

UK Shared Prosperity Fund in South Yorkshire

Rural England Prosperity Fund – Doncaster 2024/25

Guidance notes for applicants v2.2

24th July 2024

‘This project is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.’

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund 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>



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About the Rural Prosperity Fund

What is the Rural England Prosperity Fund?

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (otherwise referred to as the "Rural Prosperity Fund") is a capital grant programme integrated into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and is aimed at specifically addressing some of the challenges faced by our local rural areas.

The key aim of the programme is to facilitate sustainable economic growth in the rural areas of Doncaster, through supporting the delivery of innovative project activity. This will enable businesses and communities whose activities reflect the landscape, environment, culture and heritage of Doncaster to survive, diversify and thrive.

Doncaster has been allocated £634,307 as part of this fund. This has been split 40% in 2023/24 (£253,723) and 60% in 2024/25 (£380,584). This is to provide **capital grant funding** (investment in assets such as buildings, plant, equipment and machinery) across two themes:

- Funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas
- Funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy in rural areas

Grants of between **£2,500 - £12,499** will normally be available, but you must be able to match any funding that you are applying for with your own funds. Payments are made at the end of the process, so you will need to be able to fund the project fully by yourself before any reimbursements are made. In exceptional cases we may consider applications for larger grants, however you must be able to demonstrate that your project significantly contributes to the outcomes of the scheme.

To apply for the grant, or if you have any questions about the Rural England Prosperity Fund, the application process, or anything mentioned in this guidance, please contact a member of the Business Doncaster team on:

Tel: 01302 735 555

email: info@businessdoncaster.com



Who Can Apply?

Before Applying – Please check whether you are eligible

Who is eligible for the Grant?

Only projects taking place in locations defined as rural will be considered. The quickest way to confirm whether your project is in a rural location is to check whether the postcode falls within an eligible rural area on this map.

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

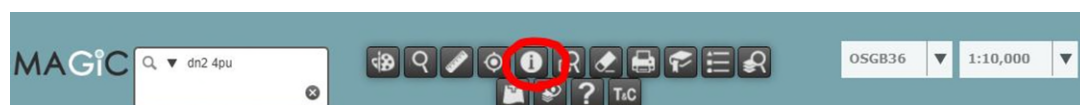
If it does not, you will not be eligible to apply for the Rural Fund grant. If you are unsure of whether your project location is eligible, if it falls within multiple postcodes, or if the postcode is not yet known, contact a member of the team for further details who will be able to check for you



How to use Magic Maps

Once the website has loaded:

- Select the Administrative Geographies option on the left-hand side and choose 'Other Administrative Boundaries'
- From the list that appears, select the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) option. Red boundary lines will appear on the map, marking eligible rural areas.
- Then, put your project postcode in the search bar at the top, and press enter (return).
- Magic map will automatically zoom to the postcode area and will load fully in seconds.
- Once the map has loaded, select the information tool from the icons on the search bar - this will turn the cursor into a cross bar.





- Click on the location of your project to determine the Rural Fund eligibility.
- If your project location is eligible, you will see the phrase 'A RURAL AREA for the purposes of REPF'.

Rural England Prosperity Fund	
Local Authority Code	E08000017
Local Authority Name	Doncaster
Rural England Prosperity Fund status	A RURAL AREA for the purposes of REPF

If you have any questions at all about the Magic Map function and how to use it, please speak to a member of the team.

Additional eligibility criteria

As well as your project being situated in specific rural postcodes, you must adhere to the following:

- Your project **must** be located within the administrative boundary of Doncaster Council
- You **must** be a new start or existing business
- Your project **must** fall into one of the two Rural Prosperity Grant themes detailed on the following pages and deliver at least one of the specified outcomes within that theme
- The grant can **only** be used for capital investments (see page 8 for further details)
- You **may not** be eligible for funding if your project cannot be completed or you are unable to provide the required evidence before the end of December 2024
- You **will not** be eligible for funding for a project that has already been committed to (for example if you have already paid a deposit to a supplier) or where work has already been started
- You **will not** be eligible for funding for projects that are already receiving grant funding from other DEFRA schemes, including (but not limited to):
 - i. [The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme](#) - funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies to deliver projects on climate, nature, people and place
 - ii. [The Farming Investment Fund](#) - grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits, covering 2 funds - the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and the Farming Transformation Fund
 - iii. [The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#) - grant funding over 3 years (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities. More details on how to apply will be available shortly.



The Themes of the Rural England Prosperity Fund

Theme 1: Rural Micro and Small Enterprises

Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, including capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses, and diversification outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business use.

The objectives of this theme are to create jobs and boost community cohesion, as well as increasing private sector investment in growth-enhancing activities, through targeted support for small and medium-sized businesses to undertake innovation and adopt productivity enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques

To be eligible for grant support, a project that falls within the Rural Micro and Small Enterprise theme must lead to one or more of the following outputs and outcomes:

- Create new jobs or safeguard existing roles
- The creation of a new business
- The adoption of new-to-firm technologies or processes
- Commercial growth, through the development of new products and/or access to new markets
- Measurable improvements to the productivity of your business / organisation.

Examples of types of projects that can be supported:

Example 1 - Investment in equipment: A small rural business that makes glass products is looking to invest in two new machines. This will create two new full-time jobs and safeguard one. It will also mean that the business will be using new, more technologically advanced equipment that will create higher quality products, and also more efficiently. The investment will also open up new markets locally, nationally, and overseas.

Example 2 - Farm diversification: A farm business plans to diversify by setting up a metal fabrication business. The business has made some gates and railings in its farm workshop and has an agreement from a local building contractor to supply gates and railings for building developments. This will build on existing skills, and the business will employ one new skilled person on a full-time basis, following investment in additional equipment to increase production capacity.



Theme 2: Tourism and the Visitor Economy

Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy (including food and drink, outdoor leisure, local attractions, trails and tourism products more generally).

The objectives of this theme are to create jobs and boost community cohesion, enhancing the rural visitor economy and rural leisure opportunities, and provide grants to develop local tourist attractions and local visitor experiences.

To be eligible for grant support, a project that falls within the Tourism and Visitor Economy theme must lead to one or more of the following outputs and outcomes:

- Create new jobs or safeguard existing roles
- The creation of a new business
- Increase business turnover.

Examples of types of projects that can be supported:

Example 1 - A farm wishes to diversify and create new glamping facilities to capitalise on the growing demand for tourism in natural environment locations. There are anticipated wider community benefits for other local businesses, for example increased trade for local pubs, restaurants, and rural tourist attractions. It also has the potential to have positive environmental impacts. The accommodation is being developed using renewable energy and tents made from natural materials contributing to the climate agenda too. The new income stream will allow the farm to employ additional seasonal workers, thereby supporting the local economy. Grant assistance is requested towards the building of the new glamping facilities.

Example 2 - A business is building a new visitor attraction for families. This will add to the range of attractions already in the area. It will make the area more attractive to tourists and increase the number of visitors. As the new visitor attraction is all-weather, it will help extend the tourist season in the area. This means other tourism businesses, like restaurants and accommodation providers, will also benefit. The project will create one full-time job and four seasonal jobs. Grant assistance is requested towards construction of the new visitor attraction.

Evidence Required

You will need to be able to evidence the outcomes that your project will be delivering and we will ask for this information from you once your project has been completed. Detailed information about what evidence will be required is included on the application form



How much can you apply for?

You can apply for a grant of between **£2,500 and £12,499** based on a 50% contribution (intervention rate) towards the capital costs of your project. In exceptional cases we may consider applications for larger grants, however you must be able to demonstrate that your project significantly contributes to the outcomes of the scheme.

You must therefore be able to match any funding that you are applying for with your own funds. Payments are made at the end of the process, so you will need to be able to fund the project fully by yourself before any reimbursements are made

Please note that if successful, a grant award may be less than the level requested, reason(s) for which will be provided. Maximum grant levels are reserved for applications that align most strongly with the Rural Prosperity Fund criteria, its strategic objectives and demonstrate the strongest added value.

What Expenditure is eligible?

The grant can **only** be used for **capital expenditure**, such as:

- Investment in capital equipment, machinery, and modern/new technologies
- Improvements to premises
- Specialist computer software (if one element of a wider programme of investment).

What Expenditure is not eligible?

Non-capital and revenue costs will not be eligible, the following are some examples but this is not an exhaustive list:

- **Costs specific to tourism:** such as refurbishment, brown signs, or hire costs (covering equipment or temporary structures)
- **General costs:** including marketing costs, housing, relocation costs, the cost of obtaining permissions or consents, contingency funds, costs incurred after the grant approval date, or items for which you have already received grant support.
- **Buildings, land, and equipment costs:** repair and maintenance of existing structures or equipment, the purchase of land or buildings, like-for-like replacements of existing items, consumables, moveable fixings or soft furnishings, the cost of any equipment or fixtures that will not be on the balance sheet of the applicant after completion of the project.
- **Business operational costs:** including salaries, in-kind contributions, recurring licence fees such as subscriptions or service charges (including software), mobile phones and marketing.
- **Agricultural business costs:** buildings, machinery and equipment used for growing and harvesting agricultural or horticultural products, standard agricultural equipment, inputs like animals and crops, the cost of agricultural production rights and payment entitlements, and developing or setting up an agricultural business.
- **Financial costs,** or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them: including bad debts, advance payments, insurance policies, working capital, lease costs, pensions, and reclaimable VAT.



The Application Process

How to apply for the Grant

You will need to contact the team at Business Doncaster directly to register your interest

Tel: **01302 735 555**

email: info@businessdoncaster.com

The scheme will be open from **Monday 18th March 2024** until **Friday 15th November 2024**.

Applications will be assessed on a first come, first served basis and subject to funding still being available, therefore the scheme may be closed earlier if all of the available funding is utilised. You should submit an application at the earliest opportunity.

Stage 1	<p>Contact a member of the Business Doncaster team to check whether you are eligible for the grant.</p> <p>A member of the team will be assigned to work with you on your application form.</p> <p>If your total project investment is below £24,999 you will be required to provide a minimum of two quotes per goods / service to be purchased</p> <p>If the total project investment is £25,000 or over, you are required to follow the Public Procurement Regulations in line with the threshold value of your total project cost, therefore quotes from three different suppliers are required</p>
Stage 2	<p>Once your application has been submitted, the team will undertake financial due diligence checks against your business and may ask you to provide any additional documentation or information as required.</p> <p>Your application, along with a relevant report, will then be submitted to an assessment panel made up of three members who will consider the proposed project against the aims of the grant scheme. At least two members of the panel will need to approve your application and make a final decision</p> <p>If your application is successful, you will be sent a funding agreement, vendor form and any other necessary documents to complete</p> <p>Once you have signed and returned the necessary documents and these have been acknowledged, you will be given written authorisation to proceed with your project.</p> <p>Once your project has been completed and you are ready to claim the funding, you will need to notify the team.</p>



Completing your application and supporting documentation

As part of your application you will need to provide information about yourself (the applicant), your business, details of the proposed project, how it will deliver the key outputs and outcomes of the theme and details of any other public sector funding that your company has received. You will also need to provide a minimum of two comparable quotes from suppliers

Please be aware that full compliance with the eligibility criteria does not automatically guarantee that your application will be successful, as grants are discretionary. If the Assessment Panel are not fully satisfied that a submission is legitimate or provides value for money, we retain the right to decline the application.

Assessment of your application

Your application will be assessed on three key points:

- How the scope of your project brings benefit to your business and whether it meets the outcomes specified within the selected theme
- Whether the project is cost effective, viable and deliverable within timescales
- How the project contributes to the low carbon agenda and the local economy and/or community

If your application is successful

Once your application has been considered, you will be notified. This notification will include:

- A formal offer of the grant funding which you will need to sign, date and return to us
- A brief description of any specific conditions attached to the grant, for example written confirmation being provided that planning permission is in place
- A vendor account form which asks for details of your business bank account, this is for us to pay the grant into when claimed.

Once you have signed and dated the grant funding agreement you must return this to us. We will acknowledge receipt of this in writing and provide authorisation for you to proceed with your project. The grant can only be paid against invoices and works that are undertaken and costs incurred and evidenced after this date.

It is important to note that once your project has been approved, if for any reason you expect that the scope of the investment may change or deviate from the original proposal in any way, you must discuss this with a member of the team as soon as you can, to ensure it can still be supported. If there are any unapproved changes to your project you will be in breach of your agreement. As a result, the grant offer may be withdrawn and no funding will be paid.



How we will pay the grant to you

Remember, payment will only be made once your project is complete, therefore you must be able to fund the project with your own finances before you can claim reimbursement for any part of it from the grant. Once your project is complete and you are ready to claim you will need to notify the team. You will be asked to provide copies of the following documents:

- Paid invoices for the approved investments
- Evidence of defrayal such as bank statements that correspond to the invoices.

We will ask for your consent to participate in a case study, though you are under no obligation to do so. A site visit may be required to see the completed works, or you may be asked to provide photographs.

Beyond the end of your project we will need to monitor the specific outputs and outcomes that your project was due to deliver. You may be required to provide further information or evidence on how your project has benefited your business for up to 12 months following payment of the grant (or longer in some cases).

Please note that if there is insufficient evidence that you have incurred all of the expenses that were originally approved on your application, or you are unable to provide the necessary evidence within the timescales required, this may result in a reduction or complete withdrawal of the grant funding.

We reserve the right to visit any grant recipient to ensure the grant has been used for the purpose stated in the grant agreement, inspect records to show that costs have been evidenced and make a formal assessment of the impact of the project. Grant recipients are obliged to cooperate with this process.

If your application is unsuccessful

If your application is unsuccessful we will write to you, giving the reasons why.

If you do not agree with the panel's decision, you may appeal in writing and you will need to submit further evidence to support your appeal. The panel will then re-assess your application, taking into account your response and any new evidence that you have provided, however there is no guarantee that the original decision will be overturned.

If, after appeal, your application is still unsuccessful and you still do not agree with the decision, you will need to submit a formal complaint online
<https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/get-in-touch/complaints-and-compliments>



Additional notes

Approval for the Rural England Prosperity Grant does not imply approval under any other relevant legislation or requirements. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain and comply with all necessary consents such as planning, building regulations, environmental health, and landlord's consent etc.

Repayment of the grant in full will be sought if any aspect of the application or grant claim is found to be fraudulent.

Doncaster Council reserves the right to withdraw the availability of the Rural Fund at any time.

Contact Business Doncaster

Tel: **01302 735 555**

email: info@businessdoncaster.com

Useful Links

[Rural England Prosperity Fund - Doncaster Council website](#)

[Rural England Prosperity Fund: National Prospectus](#)

[Check Whether You Need Planning Permission](#)

All information correct at time of writing