

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant Scheme

APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES

The Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant is funded by the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as part of the Covid-19 Revitalisation Recovery Programme Plan in partnership with the Department for Communities.

This is a Mid and East Antrim Borough Council initiative, supported by the Department for Communities.



Contents

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Background to Grant Programme
- 1.2 Levels of Grant Award
- 1.3 Who can apply?
- 1.4 Who cannot apply?
- 1.5 What can be funded?
- 1.6 What cannot be funded?

2.0 How we assess and score your application

- 2.1 Overview
 - 2.2 Eligibility Assessment
 - 2.3 What if an application is not eligible?
 - 2.4 Assessment and Scoring
 - 2.5 How decisions are made
 - 2.6 What happens if an application is successful?
 - 2.7 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?
 - 2.8 Grant Application Assessment Schedule
 - 2.9 Annexes
- Annex A - Town Centre Boundary Maps

3.0 Conditions

- 3.1 Conditions of Grant
- 3.2 Procurement Guidance
- 3.3 Insurance
- 3.4 Payment of Grant
- 3.5 Clawback of Grant
- 3.6 Assistance and Queries

4.0 Your Application Form

- 4.1 Application questions
- 4.2 Application Checklist
- 4.3 Declarations

Appendix 1

Local Council contact details and method of submitting application

Appendix 2

- 1 Publication of Data
- 2 Data Protection Act
- 3 Freedom of Information Act
- 4 Equality
- 5 GDPR

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to Grant Programme

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is working in collaboration with the Department for Communities (DfC) to deliver the Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant Scheme as part of the Town Centre Recovery Group Action Plan.

In response to the many economic challenges posed by COVID 19 Council led the establishment of The Town Centre Recovery Group to ensure a co-ordinated and cohesive approach was taken towards the recovery process across the three towns of Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne. The Group that is Chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of MEA is made up of key stakeholders across the three towns including Ballymena Business Improvement District , Ballymena Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Larne Traders Forum, Larne Renovation Generation, Carrickfergus Town Centre Partnership, Department for Communities, PSNI, two MLA's, community representatives, Town Centre business representatives and Council Officers. With the group meeting on a monthly basis and continuing to meet it has focused on re-opening support, advice and guidance on government legislation and requirements including risk assessments, furlough, health and safety and legal obligations, PPE and grant support.

Following the distribution of three successful tranches of small grants to support independent businesses across the Borough, a total of £322,045 has now been allocated to 212 businesses, funded through the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities. This support has enabled businesses to implement measures to make their businesses more Covid secure and encourage people to feel safer in those environments. Further funding has been secured from the Department for Communities, in addition to investment agreed through Council's Integrated Property Solutions Programme, to develop the Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant Scheme.

This pilot grant scheme will support capital development and repurposing works on vacant commercial properties within the three town centres of Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus.

Research carried out by the Council which explored ways of developing and regenerating town centres outlines the need to re-purpose town centres by focusing on regeneration initiatives that will encourage footfall. Supporting investors to develop vacant properties within the towns will act as a catalyst for future development whilst creating vibrant town centres for those who live, work and visit the borough of Mid & East Antrim.

Furthermore investment in infrastructure by both the private and public sectors has been identified by the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre as a key economic recovery tool post COVID.

1.2 Level of Grant Aid

The scheme can provide funding of 50% towards eligible costs up to a maximum of £30,000 per project. The minimum grant awarded will be £5,000. The total cost of the project must be a minimum of £10,000, there is **no maximum** total project cost. Applicants must provide a minimum of 50% match funding towards the project.

	Total Project Cost	Maximum grant award	Applicant match funding
Example 1	£10,000 (min)	£5,000 (min)	£5,000
Example 2	£30,000	£15,000	£15,000
Example 3*	£60,000+	Max £30,000 (max)	£30,000+

* There is no maximum total project cost, however the maximum grant award will be £30,000.

Only one application per property will be considered. This is a competitive process and any grants awarded will be determined on the basis of their ability to meet the criteria and subject to available budget.

1.3 Who Can Apply?

The grant programme is open to owners or leaseholder of eligible vacant properties in the Mid and East Antrim Borough which are located within town centre boundaries. Please refer to the maps on the Grants section of the Council website indicating town centre boundaries to determine eligibility (Annex A).

To be eligible, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must own a commercial town centre vacant property in Ballymena, Carrickfergus or Larne within the areas as defined by the Council town centre boundary maps as detailed in Annex A;

OR

- The applicant must have a lease of a minimum of 5 years still to run (without any break clauses) on a vacant commercial town centre property in Ballymena, Carrickfergus or Larne within the areas as defined by the Council town centre boundary maps as detailed in Annex A;
- The subject property must have been vacant since at least 1 March 2020 (this may be evidenced by rates payment record and/or town centre vacancy audits);
- If a mixed use property (i.e. Commercial ground floor with residential upper floors) then the commercial element of the building must have been vacant since at least 1 March 2020;
- Leaseholders must have written permission from the property owner or landlord to apply and owners/landlords must have written support from other tenants within a building which has multiple occupants (if applicable);
- All applicants must demonstrate they have a robust plan in place to revitalise and repurpose the commercial property for retail, residential, office, leisure or other economic use to generate return on investment and increase town centre footfall.

This scheme will support re-purposing of vacant commercial units for the following uses:

- Retail (engaged in the retail sale of goods);
- Coffee shops, cafes, bars and restaurants including those seeking franchise opportunities;
- Hair and beauty businesses;
- Health and fitness related businesses;
- Service providers such as estate agents, financial advisors, mortgage and insurance; and
- Residential accommodation.

To be eligible, applicants must also:

- Have a bank account in the name of the property owner or leaseholder. This must be a dedicated bank account for the project or a separate cost-code (if applicable).
- Applicants must demonstrate they have the financial resources to complete the project in full (i.e. 100% of project costs). This may be demonstrated by current bank balance or a letter from the bank to confirm the required funding is available;
- Demonstrate a suitable level of viability and solvency;

- Demonstrate evidence of property ownership to the Councils satisfaction. The onus will be on the land/property owners and leaseholders to provide this;
- Provide proof of relevant building and contents insurances;
- Commit to making the property available for tenancy or occupancy within 3 months of project completion (which will be a condition of any letter of offer and will require the applicant to demonstrate appropriate effort has been made).

1.4 Who Cannot Apply?

Ineligible applicants / businesses / organisations are as follows:

- Applicants whose the property is located outside the boundaries outlined in Section 1.3 (Annex A);
- Applicants whose property is currently occupied at the time of application or due to be occupied before the project timeframe lapses;
- Applicants whose subject property has been occupied on or after 1 March 2020;
- Applicants where the property owner or leaseholder is a political party or organisation;
- Projects where the owner or leaseholder is a non-independent business (i.e. those that are part of a multinational chain or company);
- Where the owner or leaseholder is a bank or financial institution;
- Where the property owner or leaseholder is a public sector organisation or service provider (E.g. Libraries, Statutory Organisations etc.).

1.5 What can be funded?

This is a capital grant scheme to support town centre property capital building and refurbishment works on vacant properties, where total project costs¹ are at least £10,000. If you are VAT registered, the lower and upper thresholds are based on net cost of items. If you are not VAT registered, the lower and upper thresholds are based on gross cost of items. Evidence of your VAT status if not registered will need to be verified in writing by your accountant.

Examples of eligible expenditure include:

- Building works to bring a building or an area of a building back into use;
- Building extensions or conversions to improve or change the use of the building.
- Building repairs (non-routine);
- Building refurbishment works (internal or external);
- Minor structural works to the internal or external of the building envelope;
- Services and utility upgrades or installations (i.e. Heating, power or lighting);
- Internal fit out works such as commercial or retail shop fit outs, fixtures and fittings (including decorating and cosmetic works if they are an integral part of a wider capital works or repurposing scheme).

Please note for any project involving building works or external modifications all relevant full planning permissions and building control permissions must be in place prior to the project starting or expenditure being incurred, however statutory fees are not considered eligible items of expenditure. Applicants should be aware that large parts of the Carrickfergus town centre are within a conservation area and special development considerations will apply.

1.6 What works items cannot be funded?

The following items cannot be funded under the scheme:

- Land or property purchase;
- Demolition projects;
- Legal costs;

¹ Total project costs are defined as all related project costs defined as eligible expenditure according to the guidance notes.

- General maintenance or repair works;
- Technical, design, professional fees (including architect fees, quantity surveyor fees or fees to develop specification and tendering/quotation documentation);
- Statutory planning permission costs, building control fees or any other statutory fees;
- Improvements or refurbishments of any existing residential property (even if used for business purposes), including attics, garages and extensions;
- Services beyond the basic provision of heat, light, power and ICT infrastructure;
- Labour costs not directly associated with purchased capital works/ items;
- Projects that have already started or expenditure has been incurred prior to a Letter of Offer;
- Any resource items, such as equipment, marketing materials, information websites, training courses, feasibility studies;
- Motorised vehicles, including vans, lorries, cars, boats, bikes, quads, forklifts, scissor lifts and any other form of motorised mobile vehicles;
- Cost of advertising or marketing (including advertising any quotations or tender opportunities in relation to the proposed goods/works);
- Any activity or action that is a statutory requirement for your business (e.g. for Health and Safety purposes such as Personal Protective Equipment) or the responsibility of a government department;
- Business running costs, such as staff costs, rent, rates, electric, insurance, stock;
- Bank interest charges, referral fees and foreign currency transaction charges;
- Consumable items used by businesses that are replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up (for example hand sanitiser, masks, gloves, visors, high-visibility vests for staff, printer ink);
- New build accommodation and provision of additional bed space for existing accommodation providers;
- Staff Uniforms or clothing, including personal protective items;
- Projects which are likely to cause displacement;
- Existing residential properties are not eligible for building works or modifications in any circumstances, however, re-purposing of vacant commercial or retail properties for residential use is an eligible project cost;
- Gap site developments (i.e. no existing commercial building/permises) and new build developments are ineligible but may be considered in future phases of this pilot programme.

Please note this list is not exhaustive, your local Council Officer can speak to you about your individual project.

Section 2 - How we assess and score your application

2.1 Overview

Every application received will be assessed to ensure the following:

- To ensure that the applicant is eligible to apply to this particular Scheme;
- To ensure each applicant's capability to deliver the proposal; and
- To determine how well the proposal meets the programme criteria, objectives and sustainability and growth.

The Council will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid, it will be forwarded for full assessment and scored against the stated criteria.

The Council will utilise a Grants Assessment Panel to ensure a fair and equitable assessment process.

2.2 Eligibility Assessment

If the applicant, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility as per the criteria in Section 1.3, they will progress to the next part of the process. Eligible projects will then be assessed using the Scoring Matrix in Section 2.4 and ranked in order of highest to lowest score. Funding will be awarded to the highest scoring eligible project first and work down the list until the budget has been allocated.

If the business, based on the information supplied, is not able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility, they will be advised of specific omissions/shortcomings and how these can be addressed for any future funding requests.

If the fund is oversubscribed, additional eligibility criteria and assessment measures may be applied (both essential and desirable).

A reserve list or call off list will be established and will be made up of projects which scored above the minimum threshold. This list will be prioritised via the assessment process.

2.3 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If a business is not eligible for funding through the Programme, businesses may wish to contact the Council, who will help signpost to other sources of support.

2.4 Assessment and Scoring

If the business, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the eligibility criteria, they will be scored according to established assessment criteria shown in the table below:

Area	Score
Project Overview	/ 10
Existing / Proposed Use Plan	/ 20
Project Need	/ 20
Economic Impact	/ 20

Sustainability	/ 15
Project Management Experience	/ 15
TOTAL	/ 100

Applications must score at least 65% in order to avail of funding.

Applicants will be ranked according to score obtained and available funding allocated to the highest ranking applications. Applicants who fail to achieve a score of at least 65% will be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Applicants who score above 65%, but who do not score high enough to be awarded funding due to lack of available funding will be notified of this.

Stage 1 letters of offer (LOO) will be issued to successful applicants should they meet the qualification criteria and score above the threshold in the application form, subject to budget availability. If applicants satisfy all conditions within the Stage 1 letter of offer, a Stage 2 permission to start letter of offer will be issued which will include permission to begin the project.

Further detail is provided in Section 3.

2.5 How decisions are made

When the scores are finalised, the applications will be presented to the Council for approval. Successful/unsuccessful applicants will be notified within 12 weeks of their application being received.

2.6 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue a Letter of Offer in two stages (Stage 1 and Stage 2) which is a legal agreement with the business to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form. The Stage 1 LOO will include a list of all pre-commencement conditions which must be satisfied to progress to a Stage 2 permission to start letter of offer.

Signed Letters of Offer (Stage 1 and Stage 2) must be returned within **28 days of receipt**. The Council will not reimburse applicants for any expenditure incurred before the Stage 2 permission to start letter of offer has been accepted and returned.

If successful, businesses **must** attend a Letter of Offer workshop which will explain the processes and procedures that relate to Programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting changes, promoting Council's support, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification. Applicants who do not attend this workshop will forfeit the offer of funding.

The Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant Scheme is retrospective and therefore costs will only be reimbursed once items, activities or expenditure are purchased, paid in full, viewed in place and a grant claim submitted and processed. Applicants will have to provide original invoices and show evidence of payment of invoices through their bank account as part of the claim process. Items should be paid through the bank account for which a statement is provided as part of the application process.

Stage 1 Letters of Offer will require applicants to satisfy a number of pre-commencement conditions, including but not limited to:

- Evidence of a full specification of works;
- Evidence of a works programme (including timeframe);
- Evidence of the completion of a satisfactory procurement exercise for all eligible expenditure;

- Provision of appropriate statutory approvals for proposed works;
- Specific project conditions identified and included in the Stage 1 LOO.

Stage 2 letters of offer will only be issued once all pre-commencement conditions have been satisfied and will include permission to start the project.

Projects must be complete, paid in full and cleared the bank account by 31 March 2023 or the project will be deemed ineligible and no grant payment will be made.

Businesses are required to provide information on the impact of their project on completion of the project. Officers from the Council may arrange post project visits in order to verify spend and discuss the monitoring information with the businesses that were funded. Monitoring information will include:

- Proof of appropriate building certificates;
- Proof of Health and Safety checks;
- Proof of any other statutory requirements or checks having been completed;
- Evidence of works carried out;
- Evidence of capital improvement to the property;
- Evidence of effort to market or advertise the building appropriately;
- Evidence of impact which the project has made in relation to the project objectives and anticipated economic impact (as per the application form).

2.7 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the Council will be available to discuss the application with the business and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process/Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The appeals process will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to submit information to an independent Review Panel indicating that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or;
- the proper procedures were not followed.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

2.8 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

The closing date for receipt of applications is Wednesday 30th June 2021 at 4pm

Incomplete applications will not be accepted under any circumstances. The application form must be fully completed and all required supporting documentation must be supplied at time of submission or the application will not be considered.

Applications and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Council following the method stated in **Appendix 1**. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

The Programme will follow this eight step administrative process:

Step 1	Open call for applications is made
Step 2	Applications are submitted to the Council
Step 3	Initial applicant eligibility checks are completed
Step 4	Eligible applications are assessed

Step 5	Recommendations are reported to Council for decision
Step 6	Conditional Letters of Offer are issued and applicant attends a Letter of Offer workshop
Step 7	Conditional Letters of Offer are returned within 28 days
Step 8	Applicants complete all pre-commencement conditions
Step 9	Permission to start letter of offer is issued
Step 10	Projects are completed on-site and all works paid in full by applicant
Step 11	Grant claim is submitted to local Council for processing and vouching
Step 12	Grant payment is made directly to applicant
Step 13	Monitoring and evaluation is completed and project concludes

2.9 Annexes

Annex A - Town Centre Boundary Maps

Projects must be based in the town centre areas as defined by the Council town centre boundary maps located here: www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/MEATownBoundaries

Section 3 - Conditions

3.1 Conditions of Grant

Any grant offered will be subject to the following conditions:

- Satisfactory completion of all letter of offer pre-commencement conditions included in Stage 1 letter of offer, including those examples outlined in Section 2.6, in addition to compliance with all conditions within the Stage 2 permission to start letter of offer.
- Submission of a full specification of works for all eligible project expenditure and a full works programme/timetable.
- Please note for any project involving building works or external modifications all relevant full planning permissions and building control permissions must be in place prior to the project starting or expenditure being incurred. Conditional letters of offer will be issued and applicants are responsible for ensuring appropriate permissions have been secured prior to project expenditure being incurred. For all works which require statutory permissions, it is the applicant's responsibility to cover these costs and ensure that these are obtained. Properties located within areas of conservation must also comply with Conservation Area Guidelines.
- The grant may only be used to carry out the eligible works to the specified property. The grant is not transferable to another property, project or person.
- That no work is commenced until the applicant has received a Stage 2 permission to start letter of offer and satisfied all pre-commencement conditions.
- That the letter of offer workshop has been completed and both Stage 1 and Stage 2 LOOs have been accepted within 28 days issue.
- That work is carried out by the lowest quoting contractor or supplier (copies of these quotes or tender exercise must be supplied in line with the procurement guidance) - copies of invoices addressed to your business must be provided to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and these MUST match exactly with both the lowest quoting contractor and the amount specified in the grant offer.
- That Mid and East Antrim Borough Council are notified of the actual starting date together with an indication of the completion date for the work; (work MUST be completed by and claims submitted by **31st March 2023** at the latest).
- That you will continue to maintain the property in a reasonable state of repair.
- That you will give a written declaration to the fact that you as an applicant are VAT registered and will or will not be able to recover any VAT payable. A grant offer will only include VAT if this is not recoverable by you.
- That you will ensure that any required statutory permissions for the work (such as DfI Roads Service consent for placing of scaffolding on the pavement or roadway, planning permission, listed building consent, advertising consent or building regulation approval) are obtained prior to commencement of the work.
- That the work is completed to the satisfaction of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; the grant may be reduced or withheld if the grant eligible work proves to be less than estimated or if the work is not carried out to a satisfactory standard.

- That you as the applicant, your agent and your contractor are responsible for all risks in connection with public and employer liability associated with the work.
- That Mid and East Antrim Borough Council or the Department for Communities does not accept liability or responsibility in respect of the grant aided work carried out to your property. Accordingly you should not rely on the inspection or payment of grant monies by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as any proof or guarantee that the contractor you have engaged to execute the works has completed the said works to a proper standard prior to payment. You are strongly recommended to satisfy yourself that the works have been carried out to a satisfactory standard.
- That following completion of the work, claims should be made immediately and all claims must be made by **31 March 2023** so that work completed may be inspected and payment of grant made to you as soon as possible thereafter.
- That Mid and East Antrim Borough Council or the Department for Communities may record the fact that a grant has been made in any publicity, annual report or other relevant publication.
- That copies of all invoices addressed to your business and evidence that any statutory permissions required for the work have been obtained are provided to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council within the timeframe specified in your conditional letter of offer and totals match the amounts specified in the Letter of Offer (subject to reasonable price fluctuations).
- That any proposed changes to the agreed grant eligible works listed must be advised to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council before work takes place (including any changes to the contractor or supplier who provided the lowest quotation).
- Upon completion Council, at its discretion, may contact suppliers directly to verify expenditure has taken place in accordance to the application for funding and any offer of funding by Council. Cases of suspected fraud involving Mid and East Antrim Borough Council funds will be reported to the police.
- The applicant must ensure they can receive emails from both grants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk and invest@midandeastantrim.gov.uk. Council will not be held accountable for non-responses or missed communications from either email which renders the application void.
- If you do not start work within six months of the grant being offered, the grant offer may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Council.

3.2 Procurement Guidance

Any grant offered will be subject to the following procurement guidance:

- The project promoter shall **conduct a competitive tendering process** for the procurement of any works, goods or services wholly or partly funded by the Council in accordance with all such Laws, guidance and best practice. The competitive tendering process must be in consultation with, and to the satisfaction of the Council. The Project Promoter should retain all records necessary for at least seven years to support decisions made by it in the course of any procurement exercise.
- Competitive quotes or a tender process (as per values in the table below) are required for all proposed works, goods or services, based on clear specification of works. The project promoter should only seek to include contractors, which are known to have demonstrated a capability of achieving the standards of quality required.

- If you want to accept a tender other than the lowest tender, you must provide a written justification when submitting your application. If the assessment panel does not agree with your reasons, any grant awarded will be reduced by a percentage that reflects the difference between the lowest acceptable tender to the Council and the tender you choose to accept.
- Goods, works and services to be obtained by a Project Promoter with a cost of **£0 to £29,999.99**, must be procured on the basis of written quotations in accordance with the table below:

Total Estimated Cost (per element)	Action & Minimum Number Quotes
£0 - £2,999.99	Minimum of 2 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotes cannot be used)
£3,000 - £7,999.99	Minimum of 3 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotes cannot be used)
£8,000 - £29,999.99	Minimum of 4 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotes cannot be used)
£30,000 - EU Threshold	Publicly advertised tender

- The Project Promoter shall **conduct an open public competitive tendering process** for the procurement of any works, goods or services wholly or partly funded by the Council which have a value of **£30,000 or greater** in accordance with all such Laws, guidance and best practice. High value tenders whose values fall within EU / UK levels must be processed in line with current EU / UK directives at the time of tendering. The competitive tendering process must be in consultation with, and to the satisfaction of the Council. The Project Promoter should retain all records necessary for at least seven years to support decisions made by it in the course of any procurement exercise.
- Publicly advertised - If not using a Government Procurement Portal, applicants must advertise the procurement requirement in a regional daily newspaper or a trade journal appropriate to the type of business. A minimum of 20 working days for building/construction works and 10 working days for all other procurements, must be allowed. The timescale starts from the issue of the invitation to quote or publication of the advert. The newspaper selected should have a distribution which covers all of Northern Ireland.
- EU Thresholds - Contracts in excess of the EU or UK Thresholds Contracts require publicly-advertised tenders in the EU Journal or Contract Finder UK, i.e. where the estimated value of the contract (net of VAT) exceeds the relevant financial threshold as detailed in Public Contracts Regulations, below:

Type of Contract	Threshold
Public supply and public services contracts (all other contracting authorities)	£189,330
Public works contracts and works concessions (all contracting authorities)	£4,733,252

- The Project Promoter shall ensure that no conflict of interest shall arise in the appointment of any person to provide any goods, works or services which may be wholly or partly funded by the Council, and shall upon request provide the Council with written confirmation that no such conflict arises. A written declaration of interest must be provided where any member of

the Project Promoter's organisation has any association or connection with any person who bids to provide works, goods or services to the Project Promoter.

- The Project Promoter must provide the Council with a copy of any approved tender evaluation report together with the original signed forms of tender if required, and the Council reserves the right to attend the opening of tenders and to obtain and examine copies of the tenders submitted.
- Although the Project Promoter may contract with one or more contractors for the delivery or individual aspects of the Project, the Project Promoter shall remain at all times solely accountable for the successful delivery of the Project.
- An obligation on the Project Promoter to do, or to refrain from doing, any act or thing shall include an obligation upon the Project Promoter to procure (insofar as within its power) that its employees, servants and agents and the contractors (and their employees, servants, agents and sub-contractors) also do, or refrain from doing, such act or thing.
- The Project Promoter shall ensure that any agreements with contractors contain obligations on those organisations to comply with all Laws (and ensure their sub-contractors comply with all Laws) regulating the procurement, design, construction, operation, management and maintenance of the Project, including but without limitation, employment legislation, child and vulnerable adult protection legislation, health and safety legislation and freedom of information legislation.
- The Project Promoter will ensure that any agreements it enters into with contractors contain reasonable and adequate terms and conditions to safeguard the monies paid by the Council and all obligations of the Project Promoter hereunder. The Project Promoter shall comply with and pay all sums due and owing to contractors in accordance with any agreement it enters into with such persons in connection with the Project.
- Where it is evident that one supplier can provide the goods or works, goods or services as one itemised invoice as opposed to a series of invoices, the project promoter should treat this as such and seek quotations according to procurement thresholds. This will ensure the best value for money.
- Separating the scope of works into sections for the purpose of invoicing below the procurement threshold, will be deemed by audit as purposely splitting work values to avoid due process. The correct number of quotes must be adhered to.
- Council reserve the right to obtain additional independent quotes to assess value for money.
- Quotes should be 'like-for-like'; particularly where items are specific.
- Ensure that all costs are quoted and accounted for, e.g. Labour and material costs should be part of the quote.
- Email quotes are acceptable and should include a covering email.

3.3 Insurance

- The property must be insured - both during and after the works - for its full value and against all reasonable risks;
- During the project, the contractor must insure any materials and goods used;
- Depending on the form of contract used, a joint insurance between contractor and applicant is likely to be required for the duration of the works;

- The proceeds of any insurance claim must be used to reinstate the property or the replacement of any goods or materials, unless the Council agree otherwise, in which case, they must first be used to repay the grant.

3.4 Payment of Grant

Payment of grant will be in arrears based on vouched expenditure. Applicants must incur all eligible project costs and grant payments will be dependent upon inspection of satisfactory completion of the work carried out and submission of a claim for payment with the invoice (made out to your business) along with bank statement showing proof of payment, and evidence that any necessary statutory permissions have been obtained.

3.5 Clawback of Grant

The rationale clawback is that grants to property owners and developers should not give rise to realisable private gain. All grants may be subject to clawback, which requires repayment of a share of the proceeds if the property is sold within a specified period or improperly used.

- Some grant may need to be repaid if the building is sold or otherwise disposed of within 10 years of the grant contract. The repayment is in proportion to any increase in the value of the property and is on a sliding scale over 10 years. Repayments are not required for grants of less than £5,000.
- Where clawback is applied, the grant applicant needs to supply a current value for the property prior to the grant agreement. The value will be agreed by the Council, or an independent valuation will be required if the value cannot be agreed upon.
- If the building is not sold or otherwise disposed of, no grant will need to be repaid.

3.6 Assistance and Queries

If you have any queries or would like further advice about making an application please contact invest@midandeantrim.gov.uk.

Applicants must ensure that:

- The application form is fully completed including all relevant annexes.
- All relevant documentation has been provided to support the application as per the application checklist.

The outcome of all assessments made will be final.

Section 4 - Your Application

All sections of your application form must be completed as fully and concisely as possible as this information will be used in the assessment of your project proposal. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed for funding. Please note maximum word limits per question.

4.1 Application Questions

Q1 Applicant Details

- (a) Please state applicant name
- (b) Please state contact name and details
- (c) Please indicate if you are either: Property owner, property leaseholder, or other (if other, please explain).

Q2 Property Overview/Eligibility

- (a) Please state the subject property address (Please remember that the project must be in a defined town centre area of the Council as outlined at Annex A to be eligible for grant aid).
- (b) Please provide ownership details (i.e. Freehold title, leasehold details or other)
Note - Applicant must either own the freehold of the property or have a long term lease (minimum 5 years without a break clause) on the subject property.
- (c) Please provide a detailed description of the current property condition *Maximum 500 words*
- (d) Please detail the length of time the property has been vacant (at time of application deadline)
Note - in order to be eligible, the property must have been vacant since at least 1 March 2020.
- (e) Please provide details of the previous property occupier (including for what purpose, how long they were in-situ, what date they vacated the premises and why they vacated the premises).
- (f) Please confirm if the subject property has been in receipt of any grant aid from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Department for Communities or other sources in the last 10 years (if so, please provide details).

Q3 Project Details

- (a) **Project Overview:** Please explain clearly what your project will entail, this should include, but is not limited to: Outlining the key aims and objectives and any works you plan to use the financial support for. *Maximum 250 words*
- (b) **Existing and Proposed Use:** Please explain previous use of the building and the proposed use upon completion of this project. This should include a robust plan to revitalise and repurpose the commercial property for retail, residential, office, leisure or other economic use to generate return on investment and increase town centre footfall. *Maximum 500 words*
- (c) **Project Need:** Please explain and provide evidence to demonstrate the need and demand for your project. You should clearly demonstrate how you know there is a need and the difference the capital or building works will make. (E.g. Are there deficiencies in the property, is there a market for the proposed use and what is your evidence of this? If you

have identified demand, how do you know this and what level of demand exists? How do you know the works will generate tenancy, footfall and town centre activity? *Maximum 500 words.*

- (d) **Economic Impact:** Please tick and provide information on each specific economic impact your project will have on your property, business, town centre footfall and your target market, over the next 12 months. You should complete this information for all boxes that apply to your business/project.

- Building brought back into use
- Anticipated income generation as a result of re-purposing/investment
- Existing jobs will be sustained or new jobs will be created
- Business growth or establishment will be realised
- Impact on town centre footfall or regeneration

Maximum 500 words

- (e) **Sustainability:** Demonstrate how the project or proposed expenditure contributes to business, environmental or economic sustainability? *Maximum 500 words.*

- (f) **Project Management Experience:** Please explain the experience and capability you have in delivering a project such as this one? Will you be utilising technical or professional expertise to manage and deliver the project? If so, please provide details. *Maximum 500 words*

Q4 Additional Information

- (a) Is Planning Permission required?
- (b) Is the applicant VAT registered?
- (c) Is the applicant registered with Inland Revenue?
- (d) Is the applicant registered with Companies House?
- (e) Are you, or have you been, a sole trader/partner/director of a business which has gone, or is in the process of going, into receivership/administration or liquidation?
- (f) Is the building insured?
- (g) Have you made, or can you make, an insurance claim for any of the works detailed in your estimate?

Q5 Project Costs

- (a) Please provide details of the items/activities/expenditure you require funding for.

Note - There is a minimum grant request of £5,000 and a maximum grant request of £30,000.

If your business or enterprise is not VAT registered, you may apply for up to 50% of the GROSS cost (i.e. the cost including VAT). If your business or enterprise is VAT registered, you can only apply for up to 50% of the NET cost (cost excluding VAT).

Note - you will be required to show that procurement of all items has been completed and that this procurement meets the procurement guidance.

Q6 Project Timescales

Please confirm if you can complete your project or verify expenditure by **31 March 2023**, to include project items purchased and received, and paid and cleared your bank account by this date.

Note - projects which have already commenced are ineligible for funding. Your project cannot commence until a Letter of Offer has been accepted and returned and you have attended a letter of offer workshop.

- Q7** Please indicate if you would like to be registered onto the Councils Economic Development Database to receive future communications that may be relevant for your business. If successful, you may be asked to take part in PR activities as part of the process.

4.2 Checklist

Please tick to confirm what you are submitting with your application.

4.3 Declarations

- (a) Please read the declaration carefully and complete it in full.
- (b) Please read the DE-Minimis Aid declaration carefully. Complete details of all de-minimis aid received in the last 3 fiscal years. Please note that this may include grant funding (for example through the Council, Intertrade Ireland or Invest NI) and also business support programmes (such as local Council mentoring programmes). Complete the declaration in full.

Appendix 1 - Council Contact Details

Business Area	Contact Details	Method of Submitting Application
Mid and East Antrim Economic Development Department	Connor O'Dornan Strategic Projects Officer Tel: 07753 859 720 Email: invest@midandeastantrim.gov.uk Website: www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk	Via online Grant Portal: https://mea.eformz.info/ Hard-copy postal applications will NOT be accepted.

Appendix 2 - Additional Information for Applicants

1. Publication of Data

If your application is successful and your project is awarded funding, please note that the Council may publicise details of all financial support awarded/paid out to beneficiaries. This will include the name of the beneficiary, their postal town, their post code and the total amount of financial support received by the beneficiary from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

2. Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- All information submitted in your application form, supporting documentation and any future claim will be made available to the funding organisation, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators, external auditors and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
- We may also share information with other government departments, including Invest Northern Ireland, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

For further details on your privacy see the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council website - www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/privacy-notice

3 Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act we will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk

4 Equality Considerations

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and Equality Monitoring

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has a statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity 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.

The Act also requires the Council to take into account the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

To meet its statutory obligations, Council has to continuously monitor and assess the equality uptake and outcomes of its policies and programmes, to determine if there are any adverse effects or consequences. And if there are, to look at ways to lessen these.

This equality monitoring is done through the completion of an equality monitoring form (questionnaire) by project beneficiaries once the funding has been awarded. Council is legally required to conduct this monitoring, but it is voluntary for beneficiaries to complete the form, which will be anonymous and confidential. The completed forms are returned directly to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in a freepost envelope which will be provided. This information will be stored confidentially by NISRA. These completed forms are not seen by Council.

The information collected will only be used for Equality Monitoring purposes and in compliance with The Data Protection Act. The details on this form will not be used in the decision to award funding to any person/group who applies to the Scheme, nor will this form be linked in any way to details of individual participants.

All beneficiaries are encouraged to complete the form as it will greatly help the Council comply with its statutory duty and in its assessment of the equality uptake and outcomes of the Scheme across different groups of people.

5 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

When you apply for the Town Centre Property Re-purposing Pilot Grant Scheme we will ask for some personal information because, for example, your personal email address or telephone number is used on the applicant organisation's behalf. When you provide this information it is processed in adherence with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the scheme's Terms and Conditions to enable us to communicate with you about the application.

We take care to ensure that any personal information supplied is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, the Council may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information legislation. These include:

- Occupational health and welfare;
- Compilation of statistics;
- Disclosure to other organisations when required by law to do so;
- Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 where such disclosure is in the public interest;
- The prevention and detection of fraud or maladministration (e.g. The Comptroller & Auditor General and HM Revenue & Customs).

For further details on your privacy see the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council website - www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/privacy-notice