



Report to:	Grants Advisory Committee 27/07/2023
Lead Cabinet Member:	Lead Cabinet Member for Resources
Lead Officer:	Head of Climate, Environment and Waste

Grants to Voluntary Sector: Zero Carbon Communities Grant 2023/24

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals to the Grants Advisory Committee (GAC) for awards from the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Scheme. Members are asked to consider the grant applications (details in **Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix A**) and officer panel recommendations and make a recommendation to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance.

Key Decision

1. This is not a key decision as the Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme will be funded from within existing budgets.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the GAC:
 - a. reviews all applications to the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Fund for 2022/23 as set out in **Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix A** to this report; and
 - b. agrees recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance for allocating the ZCC grant funding with reference to the eligibility and assessment criteria as set out in the [ZCC Criteria and Guidance](#), and the officer panel scores in **Appendix A**.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The priorities for the ZCC grant fund were recommended by CEAC (4 Feb 2019) and by GAC (29 Mar 2019) and approved by Cabinet on 01 May 2019. The grant enables parish councils and community groups to deliver projects which reduce carbon emissions/lock up carbon and engage communities on climate change.
4. The ZCC grant first funded projects in 2019/20; in four rounds of the scheme since the Council has funded 61 projects across the District, amounting to approximately £416,000.

A total of £125,000 is available for funding in this fifth round of the ZCC grant. This includes the 25% uplift Members agreed for 2023-24 to increase funding for such community-led carbon reduction schemes.

5. In 2022/23, applications were accepted for two categories, carbon emission reduction/ locking up carbon, and community engagement on climate change. These revisions were made following the Grants Advisory Committee meeting on 25 February 2022, having received approval from the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee. These categories were allocated the following percentages of the total grant fund:
 - a. Carbon emission reduction/locking up carbon (70%)
 - b. Community engagement on climate change (30%)

In 2023/24, the grant has been run with the same categories and nominal allocation of the total grant fund across the categories.

6. Case studies for all previously grant funded projects are available on the Council's website: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/nature-and-climate-change/zero-carbon-communities/zero-carbon-communities-grant-funded-projects/>.
7. A workshop was held on 26 April 2023 to provide those interested in applying with further information and support. This included an overview of the grant, examples of previous projects, and guidance on submitting a successful application.
8. Applications for the **Carbon emission reduction/locking up carbon** category were assessed and scored independently by three officers – all from the Climate and Environment team.

Applications for the **Community engagement on climate change** category were assessed and scored independently by four officers – two from the Climate and Environment team, one from the Waste Policy team and one from the Communications and Communities team.

All officers provided a range of prior experience, including low carbon strategy and policy, community sustainability and the making, awarding and monitoring of grant schemes.

9. Independent assessments were made using the weightings shown in **Table 3, Appendix B**. The scores were calculated using the methodology shown in **Table 4, Appendix B**. Where there were declarations of interest by the officers, their scores would have been excluded from the average weighting – there were no declarations. Each project was discussed, and the officer panels confirmed their scores after which an average score was calculated. The officer panel rankings were then agreed.

10. **Appendix A** details the officer scores for each theme, ranked in order of highest to lowest. The projects which could be funded under the nominal allocation for each theme are shown as shaded.

In the Community Engagement category, this year the two highest scoring applications, by a considerable margin, were both made by Cambridge Carbon Footprint. Members are invited to consider funding both of these projects; CCF have a strong record of delivering grant funded work and the home energy project aligns particularly well with the Council's own work on private housing decarbonisation with Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership. Furthermore, their previous ZCC-funded project 'Net Zero Now', which trained parish-based climate champions, continues to be oversubscribed and is now being delivered for a second time. It was the focus of a case study by the Local Government Association, viewable [here](#).

The decision to fund both CCF projects was supported by members of the officer panel who felt the option to fund the two CCF projects was truer to the aims of the grant than discounting the second strongest application overall (their home energy project), in favour of a lower-scoring application.

Members are also invited to fund two food related projects – Cambridge Sustainable Food and Let's Cook. It is felt these projects compliment the Climate and Environment team's work with the Communities team to establish a sustainable food network in the District and pursue a Sustainable Food Places Bronze award. Officers have proposed we include a requirement in the funding agreement of these projects to liaise carefully with the Council, beyond the usual reporting commitments – to avoid duplication in our work, and coordinate our efforts towards the Bronze award.

11. The project scores (**Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A**) align with the priorities for the grant fund and show a wide geographical spread across South Cambridgeshire.

Details

12. The Council is committed to supporting the shift to zero carbon emissions in the district by 2050, as demonstrated by the motion passed at its November 2018 meeting.
13. Round five of the ZCC grant scheme was launched on 3 April 2023 for non-profit groups or organisations based in South Cambridgeshire (or benefiting South Cambridgeshire residents) and South Cambridgeshire Parish Councils.
14. The ZCC grant scheme builds upon the Council's strong record of supporting community level action on sustainable energy through SPEP (now the Zero Carbon Communities Programme) and the previously launched, but discontinued, Community Energy grant.

15. The funds available for the ZCC grant will be taken from the Renewables Reserve (business rates retained from commercial renewable energy projects in the district). The 2023/24 total grant fund is £125,000.
16. The scheme provides for one-year funding agreements, where projects are required to be completed within one year of awards being made.

Applicants were invited to apply for £1,000-15,000 per project which needed to meet the following objectives:

Carbon emission reduction / locking up carbon:

- a. The project reduces the production of carbon emissions or reduces carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- b. The project contributes additional value (e.g. funding contributions; volunteer time/expertise from other sources; collaboration between organisations, and/or evidence of local and/or Member support; communication of the project to the local community).
- c. The project is sustainable and will have a 'lifetime' impact on the local and wider community.

Community engagement on climate change:

- a. Achieving wider community engagement and behaviour change around climate change.
- b. Additional value (e.g. funding contributions or contributions in kind, e.g. volunteer time/expertise from other sources, collaboration between organisations, and/or evidence of local and/or Member support).
- c. The project is sustainable and will have a 'lifetime' impact on the local and wider community.

Average Officer scores for each objective of each category are shown in **Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A.**

17. The fund was open for applications for an eight-week period between 3 April and 2 June 2023. Applications were invited from Parish Councils and local community groups in South Cambridgeshire. Promotion of the scheme was through an online ZCC grant workshop in April, press release, ZCC newsletter, social media posts across the ZCC and South Cambs platforms, the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) newsletter, Cambridge Carbon Footprint Newsletter, the weekly bulletin for district councillors and the e-bulletin to parish councils.
18. Information for Applicants can be found on [our Guidance Notes and Criteria webpage](#). Full grant criteria and guidance, and further information were provided in dedicated Criteria and Guidance and Information documents during the application window.
19. Eighteen applications were received from sixteen different parish councils and local community groups. All were deemed eligible for consideration at the Council Officers' panels held between 21 – 22 June.

20. The total funding requested from the 18 applicants was £200,641. This exceeds the total grant fund available in 2023/24 of £125,000. Summaries of the applications can be found in **Appendix C**.
21. Each application was discussed by the officer panel and listed in order of the average score within each stream. (**Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A**)
22. Applicants will be notified of award decisions following call-in, and before the end of August.

Options

23. Following consideration of all applications, the GAC could recommend to the Lead Cabinet Member to:
 - a. award funding as recommended by the officer panel,
 - b. award some or all of the funding in an alternative allocation to that recommended by the panel, stating the reasons for this.

Such consideration should be given to the applications listed in **Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2**.

Implications

24. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

25. The awards recommended are within the Council's proposed budget for 2022-23.

Legal

26. Funding agreements with grant recipients will be drawn up in accordance with templates approved by the legal team. Funding agreements will allow variation or recovering of the grant in specific circumstances.

Consultation responses

27. This report has been circulated to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and Members of this committee have been invited to attend the GAC meeting to contribute their views.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

28. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme has attracted significant interest. All the aims below from the SCDC Business plan 2019-24, will be furthered by one or more of the projects recommended for funding.

Growing local businesses and economies

29. Promoting village-based businesses to encourage people to use local shops and food outlets.

30. Investing in renewable technologies.

31. Helping to ensure people's homes are close to their jobs and can be accessed by walking, cycling and using public transport.

Being green to our core

32. Supporting community groups to promote behavioural change and reduce the reliance on fossil fuels.

33. Helping communities to secure grants to fund green projects.

34. Protecting and enhancing the district's heritage and environment.

A modern and caring Council

35. Funding community and voluntary groups that benefit local people.

Background Papers

Climate and Environment Advisory Committee Meeting – 4 February 2019:

<http://moderngov/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1095>

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1095&MIId=7489>

Grants Advisory Committee Meeting – 29 March 2019:

<http://moderngov/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1096>

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1096&MIId=7487&Ver=4>

Cabinet - 01 May 2019:

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=293&MIId=7365&Ver=4>

[Grants Advisory Committee – 26 November 2021:](#)

[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 26 November 2021, 8.30 a.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Grants Advisory Committee - 25 February 2022:](#)

[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 25 February 2022, 11.00 a.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Appendices

Appendix A: Officers Scores and Amounts Requested

- **Table 1:** Officers' scores and amounts requested for Carbon Emission Reduction / Locking up Carbon.

- **Table 2:** Officers' scores and amounts requested for Community Engagement on Climate Change.

Appendix B: Scoring Methodology

- **Table 3:** Weighted Scoring Matrix
- **Table 4:** Scoring Example

Appendix C: Officer Summary of all eligible applications

Appendix D: Officer scores by each objective

- **Table 5:** Carbon emission reduction / locking up carbon: Average officer scores for each objective
- **Table 6:** Community Engagement on Climate Change: Average officer scores for each objective

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