**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND 2025/2026**

**GUIDANCE NOTES**

**FOR LOCAL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY FESTIVALS**

**taking place from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

**Completed Applications are to be submitted by 15th April 2025 at 12 noon**

**Please note: Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered. Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will unfortunately be deemed as ineligible.**

**A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):** [**https://youtu.be/FywvbtK5cm8**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FFywvbtK5cm8&data=05%7C02%7CNicola.McClurg%40ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%7C9ffb6eae8b5f4b49ce4f08dd67aff0a4%7C39416dee5c8e4f5cb59d05c4bd0dd472%7C0%7C0%7C638780727529718218%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QRWx7hhnTUAqEm8bukag3HIZbIIKH%2FiDA%2FalbnG8bNo%3D&reserved=0)

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**Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Festivals Fund 2025-2026**

Applications are welcome from constituted community and voluntary groups in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Applications for Community Festival Funding should be completed in line with this guidance and criteria. Awards are subject to budget availability.

**NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:**

We will only accept one application per group/organisation. To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.

The Fund is open for applications from 9am on 25th March 2025 and closes at 12 noon on 15th April 2025.

**A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):**

**Eligibility Criteria**

Constituted Community and Voluntary groups can only apply for funding through **one** application, for **one** festival.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must meet the following minimum requirements

* A festival is defined as a one-off festival, or a series of related events that must take place over a maximum of a 12-week period and have a distinctive theme. A theme is defined as topic or subject that runs through the festival such as maritime, music or a specific commemoration.
* Provide appropriate governance, through regular public meetings, annual general meetings and management by a publicly elected committee.
* Demonstrates a fair and equitable ethos through the applicants aim and objectives, in accordance with Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75)**.**
* Demonstrates how the festival will improve the quality and capacity of the community**.**
* Applicants must deliver a Community Festival in the Borough of Ards and North Down, between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

**Ineligible Applications**

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

* Individuals or sole traders
* Trade or professional conferences/conventions
* Organisations not legally established in the UK
* Christmas Festivals

The following activities are ineligible:

* Ongoing operational costs
* Retrospective activity festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed
* Any festival that does not promote equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group
* Festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the festival organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

**Background**

The Events and Festivals Fund was launched in 2022 as a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund. Council tested the amalgamation of the Tourism Events Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund, but it has been determined that to ensure proportionate and relevant information is requested from applicants, the Fund will now return to being administered as two separate grant schemes. The community part of this fund will return to its’ original title of **Community Festival Fund**.

**The purpose of the Community Festivals Fund**

The Community Festivals Fund (CFF) is jointly provided by the Department for Communities (DfC) and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The fund was established in recognition of the positive contribution that festivals can make to communities and to the local economy.

This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.

**Guidance to Support the Development of Community Festivals.**

* The Council welcomes applications that meet the aims and objectives of the scheme whether they are returning or new festivals.
* Community organisations will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their festival, and that public funding is put to good use and shows a positive and measurable impact primarily on the local community but also on the local economy
* Community organisations if appropriate are encouraged to apply to other sources of funding or maximise income through sponsorship.

* Festivals should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of Northern Ireland and the Borough.
* Organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations. Officers are on hand to support successful applicants with this process.
* Community organisations should try to make every effort to create learning opportunities within their community through skills training and volunteering.
* As funders Council are accountable for public monies. Applicants will be required to provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.
* Community Festival Applicants should be aware that if the festival runs on the same date as a Council delivered event the use of Council equipment/assets may not be possible. Check the dates and times of Council run events by contacting tourismgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

It is the applicant’s responsibility to get permission from the landowner to hold a festival, whether this is council land or owned by a third party. If the festival requires use of Council land, this must be booked at least 3 months in advance of the festival to enable approval by Council. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section at landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333

Road closures - if a road is to be closed as part of the festival, the appropriate permission must be applied for.  To seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333

**Aims and Objectives of the Fund**

Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social wellbeing of a community. The festival must be community led, with the community developing and delivering the festival.

All community festivals must demonstrate a positive social impact within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships.

Additionally, the festival must meet at least one of the following aims and objectives:-

a) support the community and voluntary sector in promoting equality.

b) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting poverty

c) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting social exclusion

d) promote social cohesion and enhance community pride and well-being

e) enable partnership working between the community and voluntary sector and local Councils.

**The application process – GUIDANCE**

The Community Development Service Unit administers the Community Festival Fund scheme. This funding scheme is being administered in line with Council’s updated Grants Policy. Applications will be assessed by a scoring panel that comprises of at least 3 officers.

Applications to the 2025-2026 Community Festival Fund scheme will open on **25th March 2025. The Closing date is 15th April 2025 at 12 noon.**

Calls for Community Festival Fund applications will be advertised in the local press and on the Council’s website and social media. The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register.

[Link to Ards and North Down Council Website - Grants](https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grants)

Application forms, guidance notes and criteria will be made available on the Council's website. Copies can also be requested from Community Development - communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Confirmation of receipt of an application will be sent within 3 working days.

**Scoring**

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 5 using the matrix detailed in the Table below. NB: weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5d only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Measure**  |  **Score** |
| Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses. | 5 |
| A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement. | 4 |
| The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark. | 3 |
| A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 2 |
| An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 1 |
| The applicant failed to address the question. | 0 |

A pass mark of 60% has been set for the Community Festivals Fund 2025/26.

**SECTION 1**

This Community Festival Fund application and guidance is to support Local and Neighbourhood festivals: (subject to the availability of funding and the rates setting process)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Festival Type** | **Guidance attendee numbers**  | **Support****available** |
| **Local** | Attracts up to 500 attendees and participants | Up to £1,000 |
| **Neighbourhood** | Attracts between 501 and 2,000 attendees and participants  | Between £1,001 and £4,000  |

**Organisation details & Festival information**

Please answer this section fully and provide accurate details about the festival to include festival title, start and end date venue and location (including any specific dates during the festival period). Section 1 is not scored but must be completed. Please tick the appropriate box on page 3 of the application to indicate whether you are applying for a Local or Neighbourhood festival.

**SECTION 2**

**COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – THE DETAILS, FINANCES, ATTENDEES AND MARKETING**

**Grant Assessment Questions**

This section has the assessment questions which includes the provision of details of the festival, the finances, the attendees and the marketing The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of the application. It is important to be realistic and open in the responses as, if successful, some conditions within the Letter of Offer will be based on information in the application.

**ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL -**

**2.1 How does running the community festival achieve the aims and objectives of the Community Festival Fund***(scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2)*  *Max word count: 400 words*

All festivals must promote community cohesion/social inclusion e.g. equality and target poverty and social exclusion. Outline how the festival will enable communities to celebrate and encourage cultural expression whilst enhancing community relations and provide equality of opportunity and /or good relations. Please see page 6 of this guidance criteria for the aims and objectives of the funding. Tell us about the positive social impact the festival will have within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships. Additionally, please tell us about at least one of the aims and objectives listed a - e on page 6 above.

Weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5d only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix on page 7.

**2.2 Please provide a description of the community festival and its theme. Please also include the proposed festival programme. *(****scored 0-5)**Max word count 300 words*

What will an attendee see/experience? What is the festival’s theme running throughout the duration of the festival e.g. proposed activities, a specific commemoration, music, maritime, art etc. Can attendees get involved in the festival in terms of learning new skills or engaging in arts and crafts or a leisure activity?

Confirmation of the programme will be required 4 weeks before the festival.

**2.3 Outline the measures you will take regarding the safety and welfare of the festival attendees**. *(scored 0-5)**Max word count 300 words*

Please include the facilities at the location, the provision of toilets, seating and standing areas, a selection of food providers, ease and location of car parking and anything else you do at the festival to support the safety and welfare of all. How have you ensured all Section 75 groups are able to attend the festival? If you have any policies in place to ensure the festival is accessible and inclusive to all, please indicate these in this answer. All festivals must submit their Risk Assessment 4 weeks prior to the festival. Please see the Event Toolkit in the link below for more information and templates for risk assessments *-* [*Event Management Toolkit - Ards and North Down Borough Council*](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%2Fbusiness%2Fevent-management-toolkit&data=05%7C02%7CNicola.McClurg%40ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%7Cf27e32dcb82947d6d3a708dd316c8985%7C39416dee5c8e4f5cb59d05c4bd0dd472%7C0%7C0%7C638721064413164951%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Mqn0Zqoyhb%2FwvAbNA7EnymmG6aw3DoS%2F8t%2BzMv3HbaU%3D&reserved=0)

**2.4** **Please confirm by ticking in the box provided on page 5 if you have considered taking sustainability measures during the festival.** *(this question is not scored)*

Council encourages applicants to consider sustainability measures for funded community festivals, for example: consider waste, recycling, use of bio-degradable products, avoidance of hazardous substances and travel to and from the festival**.**

**FINANCE**

**The Funding available through this application is :**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Festival**  | **Support available** |
| Local | Up to £1,000 |
| Neighbourhood | From £1,001 - £4,000 |

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive -

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eligible Costs** | **Ineligible Costs** |
| Festival Costs (including entertainment/performer costs, equipment hire, venue hire/ security / Health and Safety/First Aid/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995 | Bank Fees/Bank Charges/ Interest Charges/ Bank Commission / Tax and VAT Payments /Accountancy Fees /Corporation Tax  |
| Marketing– Advertising / PR Activities / Advertising Promotional Material/ Media Monitoring / Promoter fee / Market Research/Festival Evaluation/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995 | Staff salaries / freelance fees / consultancy fees |
| Judges’ Fees/Accommodation/Travel | Hospitality – The cost of alcohol cannot be claimed in any context/circumstance. |
| Road closures (including licence, stewarding/traffic management costs) | Capital Repayments /Capital Expenditure e.g. equipment such as cameras or computers etc |
| Prize Awards and Trophies (Not cash prizes) | Hospitality (such as sponsors dinners etc) Alcohol cannot be claimed in any context. |
| Administration Costs (excluding wages) | Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty Cash |
| Festival Insurance | Legal Fees |
| Participants and volunteers catering (No alcohol) | Membership Fees |
|  | Charitable Donations |
|  | Liquor Licences |
|  | Prize Fund - Cash |
|  | Festival Management Fees  |
|  | Rates/ Fuel /Electricity/Rent / Phone Bills |

The Festival should demonstrate were possible the ability to obtain financial support from other sources. This leverage of other funding will support the long-term sustainability of the festival as Ards and North Down Borough Council is not a core funder of festivals.

Firstly please tell us the total cost of the Community Festival in the box provided on page 5 of the application.

Then move onto complete Table 2.5a which is the costs and grant amount being requested from ANDBC, Table 2.5b is the contribution in kind and Table 2.5c is other funding or income. Question 2.5d is about value money and is weighted by 2.

**2.5a** Festival expenditure - Please complete the table to show the Grant amount being requested from the Community Festival Fund. In this section only, groups can add more rows if required. *(the table for 2.5 needs to be completed but is not scored)*

This table is for the Itemised Festival Expenditure e.g. Marketing and advertising costs, performers fees, road closure fees etc. The total should be the amount you are applying for from the CFF grant and please be as accurate as possible.

**2.5b** Contribution in kind *- (table 2.5b needs to be completed but is not scored)*

In-kind support is a non-cash contribution of a good or service, provided instead of cash, that is necessary to deliver the festival. The in-kind support shows value for money.

In-kind contributions can include:

* Volunteer time: You can calculate this by using the minimum wage and
multiplying by the number of hours worked.
* Donated equipment/goods: How much the equipment or goods would cost to purchase or hire
* Services donated from other companies or organisations: How much this service would cost if you were to pay for it
* Use of premises or office space for the festival

You will need to calculate the value of the volunteer time as this is benefit in kind and it shows value for money. You will need to enter the benefit in kind amounts in to table 2.5b on page 6 of the application. To calculate volunteer time it is the amount of volunteer hours multiplied by the minimum wage rate per hour – 4 volunteers doing 6 hours each would be 24 volunteer hours so the calculation is 24 hours x £11.44 = £274.56

**2.5c** Funding income from other sources*(table 2.5b needs to be completed but is not scored)*

Please detail other income for the festival -

* Where is the Income coming from - Please indicate where you intend to secure the income from e.g. your own funds, sponsorship, other grants (N.B. other Council funding cannot be used in conjunction with this application) income from ticket sales. Please do not include benefit in kind in this table, it can be entered into Table 2.5a.
* Offered/Awaiting Confirmation – for each source of income please advise if the funding is secured, awarded or if you are awaiting confirmation and if so when do you to expect confirmation.

**2.5d** **Please explain how value for money will be achieved and what volunteering opportunities will be available.***Max word count 300 words (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2)*

Value for money means getting the best possible benefits or results for the amount of money you spend on the festival. It is about making sure that what you buy or hire is worth the cost while considering both the quality and effectiveness of the product or service. Tell us about the different ways you try to achieve value for money e.g. volunteer roles, sponsorship, donations etc. You can refer to tables 2.5a, 2.5b and 2.5c in your answer.

Weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5d only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix on page 7.

**Marketing**

Please tell us how you intend to market/publicise the festival. Please consider how your marketing materials can be made accessible for everyone.

**Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities must be acknowledged on all printed and online material.**

**2.6 How and where are you planning to publicise/advertise the festival? How will Council/DFC funding be acknowledged?** *Max word count 250 words(scored 0-5)*

Please tell us about any advertising you plan to do to publicise the community festival and to encourage people to attend e.g. flyers, posters in shops, churches, schools etc, social media, emails and so on. Also tell us how you will acknowledge the funders logos.

**SECTION 3**

**Government Funding Database, Section 75, Freedom of Information and Data Protection**

**Government Funding Database (GFD)**

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive’s Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of the Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations.  All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same voluntary/community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

The documents that are required for the GFD are the **Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement** and we can upload these to the GFD for you. We also require the following documents even though they are not uploaded to the GFD - Most recent AGM Minutes, Most recent Bank Statement, Child Protection Policy and the insurance document that relate to the festival. If you have submitted the documents within the last 6 months then we will have previously checked and uploaded these to the GFD. If these are still the most up to date versions then you do not need to submit these again.

If you need any help with uploading your documents to GFD please contact us on communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Please tick the boxes on page 8 of the application to indicate which of the documents are already on GFD and which ones are attached with the application. Failure to provide all of the requested documents before the closing date and time will result in the application not being scored.

**Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations, Freedom of Information, Data Protection and the Funding Declaration are also included in section 3**. Applicants are required to tick the statement boxes on page 10 of the application form to confirm that these have been read. The application declaration on page 10 of the application also needs to be completed and signed by 2 committee members

**What happens next**

**Evaluation**

Following the closing date, applications will be assessed and scored according to the weighted criteria below.

The application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least 3 officers of which one should be from the service delivering the grant. At least 2 other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.

**Oversubscription to the Fund**

Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage. PLEASE NOTE: GRANT AWARDS UP TO £1,000 WILL NOT BE REDUCED.

**DEADLINE**

The Community Festivals Fund will close at on **15th April 2025 at 12noon.** Incomplete applications or those received after this time unfortunately will not be considered. Please ensure that you have completed and are submitting the 2025/26 version of the application, incorrect versions unfortunately cannot be accepted.

**Return to:**

Email (preferable) communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Hand delivery or post to:

ANDBC Community Development

Community Festival Fund Applications 25-26

Signal Centre

2 Innotec Drive

Balloo Road

Bangor

BT19 7PD

Completed applications can be posted or hand delivered. If you are emailing your application and documents we advise you to password protect emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and if requested we can forward you instructions on how to do this. Council also now use Zivver for safe transfer of information and we can assist applicants with doing this

**GRANT TIMELINE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scheme advertised  | From 21st March 2025  |
| Scheme open  | 25th March 2025  |
| Scheme close | 15th April 2025 |
| Date of Assessment   | April 2025 TBC  |
| Award and regret letters issued  | April 2025 TBC  |
| Letter of acceptance received   | 4 weeks from the date of letter of offer  |
| Completion of grant period  | 31st March 2026 |
| Final Claim to be submitted   | 31st March 2026 |
| Monitoring & Evaluation to be Submitted   | 6 weeks after your festival has taken place  |

If the application is **unsuccessful**, you will be notified via email with the reasons clearly stated.  You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure. Feedback on the application can be provided on written request. However, an appeal can only be made where an applicant can evidence that the process of assessment was not followed in accordance with the criteria detailed in the Guidance Notes.

The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications.  Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.

If the Application is **successful**, we will:

* send you a Letter of offer (LoO) confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within 4 weeks of the date printed on the LoO.
* Along with the LoO you will receive a claim form and a copy of the evaluation documents (this is in line with the level of the grant) to be completed after the festival has taken place.
* You must provide appropriate insurance and risk assessments **4** **weeks** before the start of the festival, or as soon as possible after receiving confirmation of a grant (Council officers can provide a template for the risk assessment if required).

You should expect a visit from a Council officer during the festival who will observe/check that you are compliant with any conditions within the LoO.

When the festival is complete, we will provide templates for monitoring. These include:

* Attendee numbers
* Lessons learned
* Marketing
* Budget
* Section 75 monitoring arrangements

**Annex A**

**Additional information**

**SAFEGUARDING**

Individuals and organisations working with children, young people and/or adults who may be vulnerable must have an existing policy that ensures good practice guidelines are followed.

You can adopt the Council’s Safeguarding policy if the organisation does not have a policy in place by signing and returning the **Confirmation of Safeguarding arrangements** form at Appendix 1 of the Council’s Safeguarding Policy.

This is available to download at: [www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-Council/safeguarding](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-council/safeguarding).

The signed form should be returned along with the acceptance of the LoO.

**Disability access and inclusion**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) aims to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably than people who are not disabled. It covers access to goods, services, facilities, education and transport. This means that you have a duty to anticipate that disabled people will want to use the services and you should make changes accordingly to increase accessibility.

The DDA also requires employers not to discriminate against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments for applications and in the workplace.

We expect all applicants to be familiar with the DDA and have made reasonable adjustments that aim to provide equality of access, dignity and choice.

**Section 75 CATEGORIES**

Section 75 categories are:

Religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependents

**TOOLKIT**

Ards and North Down Borough Council have developed a Toolkit to assist in organising a safe and successful festival. The toolkit and other relevant templates can be accessed at

[Event Management Toolkit](https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/business/event-management-toolkit)

**Contacts**

Email communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to: **Community Festival Fund Applications 25/26, Community Development , Signal** **Centre, 2 Innotec Drive, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PD**