



## **Green Business Grants Scheme**

**Tonbridge & Malling Borough and Sevenoaks District**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

**Guidance Notes**

**January 2024**



**PLEASE READ THESE GUIDANCE NOTES BEFORE COMMENCING THE APPLICATION FORM. AN INCOMPLETE SUBMISSION WILL CAUSE UNNECESSARY DELAYS IN DECIDING YOUR APPLICATION.**

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of these guidance notes is to help you through the application process – from the initial contact stage with the Council, to submitting the application, to completion of the works and the final payment of the grant.

This scheme is part-funded through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity fund (*UKSPF*). The UKSPF is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

## **2. What is the scheme?**

This scheme is for Capital projects for (i) businesses based in either Tonbridge and Malling borough or Sevenoaks district operating in the green economy to help them to grow and develop new ideas and (ii) any business located within these areas that are looking to reduce their carbon footprint.

The grants are the latest initiative forming part of our wider economic recovery and climate change strategies.

The councils will only assess applications from Businesses in their own areas i.e., there will be no cross-border grant allocation.

There are two grants available:

- Section A grants – supporting business development
- Section B grants – helping lower business premises' carbon footprint

### 3. Who can apply?

#### Section A – supporting business development

Section A is intended for businesses in the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE) to help build short-term resilience and provide the foundations for future growth.

Under the LCREE definition (*as produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy*), businesses must fall under one of the following 17 sectors:

Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy		
Offshore Wind	Bioenergy	Carbon capture and storage
Onshore Wind	Alternative Fuels	Nuclear
Solar Photovoltaic	Renewable Heat	Fuel Cells and Energy storage
Hydropower	Energy Efficient Lighting	Low emission vehicles and infrastructure
Other renewable Electricity	Renewable Combined Heat and Power	Energy Monitoring, Saving or Control systems
Other Energy Efficient products	Low Carbon Financial and Advisory services	

Businesses applying for a grant from Section A will be required to provide evidence that the majority of their operation falls within one of the sectors listed in the LCREE table above.

In addition, the councils have decided applicants for Section A should demonstrate that their plans fit within one or more of the following Business Development Initiatives:

- Research and Development
- Physical infrastructure – including new premises to accommodate growth or improvement to existing premises.
- Equipment and Machinery

Businesses that wish to apply for funding for Business Development activities outside of the above list will be required to make a compelling case in their application form, explaining clearly why their proposal meets the aims of the scheme.

### **Section B - helping lower business premises' carbon footprint.**

Section B is open to all independent businesses based in Tonbridge and Malling borough or Sevenoaks district that operate from commercial premises.

The councils have decided that the following sectors will be given priority and will receive preference if the scheme is oversubscribed. These are:

- Food production
- Tourism and hospitality
- Distribution and logistics
- Construction
- Independent retail

### **General Information**

Please note that all grants are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds. Once all the funding has been allocated, this programme will close. The inclusion of a business/ building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

The scheme will not support any works that have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made and accepted.

In the event that an applicant incorrectly applies to the wrong section of the grant, for example applying under Section A when the applicant business is not operating in the LCREE sector, the Councils have the discretion to change the section under which an application is considered.

Multinational businesses, national chains or franchises will not be eligible to apply, nor will business that have more than 5 properties irrespective of locations.

If you are unsure of whether your business is eligible to apply for a grant, please contact [economic.regeneration@tmhc.gov.uk](mailto:economic.regeneration@tmhc.gov.uk)

## 4. How much is the grant for?

The Green Business Grant (GBG) is a one-off grant specifically to support the proposals set out by the applicant.

### **Awards for businesses in the Green Economy applying to Section A**

LCREE businesses can apply for a grant towards business development activities. This grant covers 40% of eligible costs, up to a maximum grant contribution of **£8,000**.

### **Awards for local businesses looking to decarbonise their operations by applying for Section B**

Local independent businesses can apply for a grant towards projects on their site which increase energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of their premises. The grant covers 40% of eligible costs, up to a maximum grant contribution of **£5,000**.

### **The following applies to both schemes**

The contribution provided through this scheme will always be 'up to 40%' (with the maximum individual grant being £8,000 in Section A and £5,000 in Section B). Whilst the administrators of the scheme will seek to offer a 40% contribution to most agreed proposals, there may be occasions where this is not possible. For example, if the proposal exceeds £20,000 in Section A or £12,500 in Section B, or if the remaining funds left in the scheme do not stretch sufficiently to offer 40%.

If a business is VAT registered, the GBG will not consider VAT when calculating the grant offer. E.g., if a proposal is agreed for £4,000 + VAT (Total £4,800), the grant would be a maximum of £1,600 not £1,920.

## 5. Excluded businesses

The following businesses **will not be eligible** for the GBG:

- Businesses that are not based or trading in Tonbridge and Malling Borough or Sevenoaks District – to check which local authority your business is based in go to <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>
- Businesses that have started or entered any form of administration or Insolvency process (Including CVA/CVL).

- Multinational businesses, national chains or franchises, nor business that have more than 5 properties irrespective of locations.
- Businesses that have already received Public Subsidiary Grant payments that equal the maximum permitted subsidy allowances
- **SECTION A ONLY** - Businesses that are not in the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy sector (*see Section 3 above*)
- **SECTION B ONLY** - Businesses that do not operate from commercial premises.

## 6. How do I apply?

In order to apply for the scheme, you should first make sure that you have read the guidance notes and, where required, contacted Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in the first instance for any additional information or support.

Having gathered the required information, you will then need to apply online at [www.tmbc.gov.uk/forms/green-business-grants-scheme](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/forms/green-business-grants-scheme) ahead of the specified deadline.

## 7. What do I have to supply with my application?

In order to consider a proposal, the following are required:

- Complete the online application form – this contains basic information about your proposals together with confirmation of any public subsidiary received over the last three years. An example application form is provided on the GBG webpage to help you prepare.
- Latest Bank Statement
- Evidence that you have sourced **at least three quotes** from contractors, you should state which contractor is preferred and why.
- Include cost estimates including quotes and professional fees
- The following information must be obtained in any quote:
  - A breakdown of individual cost of each element of the scheme

- Total price of the whole scheme (remember to also include project support costs and VAT as separate items as well as any ineligible works) for the purpose of grant calculation and monitoring.

- A programme of works from the contractor.

*(Please note that any grant offer would usually be based on the lowest quotation received).*

## 8. Planning and other permissions

If an applicant, to either Section A or B, intends to carry out works that change the exterior of buildings it is likely that planning permission will be required, and there are additional requirements for Listed Buildings and buildings within Conservation Areas.

If an applicant is unsure as to whether their proposal would require planning approval, then they are strongly advised to contact the relevant Planning Department:

**TMBC:** can be contacted via [planning.applications@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:planning.applications@tmbc.gov.uk). More information can be found via <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/planning-applications-appeals/planning-pre-application-advice>

**SDC:** can be contacted via [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning) or via [planning.information@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:planning.information@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

Whilst very minor works often do not require the submission of a planning application, Building Regulations approval will need to be obtained if any of the proposed changes are structural or involve moving or altering entrances. Further information can be found at:

**TMBC:** <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/planning/find-building-control>

**SDC:** [https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/homepage/88/building\\_control](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/homepage/88/building_control)

Where an applicant requires planning or building regulations approval to deliver their proposal, but has not yet secured it, any award from this scheme will be 'subject to securing the necessary permissions'. In summary, no grant funding will be able to be paid out until all necessary permissions have been obtained and the required proof provided.

**As part of the application process, applicants will initially be required to comment on their permission requirements and, subsequently, will need to provide proof that all permissions have been received prior to grant payment being made.**

For further information, go to <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/planning-applications-appeals/apply-planning-permission> or [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning)

## **9. How long will it take to decide on my application?**

We will try and decide on your application within four weeks after the application deadline has passed, providing that the submission has been fully completed and all additional information provided.

**If planning approval is required and has not been granted by the time a decision on your grant application is made, then any offer will be conditional on securing the required permissions.**

If your application is submitted without all of the necessary information, then this will delay the process and may result in the applicant not receiving an award.

## **10. Who will decide whether my application is approved?**

The grant scheme will be administered by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council dependent upon applicant location.

Applications will initially be assessed by a panel made up of council officers (from planning, building control, licencing, environmental health, finance and economic regeneration).

Once assessed, recommendations will be made to the Decision Panel of each respective council.

## **11. What conditions will apply to the grant?**

All grant offers will be made in writing setting out conditions, including a timeframe of a **maximum of nine months** from the date of the grant offer letter to deliver the project. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in the grant offer letter.

All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning consent where required. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and as such securing planning permission does not imply in any way that a grant application will be approved or vice versa.

Grants are dependent on applicants being required to complete a short questionnaire evaluation 6 months after the receipt of the grant.

## **12. When will the grant be paid?**

Grant contribution payments will be made retrospectively and on production of

- I. receipted invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs,
- II. Pictures of the finished project
- III. satisfactory proof that, where required, planning and any other permissions have been obtained and
- IV. after all works are completed.

**In exceptional circumstances, the councils will consider providing stage payments in order to help with cash flow.**

## **The application process**

1. Where required, in the first instance contact Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council with any questions or for areas that require clarification in connection with the project idea and with completing the application form.
2. Fully complete application form online and submit for consideration ahead of the deadline [www.tmbc.gov.uk/forms/green-business-grants-scheme](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/forms/green-business-grants-scheme)
3. Once the scheme has closed to applications, the individual submissions will be considered by the panel (in accordance with Section 10) and a decision made.
4. If approved, a formal Grant Offer Letter is issued giving the applicant 9 months to complete their project (if planning permission is required but not yet secured, the grant offer will be conditional on achieving the required permission).

5. If declined, the applicant will receive feedback explaining the decision of the panel.
6. As stated in Section 8, advice should be sought from the Planning Department if you are uncertain as to whether permission is required. This can be done through the submission of a Lawful Development Certificate proposal. Please note, this service is subject to a fee.
7. If permission is required, prepare the planning/other permissions application(s) (including appropriate plans, application forms and relevant fees) and submit to the relevant Planning Dept. (Please note duration of at least 8 weeks for determining the planning application).
8. Before work starts on site, please advise us of the planned commencement date.
9. Work starts on site.
10. Works complete.
11. Submit evidence of completion, including photographs, receipted invoices, and confirmation of permissions together with Bank details.
12. Checks will be made by the Council to verify the works have been completed and that the documentation provided is correct and in order.
13. Council Officer approves the works.
14. Grant paid retrospectively (unless stage payments have been agreed).

## Summary of Scheme A – supporting Business Development

Business	Notes
Eligible sectors	Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy
Types of eligible businesses	Offshore Wind, Bioenergy, Carbon capture and storage, Onshore Wind, Alternative Fuels, Nuclear, Solar Photovoltaic, Renewable Heat, Fuel Cells and Energy storage, Hydropower, Energy Efficient Lighting, Low emission vehicles and infrastructure, Other renewable Electricity, Renewable Combined Heat and Power, Energy Monitoring Saving or Control systems, Other Energy Efficient products, Low Carbon Financial and Advisory services,
Location	Tonbridge and Malling Borough, or Sevenoaks District
Tenure	Commercial property owners or tenants with a minimum of 2 years remaining on their lease.
Eligible works	Research and Development, Physical infrastructure – including new premises to accommodate growth or improvement to existing premises and Equipment and Machinery
Grant value	40% of Eligible Costs, up to a maximum of £8,000
Quotes	A minimum of <b>three</b> quotes needed to demonstrate value for money.
Planning permissions	<b>Commentary whether planning permissions are necessary for your works will be required before your application can be considered.</b> Upon approval of the Grant request the Applicant will obtain formal Permission(s) as required.
Timeframe to deliver project	If an applicant is successful in accessing a grant, they will have a maximum of 9 months (from the date of the Grant Offer Letter) in which to deliver their project
Payments	Will be made retrospectively on receipt of paid invoices, proof that any necessary permissions have been obtained and photographic evidence that the works have completed. In exceptional circumstances, the Borough Council will consider stage payments.

### Summary of Scheme B – helping lower business premises' carbon footprint

Business	Notes
Eligible sectors	All sectors are eligible: preference given to the following in event of oversubscription: Food Production, Tourism and Hospitality, Distribution and Logistics, Construction, Independent Retail
Types of eligible businesses	All businesses that trade from commercial premises.
Location	Tonbridge and Malling Borough, or Sevenoaks District
Tenure	Commercial property owners or tenants with a minimum of 2 years remaining on their lease.
Eligible works	Those that reduce the Carbon Footprint of Commercial premises
Grant value	40% of Eligible Costs, up to a maximum of £5,000
Quotes	A minimum of <b>three</b> quotes needed to demonstrate value for money.
Planning permissions	<p><b>Commentary whether planning permissions are necessary for your works will be required before your application can be considered.</b></p> <p>Upon approval of the Grant request the Applicant will obtain formal Permission(s) as required.</p>
Timeframe to deliver project	If an applicant is successful in accessing a grant, they will have a maximum of 9 months (from the date of the Grant Offer Letter) in which to deliver their project
Payments	Will be made retrospectively on receipt of paid invoices, proof that any necessary permissions have been obtained and photographic evidence that the works have completed. In exceptional circumstances, the Borough/ District Council will consider stage payments.

## Terms and conditions

Businesses/organisations accepting grant offers from this Scheme will be required to abide by and agree to the following terms and conditions:

1. The approval or refusal of a grant is at the absolute discretion of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council or Sevenoaks District Council ('the Council') and there will be no right to appeal process.
2. Grants will not be given for expenditure incurred prior to the grant offer being made and the Grant Offer Letter signed.
3. The grant is not payable to an un-discharged bankrupt.
4. The grant must be used for the purpose intended as outlined in the Grant Offer Letter (this will be supported by producing original invoices for the grant claim).
5. In the case of tenants, payment of grant requires the building owner's approval and providing proof of a minimum of a two-year lease for the building.
6. If the business/organisation ceases trading/operating within 2 years of the payment of the grant or the building is sold, the applicant must notify the Council within 14 days and in such circumstances The Council may require the applicant(s) to repay, in whole or part of, the grant paid.
7. The grant must not be used for improvements to residential property, external security features, CCTV systems or recoverable VAT.
8. If the applicant is registered for VAT this must be declared on the application form. If at any point the business/organisation becomes VAT registered, the applicant must inform The Council and discuss repayment of VAT expenses claimed.
- 9. The Grant will only be paid to proposals which, where required, have been granted all relevant permissions (*Planning/Advertising etc*).** Nothing in the agreement or negotiation of the grant will affect the Council's decision over planning permission. Failure to provide satisfactory proof will result in a delay in payment being made and could result in Grant forfeiture.
10. All works are to be undertaken strictly in accordance with the specification and schedule of works agreed with the Council.

11. The Council's written approval must be obtained in advance of any amendments to the approved specification and schedule of works. Amendments include the omission or variation of the agreed works and the execution of additional works. Failure to comply with this condition may invalidate the grant offer even if the additional work is not grant aided.
12. Representatives of the Council must be allowed access to the property to carry out interim inspections of the works in progress, by appointment at any reasonable time.
13. There is no obligation on the Council to increase the grant if the costs of works increase, or if any additional work is undertaken.
14. A proportional reduction will be made in the grant if the actual cost of the eligible work proves to be less than estimated. Payment will be made in arrears upon the production of the grant claim form along with supporting documentation (*e.g., paid invoices*) subject to the percentage criteria.
15. The applicant must inform the Council of any changes to the business/organisation or changes of business address and/or telephone number.
16. The grant is made on the condition that the property will be maintained to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of two years.
17. Any grant must be taken up within the period stated in the Grant Offer Letter or the offer will lapse
18. Payments of grants to successful applicants will be made in arrears, in one sum on the receipt by the Council of evidence that the applicant has incurred the expenditure. A supporting statement should show how the expenditure relates to the individual items in the approved schedule of works together with all relevant supporting evidence.
19. Expenditure must be incurred using a debit/credit card/cheque or direct Bank payment and evidenced through a bank statement. Payments of grants will not be made towards expenditure incurred using the payment method of cash.
20. Grants are dependent on applicants being required to complete a short questionnaire evaluation 6 months after the receipt of the grant.
21. The Council reserves the right to publish illustrations, photographs or other details of your project in promotional literature and other documents associated with Council grant schemes

22. Applicants will need to sign the contract within 28 days from the date offered otherwise the offer will be withdrawn.

23. If the applicant undertakes any work that, in the opinion of the Council, significantly alters or removes any elements of the grant aided work, the Council shall have the right to recover such proportion of the grant as it sees fit. This condition shall apply for a period of five years starting on the day on which the final grant payment is made.

24. Under s58(4) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, if any grant condition is contravened or not complied with, the Council reserves the right to recover the grant, or such part of it as the Council sees fit.