been secured or

sought. Match funds means that you would contribute to some of the costs from your own resources and/or funds raised from other sources. For example, overall costs of £10,000 could mean you apply to AHF for £5,000 and apply to other sources for £5,000. Match funding needs to be financial: we cannot accept volunteer time or pro-bono contributions as part of your match funding package.

If you do not already own the building, you will need to provide evidence that you have a reasonable prospect of securing ownership or a long lease of a minimum of 25 years. For example, this may be a letter from the owner confirming that they will allow access for survey work to be undertaken, agreeing to allow you time to raise the necessary funds, or giving you preferred bidder status; draft Heads of Terms; or evidence that a Community Asset Transfer will be taking place. Talk to us before applying if this does not seem to apply to your situation.

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. At a minimum, we will still want to see that you have an initial governing structure, clear constitution and an organisational bank account.

We prefer applications to be based on an actual quote rather than an estimate. If any item of work for which you are seeking funds is over £10,000 excluding VAT, you must obtain at least three competitive quotes. Please get in touch with a Support Officer if you need assistance with this.

You will need to show that the proposals will be sympathetic to and not harm the historic character of the building. We expect you to take a sensitive and conservation-led approach to any work to the building, described in our Design Principles on our website here. 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, including from conservation-accredited professionals.

You may find it helpful to refer to the RIBA Plan of Work when discussing your requirements with an architect or professional team and developing briefs for their work.

A summary guide to the RIBA stages can be found here.

What will this grant help you achieve?

At the end of the funded work, you should be in a position to decide whether to commit to further cost, risk and effort in developing the project and be able to provide a route map for the next steps. We encourage you to use our Project Viability Appraisal template to bring together the results if any professional reports and studies with your own knowledge of the area and potential project. This will also be a document you can then present to potential funders and supporters to help explain your plans.

For projects seeking to take community ownership of a historic place of worship:

At the end of the funded work, you should have a clear governance structure to manage community use of your building alongside potential continued use for religious activity, and a legal agreement to take ownership of the building or part of the building.

Project Development Grants (PDG)

Grant amount: Up to £45,000 (*average offer: £20,000)*
Project length: Up to one year

Funding covers: Project development costs
Match-funding: Prefer 50% in place or being sought

Location: Anywhere in Scotland
Project stage: equivalent to RIBA Plan of Work stages 2 – 4

What kind of work can be supported with a development grant?

These grants can help you to develop your proposals from feasibility through to the start of capital works. You can apply for grant support to appoint professional advisors to work with your organisation to advance the plans. These can include architects, surveyors, engineers etc. to develop the architectural plans for the historic building; additional support to build the capacity of your organisation by employing or contracting a project manager; support with refining your business plan, building community engagement and preparing funding bids.

Points to note

Applications for up to £20,000 are assessed in shorter timescale. It is possible to apply more than once, for successive stages of work, up to a maximum of £45,000 per project. One piece of work must normally be completed before another started, but talk to us if timescales are likely to be an issue.

We prefer to see evidence of 50% match funding having been secured or sought, meaning that you would plan to contribute to some of the costs from your own resources and/or funds raised from other sources. For example, costs of £50,000 could mean that you apply to AHF for £25,000 and apply to other sources for £25,000. Match funding needs to be financial: we cannot accept volunteer time or pro-bono contributions as part of your match funding package.

If you do not already own the building either outright or under a long lease of a minimum of 25 years, you will normally 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 above.

We require applications to be based on an actual quote rather than an estimate. If any item of work for which you are seeking funds is over £10,000 excluding VAT, you must obtain at least three competitive quotes. Please get in touch with a Support Officer if you need assistance with this.

You will need to show that the proposals will be sympathetic to and not harm the historic character of the building. We expect you to take a sensitive and conservation-led approach to any work to the building, described in our Design Principles on our website here. 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, including from conservation-accredited professionals.

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 – this could include an Options Appraisal, business plan or other documents. We will consider how likely it is that your project will be able to go on to attract the capital funding required.

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 be working towards reaching the stage of securing capital funding to enable the delivery of your project.

William Grant Foundation – Tailored Support Fund

Grant amount: Up to £15,000 *(average offer £10,000)*
Project length: Up to one year

Funding covers: Various – see below
Match-funding: We can fund up to 100%

Location: Anywhere in Scotland
Project stage: Any stage

What kind of work can be supported?

This fund is intended to fund projects, or aspects of a project, which will re-use a historic building but are hard to fund from other sources. Typically, this can be used in situations where an unexpected cost arises or emergency repairs are required. It may also be used to support meanwhile uses, or other physical enabling works that help sustain the development of a larger project. We're particularly keen to hear from projects that might be aiming to create something unique and exceptional; or which involve innovative approaches with potential for replication and wider learning.
Please discuss your ideas and project with a Support Officer before applying.

Points to note

We usually require applications to be based on an actual quote rather than an estimate. If any item of work for which you are seeking funds is over £10,000, you must obtain at least three competitive quotes. Please get in touch with a Support Officer if you need assistance with this. 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, including from conservation-accredited professionals.

What will this grant help you achieve?

Example of situations we would welcome a discussion about potentially supporting include:

- emergency repairs/urgent capital works/mothballing
- to prevent deterioration whilst developing longer term plans for a building
- to enable a 'meanwhile use' or testing of proposed longer-term use(s)
- other costs involved in enabling meanwhile uses
- uplifts needed to existing funding due to unexpected situations/increased costs
- projects involving unlisted buildings that are highly valued by local communities for their historic interest
- assisting in building the capacity of a community to deliver a project
- any other areas where our other grant funding programmes cannot currently assist

Examples of eligible costs for all grant types

- Employment of a project co-ordinator (either someone appointed externally on a consultancy basis or an existing employee(s) working additional hours on this specific project).
- Fees for professionals/consultants needed for initial plans (e.g. architect, quantity surveyor, structural engineer, mechanical & electrical engineer, energy consultant).
- 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 explore constitutional models for delivering the project and operating the building following completion).
- Costs associated with setting up a charity, converting a Community Interest Company into a charity, or converting an existing charity or social enterprise into a Community Benefit Society.
- Property valuation by a RICS registered valuer.
- Outline fundraising plans.
- Outline business plans.
- 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).
- Costs of community engagement work (e.g. outreach, pop-up events, consultations).
- Specialist VAT advice to help identify the most tax efficient approach.
- Organisational overheads/administration costs (no more than 20% of the grant requested).
- One year's membership of relevant organisations, such as the Heritage Trust Network, the Heritage Alliance, or Fit for the Future.

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

How to apply

Application timetable: Two-stage application process

- You can submit an Expression of Interest anytime (Stage 1)
- You will hear back from us within 2 - 3 weeks
- If your project is a close match with our funding priorities, we will invite you to submit a full application (Stage 2)
- We will let you know if your bid has been successful 2 - 3 months after receiving your second stage application

Stage 1 – complete our short online Expression of Interest form online. This asks for initial information about your organisation, the building you are interested in, and your plans for it. We welcome the chance to discuss your plans with you before you submit your enquiry. We may also get in contact once we have received your enquiry to discuss your project and ask some follow-up questions.

Stage 2 – if your organisation and project are eligible and appears to be a good fit with our priorities, we will invite you to submit a full application. We will send you a link to the online application form. You can complete and submit this to us when you are ready.

Please ensure you read the full guidelines before starting your application and refer to the application form help notes as you complete your application.

Decision – we normally take 6 - 8 weeks to assess applications. Your request for funding will then be considered at one of our monthly meetings. We will tell you when this is once we receive your application, and you will hear the outcome within one week of this meeting.
If your application is unsuccessful, we will provide feedback.

Supporting Documentation

Essential for all applicants:

1. Your organisation's governing document (if not previously supplied).
2. List of current trustees or directors and very brief description of their roles and relevant experience.
3. Copy of a minute from a meeting of your organisation's trustees or directors, or other evidence formally recording the decision to apply for a grant from the AHF for this project.
4. Your organisation's latest audited accounts and balance sheet, recent management accounts (if available) or up-to-date certified financial statement.
5. A number of high quality digital images of the interior and exterior of the building, and any associated community events and activities.

Essential for all applicants *except* **Project Viability Grant applicants:**

6. Proof of your organisation's ownership/long lease of the building (e.g. a copy of the title deed from the Land Registry), or evidence that your organisation can acquire the building (e.g. a letter from the owner indicating a willingness in principle to transfer ownership or lease to your organisation).
7. A Project Viability Appraisal, Feasibility Study or Options Appraisal. This should include:
    - Evidence that the project is permissible in planning and conservation terms (*e.g.* copy of pre-application advice received from the local planning authority)
    - Evidence of community/stakeholder consultation
    - Market research report/evidence of demand from potential users

Additional items:

Applicants for Project Development Grants and William Grant Foundation – Tailored Support Grants

Your grant request may not include all the items of work indicated, in which case only send the information if applicable. Supporting information strengthens the application as it helps us to assess the overall viability of the project and how our funds could help move the project forward.

8. Business Plan.
9. Valuation report, if applicable, for example to support the calculation of a conservation deficit, or in relation to the financing of the project.
10. Building condition report / structural survey.
11. Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment.
12. Copy of briefs for development work.
13. List of consultants invited to quote for the development work and a copy of the preferred quotation or tender.
14. Job description and person specification of the individual(s) who will be working on the project (either existing staff or new staff to be appointed).
15. Curriculum Vitae of the individual recruited to work on the project.
16. Calculation of allocation of overhead costs (using full cost recovery method).
17. Project fundraising strategy, plus confirmation of awards secured to date.
18. Relevant correspondence with potential match funders.
19. Copies of any match funding grant offer letters (relating to the work you are asking us to fund).
20. Partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding.
21. Any other relevant information you think we need to see.

What happens after 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 grant holders, but key points to note at this stage are:

- The work you would like us to fund must not start until after we have taken a decision to award a grant. We cannot cover costs you have incurred before your grant offer date.
- Our grants are normally valid for one year, but if project timescales change, talk to us.
- We will ask you for updates during your work, usually when you are making a grant claim. Following completion, we may ask you to provide brief updates, so that we can understand the outcomes our funding has helped you to achieve.
- We will ask you to publicise our support for your project, as a condition of the grant.
- Grant payments are normally 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. If necessary, we can make grant payments in stages to help you manage costs and cashflow.
- We generally expect you to have claimed your grant in full before applying for any others for the same project, unless you have agreed otherwise with us in advance.

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 Support Officers here, who will be happy to help.

Do you offer other financial support?

Alongside grants, the AHF provides social investment loans to charities, social enterprises and community businesses across the UK seeking to acquire, reuse or redevelop buildings which are of historic or architectural importance.

Social investment is available for the acquisition of buildings, to provide working capital, for bridge / cashflow funding, or to kick-start enterprising activities. Find out more about the different advice, social investment and grants we provide on our website at www.ahfund.org.uk or by emailing us at scotland@ahfund.org.uk



The Architectural Heritage Fund
ahfund.org.uk/scotland
Tel: 0300 121 0346
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The Architectural Heritage Fund
Company Number:1150304
Charity Number: 266780
Scottish Charity Number: SC043840
Financial Services Register number: 707421