Great British ENERGY

GBE Community Fund Guidance

Contents

What is the Great British Energy Community Fund?

The Great British Energy Community Fund (GBECF) supports communities to develop and own clean energy projects.

It provides grant funding to help communities to test whether a project idea is viable, develop it into a strong, investment-ready proposal, and secure funding to build the project.

The Fund supports projects that will create community benefits[1], and help local people play an active role in the clean energy transition. GBECF supports projects across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

How The Fund Works – The Three Stages

GBECF is split into three stages:

- **Stage 1 – Feasibility**
  To fund the initial feasibility assessment of a project.
- **Stage 2 – Development**
  To fund the development of projects up to Final Investment Decision.
- **Stage 3 – Capital**
  To partially fund construction of ready-to-build projects.

Each funding stage is assessed independently and has its own eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and funding limits. Applicants are not required to have received funding from a previous stage to apply. To be successful, applicants must demonstrate that they meet all the requirements for the funding stage they are applying to. Projects may apply for the stage that matches their readiness. Funding at one stage does not guarantee funding at any later stage.

Who Can Apply?

Eligible applicants must be based in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, [2] be a legally incorporated community organisation of a type set out below and have a bank account with two signatories on the account.

Eligible community organisation types:

- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Community Benefit Society (CBS or Bencom)

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[1] Community benefits refers to the measurable social, economic and environmental value generated by a project for the local community, beyond the direct delivery of the energy asset itself. It ensures that communities not only host projects, but actively share in the outcomes, including influence over decisions, access to benefits, and a lasting stake in the value created.

[2] The Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) offers developmental and financial support for projects located in Scotland.

- Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Co-operative Society
- Development Trust
- Pre-Commencement Society
- Incorporated Registered Charity
- Registered Social Landlord (see paragraph below about Local Authorities)
- Registered Society
- Town or Parish Council

In addition to being an eligible community organisation type, applicants should provide their most recent statutory annual accounts, ideally covering up to three years of financial performance. Where an organisation does not have statutory annual accounts available (for example, because it is recently incorporated), it will remain eligible to apply. In these circumstances, applicants must provide alternative evidence sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's financial position and ability to manage public funding.

As a minimum, applicants must provide:

- either their most recent statutory annual accounts (where available) or alternative financial information, such as management accounts, draft financial statements, or a statement of assets, liabilities and income; and
- information demonstrating the organisation's capability to manage grant funding and project expenditure.

Applicants may also be asked to provide supporting evidence where relevant, including:

- evidence of relevant financial or project management experience within the organisation;
- details of financial governance arrangements, including board or trustee oversight, financial controls and authorised signatories;
- details of delivery partners, parent organisations, accountable bodies or other arrangements providing financial oversight; and
- forecast budgets, cash flow projections or other financial planning information.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have appropriate financial management arrangements in place and can manage grant funding responsibly. Where GBE is not satisfied that these arrangements are adequate, the application may be rejected or funding may be made conditional on further assurances being provided.

Assessment will consider the funding amount requested, the nature and complexity of the proposed activity and the financial risks involved. GBE will review the financial information and supporting evidence provided in the application form to satisfy itself that the organisation has the financial capacity and controls necessary to manage the grant appropriately.

Application Windows & Timeline

- The application window will open on Thursday 17th September 2026 and close on 12th November 2026 at 11:55pm.
- All grant funding must be defrayed and claimed by 31st March 2028, unless you are a Stage 1 project that has requested payment in advance.
- There will be a single window with the possibility of further windows if funding remains available.

Requirements for Community Ownership and Benefits

GBECF supports projects that give communities a defined stake in clean energy projects and ensure that local people share in the decisions and benefits arising from those projects.

For the purposes of GBECF, a project must demonstrate both of the following:

- **Ownership**: the community will hold a defined legal and financial interest in the project.
- **Benefit**: a defined share of project benefits will be retained for, or delivered to, the local community.

Ownership

Applicants must demonstrate that the community organisation will hold a defined legal and financial interest in the project.

The community organisation must hold at least a 50% legal and financial ownership interest in the project company or project asset when the project is operational. In the case of a project company, the legal ownership interest requirement means holding at least 50% of the issued share capital and voting rights in the company that will own the project assets. In all cases, the 50% financial interest requirement means being entitled to receive at least 50% of the financial returns generated for the project's owners.[3]

Benefit

[3] For 'split ownership' models, where a community organisation's ownership interest is in one or more parts of a wider project, these legal and financial ownership requirements apply only to those parts and not to the wider project as a whole.

Applicants must demonstrate that a defined share of project benefits will be retained for, or delivered to, the local community.

Benefits may include:

- payments into a community benefit fund;
- community shareholders receiving annual returns on share investments;
- reinvestment of project income into local community activity;
- reduced energy costs for community facilities or local beneficiaries;
- funding for local services, energy advice, skills, training or other community priorities; or
- other social, economic or environmental benefits delivered locally.

Applicants must explain:

- what benefits will be delivered;
- who will receive or manage those benefits;
- how the level of benefit will be calculated;
- when benefits are expected to arise; and
- how the benefits will continue, where relevant, over the operational life of the project.

Benefits must be linked to the project and must be capable of being evidenced. General statements that the project will benefit the community will not be sufficient.

Project Location

Applicants must have an existing relationship with the community that will host the project and receive its benefits. Applicants must demonstrate:

- evidence of support from the local community, including how local people, organisations or stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the project; and
- a clear mechanism through which project benefits will flow to that community, including who will benefit, the nature of those benefits, and how they will be delivered, retained or distributed locally.

Applicants must provide sufficient evidence to support these requirements. General statements that a project has community support or will deliver community benefits, without supporting evidence, will not be sufficient. The application form includes questions on community engagement, community involvement and community benefits that will be used to assess these requirements.

Joint Applications

Joint applications are welcome, but you must specify a lead partner, and all partners must be an eligible organisation listed in this guidance. GBE will only enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with, and make grant payments to, the lead partner. The lead partner will be the organisation accountable to GBE for the delivery of the project, management of the grant funding, and compliance with the Grant Funding Agreement. Any liabilities, or other obligations arising under the Grant Funding Agreement will rest with the lead partner.

Applications From Local Authorities

Other than Town and Parish Councils, Local Authorities are not eligible to apply for funding from the GBECF. However, for Councils located in England, they may wish to consider applying for the GBE Local Partnerships Grant, which is being piloted from September 2026.

Applications From Schools

Applications cannot be accepted directly from schools. However, a community group can apply for funding to progress project infrastructure on school sites that provides wider community benefit. For example, the community surrounding a school may form a community group to progress a project on their school site, or an existing community group could do this.

Where a project is proposed on a school site, the applicant must provide evidence of the school's and relevant landowner's support and explain the proposed arrangements for site access, ownership of the funded asset, operation and maintenance, use of generated energy, and distribution of community benefits. Funding will not be provided where the benefits are confined principally to the school and the wider community benefit requirement is not met.

Applicants Undertaking Their Own Feasibility Work

Applicants may undertake feasibility work using their own staff and include these costs within their application. Where applicants propose to deliver feasibility work in house, they must be able to demonstrate that the individuals undertaking the work have the skills, experience and competence required. GBE may request evidence to support this.

Any day rates charged for in-house feasibility work must be reasonable, represent value for money, and be comparable to or lower than prevailing market rates for equivalent professional services. The scope and quality of work provided should also be comparable to that which could reasonably be obtained from an external consultant. Applicants must clearly disclose any proposed in-house feasibility work and associated costs within their application.

Applicants Who Have Already Received Stage 1 and Stage 2 Funding

This section applies to projects that have previously received funding under GBECF or previous community energy fund schemes delivered by DESNZ, where the proposed application relates to the same or substantially similar project.

An applicant may apply for further funding in relation to a project that has previously received funding from GBECF or a previous community energy scheme delivered by DESNZ. GBECF will not provide funding to repeat, duplicate or replace activities that have been previously funded. Applications for further funding will be assessed on their merits, including whether the proposed activities are distinct from, and additional to, activities supported through previous grant awards, represent value for money, and justify further public funding.

Additional Stage 1 or Stage 2 applications in respect of a project which has already received Stage 1 or Stage 2 funding will be considered if it is clear that the remit of the project has significantly changed; for example, adding a new technology, increasing capacity, extending the project to additional assets or buildings, or undertaking further development work that was not included within the original funded project. Additional applications will not be supported where there is no material change in scope, circumstances or delivery requirements.

Additional applications should not be made to remedy poor quality work funded through a previous grant award. For example, applicants cannot seek further Stage 1 funding solely to repeat or improve a feasibility study that was not completed to an acceptable standard. However, funding may be sought to update or refresh an existing feasibility study where that study was completed to a satisfactory standard but requires updating before the project can progress.

Multiple Sites

Applicants may apply for funding for multiple sites as part of a single portfolio application. Where funding is sought for multiple sites, applicants must explain why the sites are being progressed together rather than as separate applications. This should include:

- how the sites contribute to a common set of objectives;
- how governance, delivery and risk management arrangements will operate across the sites;
- how funding and resources will be allocated across the sites; and
- why the portfolio approach represents better value for money than progressing the sites separately.

Each site included within an application must independently satisfy the eligibility requirements of the scheme. Applicants must not rely on stronger sites within a portfolio to demonstrate eligibility, deliverability, value for money, or strategic fit for weaker sites.

GBE may assess individual sites separately and reserves the right to refuse funding for an application if any site does not meet the requirements of the scheme, even where other sites included within the same application are fundable.

GBE may treat connected applications as a single application where GBE concludes that projects or elements of a project could reasonably have been structured in a different way.

What Types of Projects Can Be Supported?

GBECF supports clean energy projects under community ownership. Eligible technology types at each stage of funding are listed below:

Type A - Stages 1 and 2 only - Clean Energy Assets

- Anaerobic digestion (electricity generation)
- Biogas heat network
- Biomass heat network
- Heat pumps (*when combined with another eligible technology in this list)*
- Heat pump-fed heat networks *(e.g. heat zoning for a village, when combined with another eligible technology in this list)*
- Hydropower
- Ground mounted solar
- Rooftop solar
- Solar thermal
- Wind power
- Battery storage (*when combined with another eligible technology in this list)*

Stage 3 only – Clean Energy Generation Assets

- Anaerobic digestion (electricity generation)
- Hydropower
- Ground mounted solar
- Rooftop solar
- Wind power
- Battery storage (when combined with another eligible technology in this list)

Type B - Clean Energy Advice and Efficiency Projects (Stage 1 only)

- Community energy advice services
- Bulk buy retrofit for energy efficiency measures or clean energy technologies (for example insulation, heat pumps or solar panels)
- Energy efficiency programmes for multiple households

Energy advice and efficiency projects are supported at early stages only and are not eligible for Stage 2 or Stage 3 funding. Funding cannot be used for the ongoing delivery of advice services, routine operational costs, or the direct installation of energy efficiency measures. Where proposals are primarily focused on large scale retrofit delivery or household upgrades, applicants should look at alternative funding routes, such as Warm Homes Plan funding.

Applicants for Type B funding must identify the need or service gap that the proposed model is intended to address. This should include relevant existing provision, why that provision does not adequately meet the identified need, and how the proposed activity is additional rather than duplicative. GBECF will not fund development of a substantially duplicative service where an existing provider can meet the identified need to an appropriate standard and has sufficient capacity to do so.

Stage 1 – Feasibility

What Is Stage 1 For?

Stage 1 helps communities test whether a project idea is viable before spending significant time or money.

What You Need Before Applying

Before applying to Stage 1, you must:

- be an eligible applicant (an eligible community organisation with a verified bank account and two signatories on the account);
- have a clear project idea and technology; and
- have identified either a prospective site, or a credible shortlist of sites.

How Much Funding Is Available?

- At Stage 1, up to £40,000 is available per project, to fund the feasibility stages of projects.
- Stage 1 projects facing cashflow challenges can request that up to 25% of the grant award be paid upon evidence that costs have been incurred, but not yet defrayed.
- Your costs claimed from GBE should be exclusive of VAT, unless it is irrecoverable. VAT can make a big difference to costings, so be sure you understand whether your suppliers are charging you VAT or not in their quotes, and whether or not you can recover this VAT.

Stage 1 - Eligible Expenditure

Cost Category	Eligible Expenditure	Conditions (in addition to costs being reasonable and proportionate)
Technical, legal and feasibility services	Technical feasibility studies, site assessments, site identification and option appraisal, high-level engineering advice, grid feasibility studies, planning and environmental advice, legal advice, outline financial modelling, business case development and procurement advice.	Costs must be directly linked to assessing project viability or developing the project towards a later stage.
Land, planning and consenting activity	Landowner discussions, preparation of Heads of Terms, early land access advice, early planning and consenting scoping, pre-application planning advice, environmental constraints checks and related professional advice.	Costs must relate to an identified site or shortlist of sites and be necessary to determine whether the project can proceed. Funding should not be used for speculative activity across a large number of unprioritised sites.
Community engagement	Events, workshops, surveys, consultation activity, communications materials and engagement with local communities, stakeholders, landowners or potential beneficiaries.	Activity must directly support project development, feasibility, local support, community ownership or community benefit arrangements.
Governance, ownership and project structure	Development of governance arrangements, ownership models, community benefit arrangements, shared ownership options, draft Heads of Terms, constitutional advice, preparation for community share offers and other documentation needed to develop the project structure.	Costs must be directly linked to developing the project and its community ownership, control or benefit arrangements. They must not relate to general organisational development unrelated to the project.
Financial and commercial development	Outline business planning, financial modelling, route-to-market advice, revenue assumptions, match funding planning, investor or lender engagement, and assessment of project income and costs.	Costs must be necessary to assess project viability, affordability, value for money or readiness for further development.

Project management support	Project management time, coordination of advisers, management of feasibility activity, development of project plans, risk registers, budgets and delivery documentation. This includes staffing costs incurred by the applicant organisation. Project management costs are limited to 20% of a total claim.	Costs must be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the Stage 1 activity and directly linked to delivery of the funded project.
Overheads	A reasonable and proportionate level of overhead costs may be included where directly attributable to project delivery.	

Stage 2 – Development

What Is Stage 2 For?

Stage 2 supports projects that are technically feasible and ready to be developed up to FiD (final investment decision). To apply for Stage 2, you must be an eligible applicant and have completed an initial feasibility study before applying for Stage 2 funding, and evidence of this will be requested.

To Apply For Stage 2, You Must Have:

- A completed feasibility study demonstrating that the project is suitable for further development;[4]
- Evidence of community engagement and a basis for community support;
- A clear proposal for how the project will be owned, governed and delivered; and
- Identified the key development activities required before the project reaches investment readiness, such as planning, land agreements, grid connection, technical design or financial development.

How Much Funding Is Available?

- At Stage 2, up to £100,000 is available per project, to fund development activities up to FiD.
- All Stage 2 grant funding must be defrayed and claimed by 31st March 2028.

[4] This does not need to have been funded through GBECF Stage 1. The feasibility evidence should be sufficiently current and detailed to demonstrate that the proposed technology and site are capable of further development. It should ordinarily address technical feasibility, indicative costs and revenues, site or land considerations, grid requirements where relevant, planning and environmental constraints, principal risks, ownership options and the proposed route to delivery. GBE may request an updated assessment where the evidence is materially out of date or relevant circumstances have changed.

- Your costs claimed from GBE should be exclusive of VAT, unless it is irrecoverable. VAT can make a big difference to costings, so be sure you understand whether your suppliers are charging you VAT or not in their quotes, and whether or not you can recover this VAT.

Stage 2 - Eligible Expenditure

Cost Category	Eligible Expenditure	Conditions (in addition to costs being reasonable and proportionate)
Technical design and engineering	Detailed technical design, engineering assessments, system design, technical studies, environmental surveys, site investigations and other technical work required to advance project development.	Costs must be directly linked to developing the proposed project towards investment readiness or delivery.
Planning, permitting and consenting	Planning applications, supporting surveys, environmental assessments, ecological studies, transport assessments, planning consultancy and other consenting activity.	Costs must be directly related to securing the consents required for project delivery.
Grid connection development	Grid connection applications, detailed connection studies, network modelling, technical advice, negotiations with network operators and associated professional support.	Costs must relate directly to progressing or securing a grid connection for the project.
Land and property arrangements	Option agreements, leases, easements, advanced land agreements, legal support, valuation advice and associated professional costs beyond initial heads of terms.	Costs must be required to secure the rights necessary to deliver the project. Land acquisition costs are not eligible.
Governance, ownership and legal structures	Governance development, legal advice, ownership structures, community benefit arrangements, shareholder agreements, constitutional advice, shared ownership arrangements and associated legal documentation.	Costs must directly support the development of the project's ownership, control and benefit arrangements.
Financial, commercial and investment development	Detailed financial modelling, business case development, due diligence, route-to-market advice, investment readiness activity, lender engagement, and	Costs must be directly linked to securing project funding, demonstrating viability or preparing the project for investment and delivery.

	preparation of community share offers or other investment mechanisms.	
Community engagement	Community consultation, stakeholder engagement, public events, communications materials and development of community benefit arrangements.	Activity must directly support project development, community ownership, project delivery or community benefit arrangements.
Project management and delivery support	Project management, programme management, coordination of advisers, management of development work, risk management, project reporting, and staff time incurred by the applicant organisation involved in eligible Stage 2 activities.	Costs must be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the project, directly attributable to Stage 2 delivery, based on actual salary costs (including reasonable on-costs where applicable), and must not include any element of profit.
Overheads	A reasonable and proportionate level of overhead costs directly attributable to Stage 2 project delivery.	

Stage 3 – Capital Funding

What Is Stage 3 For?

Stage 3 provides capital funding for a more limited number of projects that are fully developed and ready-to-build.

To apply for Stage 3, you must be an eligible organisation and your project must have:

- completed development work, including technical feasibility and a complete financial case and business model;
- planning permission in place, or will be in place prior to any grant funding agreement being offered;
- a secured grid connection;
- land access agreements signed;
- a clear construction and delivery plan; and
- confirmation of where third-party funding will be coming from.

Applicants must provide a sufficiently detailed financial model to enable GBE to assess the project's financial viability, funding requirement and residual financing gap. The financial model should, where relevant, include capital costs, operating and maintenance costs, replacement costs, generation assumptions, revenue assumptions, financing assumptions, debt, equity, community investment, taxation, VAT, reserves and proposed returns. The model clearly demonstrate the project's financing gap and key sensitivities.

How Much Funding Is Available?

- Up to £3 million per project (no more than 50% of total project capital costs).
- All Stage 3 grant funding must be defrayed and claimed by 31st March 2028.
- Your costs claimed from GBE should be exclusive of VAT, unless it is irrecoverable. VAT can make a big difference to costings, so be sure you understand whether your suppliers are charging you VAT or not in their quotes, and whether or not you can recover this VAT.

The available funding is the maximum that can be awarded per project, and we anticipate most awards to be lower than this. Projects must bring in other funding (such as community shares, loans, or partner investment), and this must be evidenced as part of your application.

Stage 3 applications must be connected at distribution level, and may be subject to additional due diligence checks. This may include discussions with members of the GBE Local team and/or CGL team to better understand the proposed project, confirm information provided in the application, and complete standard grant assurance and due diligence processes. These discussions will not form part of the assessment or scoring process. They are intended to provide assurance that any proposed award can be made appropriately and in accordance with GBE’s governance and funding requirements.

Stage 3 - Eligible Expenditure

Cost Category	Eligible Expenditure	Conditions (in addition to costs being reasonable and proportionate)
Capital equipment, construction and installation	Purchase, construction, installation and commissioning of renewable energy generation assets, storage assets, and other eligible community energy infrastructure. This may include equipment, materials, contractor costs, civil works, electrical works and installation costs.	Costs must be directly related to delivering the approved project and creating operational project assets and represent value for money.

Associated infrastructure	Infrastructure required to construct, connect and operate the project, such as grid connection works, cabling, substations, mounting structures, foundations, metering, monitoring equipment, control systems and other supporting infrastructure.	Costs must be necessary for the delivery and operation of the approved project and represent value for money.

Stage 3 funding cannot be used for:

- ongoing operational costs;
- costs already incurred before the grant is awarded; or
- development costs, feasibility studies, business case development, project management, staff costs, legal services, financial advice, community engagement activities or general organisational overheads.

Additional Information

Commitments Made Before Award Is Given

Costs incurred, for any stage of funding, before the eligible expenditure date will not be funded. Applicants must also disclose any contract, purchase order or other commitment entered into before grant award.

Where an applicant has committed unconditionally to incur a cost regardless of the outcome of its GBECF application, this will normally indicate that the grant is not causing that expenditure and the cost will not be eligible.

Reasonable preliminary work undertaken to prepare an application does not necessarily demonstrate that the whole project would proceed without support, but application preparation costs will not be reimbursed.

Subsidy Awards

Applicants must declare all public funding received, applied for, or expected to be received in relation to the project. The same eligible costs must not be funded more than once from public sources. GBECF is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, other sources of support. Information provided will be considered as part of funding-gap, duplication, cumulation and subsidy-control assessments. Applicants must demonstrate that the combination of public funding sources does not result in overcompensation or otherwise breach applicable subsidy control requirements.

All awards of funding will be subject to the UK's subsidy control regime which is primarily set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022, but other regimes including, in some limited circumstances, European Union State aid rules and the UK's wider international obligations, may give rise to additional requirements. GBE will reject any application where it considers that a grant cannot be issued in compliance with relevant subsidy control rules.

In line with statutory requirements, any subsidy award exceeding £100,000 must be published on the Subsidy Transparency Database within three months of the signing of the grant agreement.

Windsor Framework

Applications with a relevant connection to Northern Ireland will be screened to allow GBE to determine the applicable subsidy control regime. Applicants will be required to provide factual information about the applicant, project, economic activity, trading arrangements, production and sale of goods or electricity and relevant markets.

Applicants should consider the activities of their business in its entirety when answering. Applicants will also be required to confirm relevant information about previous public funding and provide supporting information as part of the application process.

Where Article 10 of the Windsor Framework does not apply and the Subsidy Control Act 2022 applies, an award may be made under GBECF where all scheme requirements are satisfied.

Where Article 10 applies, an award will only be made where GBE has identified and verified an applicable State aid legal basis before the aid is granted. Availability of a legal route cannot be guaranteed and will depend on the beneficiary, funded activity, eligible costs, amount, technology and other aid received. Depending on the circumstances, legal routes may include de minimis aid or an applicable provision of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER). GBER is the European Union's State aid regulation which permits certain subsidies to be granted without prior notification to the European Commission, provided the subsidy satisfies certain conditions. For further information on GBER, including those conditions, please see here.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 grants that engage the Windsor Framework will be made on a State Aid de minimis basis, meaning the applicant will need sufficient de minimis headroom to receive the subsidy. For Stage 3 funding, GBE funding can cover only part of the total eligible project costs. Applicants must provide evidence of how the remaining costs will be funded, for example through community share offers, commercial lending, partner investment, organisational reserves, or other non GBE funding sources. Where applicants propose to use funding from a public body, they must clearly identify the source and demonstrate that it is compatible with applicable subsidy control requirements.

Subsidies of Particular Interest

GBECF will not be used to award subsidies which constitute 'Subsidies of Particular Interest' under the UK subsidy control regime. Before award, GBE will consider the proposed grant together with any related subsidies in accordance with the legislation and statutory guidance in force at the relevant time.

Applicants must provide information about relevant subsidies received by the enterprise and any enterprises under common control. Where the proposed award would cause the applicable Subsidy of Particular Interest threshold to be met, the award will not be made under GBECF.

Connected Parties and Indirect Beneficiaries

Applicants must identify all organisations that may receive a direct or indirect economic benefit from the grant funded project. This may include the grant recipient, asset owner, project company, commercial developer, investor, landowner, connected supplier or contractor, and any party receiving project rights, intellectual property or services on favourable terms.

Applicants must disclose:

- ownership and control arrangements;
- the flow of grant and other project funding;
- contractual payments;
- rights to project income and assets;
- financing returns;
- connected party relationships; and
- any non-cash economic advantage.

A supplier paid a reasonable market price will not normally be treated as receiving the subsidy because it supplies the project. However, GBE will consider whether a commercial or connected party receives a material advantage on terms that are more favourable than market terms and decide not to provide a grant on this basis.

Additionality and Need for Funding

An application will only be eligible for funding where the applicant demonstrates that the grant will bring about a material change that would not occur without GBECF support. Applicants must explain what would most likely happen without the grant, including whether the proposed activity or project would proceed at the same time, scale, scope and ownership structure.

An application will not qualify because grant funding would make the activity cheaper, preserve the applicant's preferred level of reserves, increase project surplus or replace finance that is reasonably available on acceptable terms.

GBECF supports new and incremental activity that is directly attributable to the approved project. Funding will not be provided for ordinary operations, business-as-usual activity, routine organisational functions or general organisational costs that would be incurred irrespective of the project. Staff costs, internal project-management costs and overheads are eligible only where permitted for the relevant funding stage, directly attributable to the funded activity, necessary to deliver the approved outputs and supported by appropriate evidence.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 funding may cover up to 100% of eligible project costs, subject to the applicable funding cap. This is a maximum intervention rate and not an entitlement to full funding. In determining the appropriate level of funding, GBE will consider resources reasonably available to the applicant to support the proposed activity.

How The Stage 3 Grant Amount Will Be Determined

To determine the Stage 3 grant amount, GBE will consider:

- verified eligible capital costs;
- resources reasonably available from the applicant;
- community shares or other community investment that can reasonably be raised;
- commercial debt that the project can reasonably support;
- equity, developer or partner finance reasonably available;
- other public funding;
- expected project revenues, costs and reasonable reserves; and
- the effect of alternative financing structures on substantive community ownership and community benefit.

A Stage 3 grant will only be considered where a residual financing gap remains after these sources have been taken into account. The grant will be limited to the minimum amount required to enable the identified change in the investment decision. The presence of match funding does not, by itself, demonstrate that GBECF funding is necessary. Applicants must demonstrate that a residual financing gap remains and that GBECF funding is required to bring about the identified change in the investment decision. A project will not qualify for Stage 3 funding where the evidence demonstrates that the full project costs could reasonably be financed without GBECF support while delivering materially the same project at the same time, scale and level of community ownership and community benefit.

Applicants must disclose any current or previous material commercial interest in the project, site, asset or development opportunity. Applicants must explain the status of that interest, what funding or support has been proposed and why GBECF funding remains necessary. GBE will take this information into account when assessing additionality, the financing gap and whether reasonably available private finance could enable the project to proceed without GBECF support.

The maximum funding limit is a ceiling, not a standard award. Applicants must request only the minimum amount necessary to enable the proposed activity or project to proceed in the manner described in their application. The amount awarded will be the lowest of:

- the amount requested;
- the applicable stage cap;
- the reasonable eligible costs of the approved activity;
- the evidenced residual funding requirement; and
- the minimum amount required to bring about the material change identified in the applicant's additionality case.

GBE may offer a lower amount where the evidence demonstrates that a lower award would be sufficient. GBE will not offer a reduced amount where this would make the approved project undeliverable or prevent the identified outcome from being achieved.

Financial viability

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have appropriate financial management arrangements in place and are financially viable. GBECF is not a rescue or restructuring scheme and funding will not be provided where the proposed award would constitute prohibited rescue or restructuring support.

GBE may request additional information regarding an applicant's financial position, including information relating to insolvency proceedings, financial distress, going-concern issues or restructuring activity, where relevant to the assessment of the application.

GBECF funding must also not be used to fund fines, penalties, remediation costs, environmental liabilities or other legal obligations that the applicant, beneficiary or another responsible party is already required to meet under applicable law.

Responsible Sourcing

As a publicly owned energy company with purpose, we know that delivering on our mission depends not only on what we and our partners achieve, but on how those outcomes are achieved. We see responsible business conduct, including human rights and environmental due diligence, and consideration of social and environmental value, as integral to impact: it influences whether clean energy deployment genuinely supports good jobs, whether supply chains are resilient and ethical, and whether the benefits of the energy transition reach the communities and places that need them most, including respect for human rights throughout our activities and partnerships.

Social value - fair work, skills and communities

Promoting social value is fundamental to GBE. We encourage projects to support high quality jobs and a skilled workforce, including through supporting entry-level placements, employability programmes and other opportunities that are proportionate to the applicant organisation's size and role. This should also take place-based factors into account, and work collaboratively with regional and local skills and education providers and partnerships. We also encourage high quality, safe and fair work, with decent conditions, fair pay and constructive industrial relations, alongside meaningful community engagement that demonstrates how local voices have been heard, reflected in project design and supported through plans for ongoing engagement and community benefit.

Human Rights and Ethical Supply Chains

GBE is committed to ethical supply chains and preventing human rights abuses, including modern slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking. We have ambitions to become a sector leader in ethical supply chains, and are embedding ethical standards across GBE, at the board and operational levels, and through the delivery of the Local Power Plan.

However, the technologies we rely on – such as solar and batteries - are embedded in global systems where perfect traceability and zero-risk sourcing do not exist yet. Small-scale projects face a particular disadvantage: they are exposed to the same modern slavery supply chain risks as larger projects yet are far less able to mitigate them. Smaller buyers typically lack the leverage to influence suppliers and the capacity to carry out resource-intensive due diligence or secure deep supply chain transparency. GBE recognises these challenges and is committed to helping smaller buyers tackle them in a practical and proportionate way.

Environmentally Sustainable Sourcing

GBE encourages projects to take a practical and proportionate approach to environmentally sustainable sourcing and development, including by considering opportunities to reduce energy use and carbon emissions across their operations and supply chains, increase the use of recycled materials where appropriate, and minimise wider environmental impacts.

Responsible Sourcing Conditions and Support Package

GBE will provide a package of awareness-raising and capacity-building support. This will include webinars and written guidance designed to raise awareness of ethical and sustainable supply chains and responsible business practices.

Successful applicants will be expected to engage with this support and consider how the learning could be applied to their project and future activities, in a way that is proportionate to their role, capacity and local context.

GBE has also embedded conditions within the Fund's Terms and Conditions to promote responsible sourcing across projects. These conditions are proportionate and pragmatic, to reflect the particular challenges faced by small-scale projects. In the case of solar projects, for example, applicants will need to demonstrate that their chosen supplier(s) use manufacturers that are members of the Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) or, provide equivalent levels of ESG assurance.

These conditions do not replace existing legal or regulatory obligations. GBE expects all applicants to comply with all relevant laws and with internationally recognised minimum standards for workers' welfare and employment conditions, including those established by the International Labour Organization (ILO), and to operate in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Compliance with these conditions will be a requirement for receiving funding under the Scheme. Where there is evidence of unethical labour practices within an applicant's operations or supply chains, GBE will take appropriate action. Depending on the circumstances, this could include requiring remediation of identified issues, suspending funding, or, where necessary, terminating agreements.

The Fund's application form will also include questions on responsible sourcing. Specifically, applicants will be able to provide a narrative on their responsible sourcing, social value and environmental strategies. For earlier stages of the Fund, applicants may provide proposed or developing strategies. By Stage 3, applicants will be expected to provide a more confirmed position. These questions will not be assessed. Instead, they will help GBE understand applicants' level of maturity and experience in this area and inform the design of capability-building support.

Environmental Considerations

Heat generation and heat network projects must demonstrate that the proposed project is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared with a credible fossil fuel or other relevant counterfactual. Applicants must identify the proposed energy or fuel source, the relevant counterfactual and the evidence or assumptions supporting the claimed reduction.

Battery storage is eligible only where it is combined with another eligible clean energy technology and forms an integral part of that project. Applicants must explain:

- how and when the storage will charge and discharge;
- how it supports the associated clean-energy generation;
- any expected flexibility, network or local energy system benefit; and

- the basis of any claimed environmental benefit.

Installation of storage capacity will not, be treated as evidence of environmental benefit.

Monitoring, Reporting & Learning

Successful applicants will enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with defined deliverables and conditions. GBE Local (via its delivery partner, CGL, which is part of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) will monitor progress primarily by reviewing these deliverables. Examples of deliverables might include a feasibility study report, partnership agreements, evidence of community engagement, etc., depending on stage. Payment of claims must be accompanied by proof of completion of deliverables and evidence of defrayal of project costs. If a project fails to deliver or significantly deviates, GBE reserves the right to withhold further funds, terminate the Grant Funding Agreement and/or claw back funding, as per standard grant conditions.

All grant recipients will be expected to participate in knowledge sharing and evaluation. Shared learning may involve providing a short case study about your project and outcomes or joining peer learning sessions where you share experience with other projects. This helps ensure the benefits of the grant extend beyond individual projects.

Grant recipients must provide regular progress updates, and final project reports aligned to agreed outputs.

Typical deliverables for each stage include:

- Stage 1: feasibility study or equivalent,
- Stage 2: development outputs (e.g. business case, planning progress, legal agreements)
- Stage 3: evidence of delivery and construction progress.

Monitoring will be output-focused, with proportionate reporting requirements. Recipients may also be required to provide follow up data for up to 5 years following the grant funded activity to support evaluation of project delivery outcomes, renewable capacity enabled and community benefits delivered.

GBE’s monitoring will also track key performance indicators, to evaluate the overall impact of the programme, for example:

- number of projects supported,
- renewable energy generation capacity installed,
- value of Community Benefit Funds delivered.

Support Available & Contact Information

There are five Local Net Zero Hubs across England that provide free support and advice to community energy projects.

- North East & Yorkshire,
- North West,
- Midlands,
- South West,
- Greater South East

These Hubs can provide pre-application advice and feedback, support project scoping and development, connect applicants with technical expertise and delivery partners, and facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing.

Applicants based in Wales and Northern Ireland can access additional support from relevant regional and national organisations working in community energy and local decarbonisation. This includes the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) in Wales and Advice NI in Northern Ireland.

These organisations can provide early-stage advice and project development support, help applicants navigate local policy, planning, and funding landscapes and connect projects with local partners and expertise.

Applicants in these regions are encouraged to engage with appropriate support bodies as early as possible to strengthen their proposals and ensure alignment with local delivery contexts.

GBE Local & Central Loans and Grants Team

The GBECF is administered by the Central Grants & Loans (CGL) team, which is part of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Formal queries relating to the application process (deadlines, submission routes, and forms) should be directed to **Localgrants@gbe.gov.uk**

Applicants should refer to the official GBE Local webpage for up-to-date information, FAQs, and guidance.

Funding Conditions & Grant Parameters

All funding is provided as a grant and awarded on a competitive basis. In limited and exceptional circumstances, GBE may agree to make an advance payment of up to 25% of a Stage 1 grant where an applicant can demonstrate that it does not have sufficient cashflow to meet eligible project expenditure pending reimbursement. Requests for advance payment will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by financial evidence satisfactory to GBE, which may include bank statements, cashflow forecasts or other information requested by GBE. The provision and amount of any advance payment will be at GBE's discretion and may be subject to additional conditions.

Any payment made in advance of defrayal will only relate to costs for which there is evidence that eligible work has been completed, and a liability has been incurred, for example through invoices for completed work. Applicants must provide evidence, satisfactory to GBE, that the expenditure has subsequently been defrayed. All expenditure supported through advance payments will be subject to a full verification check at the time of the next claim, and GBE reserves the right to recover funding where satisfactory evidence of defrayal is not provided.

In appropriate cases approved by GBE, grant funding may cover costs incurred by the project company in which the community organisation holds an interest. Where this is the case, GBE will need to be satisfied that any third parties with an interest in the project company (e.g. other shareholders) are making suitable analogous contributions to the project company, to avoid those third parties receiving an undue indirect benefit from GBECF. GBE would assess any proposal that GBECF covers the costs of project companies at the due diligence stage, and GBE may reject such a proposal at its discretion, for example, where in GBE's judgment the type of arrangements detailed above in respect of third parties would be insufficient.

Applicants should ensure they have sufficient cashflow arrangements in place to meet project expenditure before grant funding is claimed. GBE recognises that cashflow can be challenging for some organisations and will discuss payment profiles and milestone arrangements with successful applicants as part of grant award discussions. Any payment arrangements must remain consistent with the requirements governing the proper use of public money.

Applicants should seek competitive quotes (best practice is to obtain three quotes) where feasible or provide clear justification where this is not possible. Applicants are also required to demonstrate that costs are reasonable and proportionate to outputs.

Where fewer than three quotes are obtained, applicants must provide a clear explanation. Acceptable reasons may include:

- there are a limited number of suppliers able to provide the required goods or services;
- the work requires specialist expertise that is only available from a small number of providers;
- an existing supplier must be retained for technical compatibility, continuity or warranty reasons;
- genuine attempts were made to obtain additional quotes, but no further quotations were received; or

- there are exceptional circumstances that make obtaining three quotes impractical or disproportionate.

Self-supply (e.g. community groups delivering work directly) is permitted where:

- capability can be demonstrated;
- costs are aligned with market rates (we reserve the right to request comparable quotes);
- value for money can be evidenced;
- any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest are identified, declared and appropriately managed;
- the arrangement does not provide an undue private benefit to any individual or organisation connected to the project.

Grant recipients will be required to inform GBE about certain material changes to the project and their circumstances. In some situations, this might lead to GBE varying the terms of the grant award, ceasing payments or recovering funding

How to Apply & Key Dates

Application Process

The GBECF will be open for an initial application window, with separate application forms for each stage (Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3). GBE may consider opening subsequent application windows if funding remains available.

Key steps:

Step	Event	Details
1	**Check eligibility & prepare**	Ensure your organisation and project meet the eligibility criteria.
2	**Complete the application form**	Provide information on: organisation and governance; project scope and activities; community benefit; costs and delivery plan; and alignment with assessment criteria.
3	**Submit by the deadline**	Applications must be submitted via the designated portal before the window closes on **12th November 2026, 11:55pm**. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. Applications received within an application window will be assessed together and funding decisions will be made following the close of the window.
4	**Assessment & decision**	Applications will be considered through the following stages: 1. Completeness and eligibility check: Confirmation that the applicant and project meet all mandatory eligibility requirements.

		2. Scored assessment: Assessment against the published stage-specific criteria. 3. Moderation and ranking: Moderation of scores, application of minimum fundable standards, and ranking and allocation in accordance with the allocation methodology. 4. Due diligence: Verification of legal status, financial capacity, project information, subsidy control compliance, ownership arrangements, costs, match funding, and other material information. 5. Grant award: Agreement of the final award, deliverables, payment profile, and Grant Funding Agreement.

How Applications Are Assessed

Applications at all stages are assessed competitively.

Proposals that do not meet essential criteria around eligibility and subsidy control cannot be funded and will not be fully assessed. Due to the competitive nature of the scheme, not all eligible applications will be funded.

Assessors will award a score from 1 to 5 for each scored question in the application form based on the quality of the response, supporting evidence provided, and alignment with the published assessment criteria.

In order to be fundable, an application must receive a moderated score of at least 3 in each assessment area. An application receiving a score of 1 or 2 in any assessment area will not be recommended for funding, irrespective of its overall weighted score.

Important Information Regarding the Process

- The fund will be open for applications during a single application window. If funding remains available at the end of this period, GBE may consider opening subsequent application windows.
- The size of the Fund is discretionary and is finite in size. GBE reserves the right to increase or decrease the size of the Fund at any time and for any reason.
- GBE reserves the right to extend the years of allocation at any time and for any reason.
- GBE may shorten or extend application windows and may decide to open further application windows until available funding is exhausted.

- GBE reserves the right to reject an application if an applicant refuses to disclose any information requested or does not provide information in a timely manner as requested.
- GBE reserves the right to offer an applicant a lower grant amount than that applied for.
- The Fund and grant funding awards from it are discretionary. There is no automatic entitlement to an award of funding or funding in the amount asked for.
- GBE reserves the right not to accept any application and not to make any grant and reserves the right to cancel the Fund before it has completed (whether in whole or in part) or at any time before any Grant Funding Agreement ("GFA") is agreed and executed.
- Until a GFA (grant funding agreement) is agreed and executed, GBE will not be responsible for, nor will GBE make any commitment in respect of, costs that applicants may incur. Applicants are advised that they should not make any irrevocable commitments to incur project expenditure in reliance on funding by GBE at any point prior to finally executing a GFA.
- GBE is under no obligation to provide feedback to any unsuccessful applicant. However, applicants that are rejected at any step of the process outlined in this Guidance may request feedback and GBE may (at its discretion) provide feedback to the applicant based on summary comments from its assessment. There is no set appeals process and GBE is not responsible for any costs associated with any application.
- Applicants will remain responsible for all costs and expenses incurred by them, their staff, and their advisers or by any third party acting under their instructions in connection with this competition. For the avoidance of doubt, GBE is not liable for any costs or expenditure resulting from any cancellation or amendment of this competition.
- Reasons for decisions in respect of applications will be recorded at all stages for the purposes of good administration and to ensure that there is a clear audit trail for all decisions. Administrative records will be maintained for all applications irrespective of whether they are successful or not.

Stage 1 – Assessment Framework

Assessment criterion	Weighting
Organisational capacity and governance	12.5%
Project viability and deliverability	25%
Community ownership and benefit	25%
Finance, including value for money	25%
Risks and how they are managed	12.5%

Assessment Area	We are looking for you to demonstrate	You should evidence this by providing	High scoring responses (4–5)	Medium scoring responses (3 – Minimum Fundable Score)	Low scoring responses (1–2)	Application Sections
Organisational Capacity and Governance	That your organisation has the governance, skills, capacity and financial management arrangements required to manage public funding and deliver the proposed Stage 1 activities.	Key personnel, relevant experience, organisational structure, delivery arrangements, project team roles and responsibilities, delivery partners (where applicable), and financial information demonstrating the organisation's ability to manage grant funding.	Demonstrates clear governance arrangements; appropriate financial controls; sufficient relevant experience; organisational capacity; and a strong understanding of the responsibilities associated with managing public funding.	Demonstrates sufficient governance arrangements, relevant skills and experience, organisational capacity, and financial controls to manage public funding and deliver the project. Some minor weaknesses or evidence gaps may exist, but these do not materially undermine confidence in delivery.	Governance arrangements, relevant skills and experience, organisational capacity, financial controls, or the organisation's ability to manage public funding are unclear, insufficiently evidenced, or create material uncertainty regarding delivery of the proposed Stage 1 activities.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Skills & Experience).

Project Viability and Deliverability	The project opportunity, proposed technology and potential site(s) have been identified and are sufficiently developed to support a meaningful feasibility assessment	Project description, proposed technology, site information, project rationale, technical considerations, project plan and proposed feasibility activities.	Presents a clear and well-developed project concept with a compelling rationale. Demonstrates a strong understanding of the key technical, commercial, operational, regulatory and delivery considerations relevant to the proposed project or activity. Clearly explains how the proposed Stage 1 activities will test, develop or establish the viability and deliverability of the project and support progression to the next stage of development.	Presents a plausible project concept and realistic feasibility programme. Some technical, site or delivery issues remain uncertain, but these are appropriate for a feasibility stage and can reasonably be explored through the proposed activities.	The project concept is unclear, poorly defined or insufficiently developed, or the application does not demonstrate how the proposed activities will establish project feasibility or whether the project has a realistic prospect of progressing.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Project Overview; Technical & Delivery; Project Plan; Multiple Sites questions where relevant).
Community Ownership and Benefit	That the project is community-led, or has a credible route to community ownership, and is designed to deliver lasting benefits for the local community.	Evidence of community engagement, local support, community relationships, ownership ambitions, proposed ownership model and expected community benefits.	Demonstrates strong existing links to the local community; engagement or established community relationships; a credible route to community ownership; and clearly defined community	Demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the community and some evidence of engagement or support. Community ownership and benefit proposals are credible but require further development during Stage 1.	Provides limited evidence of community engagement, ownership ambitions or local benefit. Alternatively, the role of the community in shaping, owning or benefitting from the project is unclear.	**Section 2: Project Details (**Ownership) **Section 3: Community** (Community Benefits; Employment & Skills where relevant).

			benefits. The application explains how local people will influence project development and share in project outcomes.			
Finance, Including Value for Money	That the proposed costs are reasonable, necessary and proportionate, represent value for money, and that grant funding is required to undertake the proposed feasibility work.	Cost breakdown, quotes or estimates, procurement approach, self-delivery justification, funding request and explanation of what would happen without grant funding.	Costs are clearly linked to eligible activities and supported by evidence. Procurement and supplier selection are well explained. The amount requested is justified and the applicant clearly demonstrates why grant funding is required and what would happen without support.	Budget is broadly credible and costs appear reasonable and proportionate. Value for money and need for funding are reasonably explained, although supporting evidence may be limited in some areas.	Costs are poorly evidenced, disproportionate or insufficiently justified. The value for money case or need for grant funding is weak or unclear.	**Section 4: Funding** (Funding Requirement; Procurement Financial Evidence).
Risks and How They Are Managed,	That you understand the principal risks affecting the project, have proportionate plans for managing them, and can effectively deliver, monitor and evaluate the proposed Stage 1 activities.	Risk register, mitigation measures, monitoring arrangements.	Identifies relevant technical, planning, land, grid, financial, governance and community risks and sets out credible mitigation measures.	Identifies the principal risks and demonstrates a reasonable understanding of how they will be managed. Project management arrangements are sufficient to support delivery, although some risks or mitigations require further development.	Key risks have not been identified, or mitigation measures are weak or unrealistic. Delivery arrangements do not provide confidence in successful delivery.	**Section 5: Risks** (Delivery Risks)

Stage 2 - Assessment Framework

Scored questions will be awarded a score from 1 to 5. The descriptors below provide an overall guide to the standard of evidence expected across the questions contributing to each assessment area. For Stage 2 applications, weightings are detailed in the table below:

Assessment criterion	Weighting
Organisational capacity and governance	12.5%
Project viability and deliverability	25%
Community ownership and benefit	25%
Finance, including value for money	25%
Risks and how they are managed	12.5%

Assessment Area	Weighting	We are looking for you to demonstrate	You should evidence this by providing	High-scoring responses (4–5)	Medium-scoring responses (3 – Minimum Fundable Score)	Low-scoring responses (1–2)	Application Sections
Organisational Capacity and Governance	**12.5%**	That your organisation has the governance, skills, resources and delivery arrangements necessary to develop the project to investment readiness and manage a larger public grant.	Governance arrangements, project team structure, roles and responsibilities, delivery partners, specialist advisers, organisational experience, financial management arrangements and evidence of capacity to manage the proposed development programme.	Demonstrates strong governance arrangements, appropriate technical and project management capability, clearly defined partner roles, access to specialist expertise, robust financial controls and sufficient	Demonstrates sufficient governance, skills, resources and delivery capability to progress the project. Some weaknesses exist but are recognised and can be addressed through	Governance arrangements, delivery capability, key skills or organisational capacity are unclear or insufficiently evidenced, creating significant concerns regarding delivery.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Skills & Experience);

				organisational capacity to deliver the Stage 2 programme.	the development phase.		
Project Viability and Deliverability	**25%**	That the project is technically feasible, capable of progressing to investment readiness, and has a realistic route to delivery. The applicant demonstrates that an appropriate feasibility study has been completed and has identified the key development activities required to progress the project to investment readiness.	Results of Stage 1 work (where applicable), feasibility studies, site information, grid position, planning strategy, development programme, project plan and supporting technical evidence.	Demonstrates a well-developed project with a clear delivery pathway. Technical feasibility is strongly evidenced. Site, planning, land, grid and delivery issues are well understood and there is a credible route to investment readiness.	Demonstrates a feasible project with a realistic development pathway. Some uncertainties remain but can realistically be resolved through the proposed Stage 2 activities.	Significant uncertainties remain regarding technical feasibility, site suitability, planning, land ownership, grid connection or delivery strategy. Alternatively, the application does not provide confidence that the project can progress to investment readiness.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Project Overview; Technical & Delivery; Feasibility Study upload; Readiness for Stage 2; Project Plan; Multiple Sites questions where applicable)
Community Ownership and Benefit	**25%**	That the project has a credible and well-developed route to community ownership and will deliver lasting benefits to the local community. The applicant provides evidence of community engagement and a	Ownership proposals, governance arrangements, community engagement activity, evidence of community support, benefit-sharing proposals and plans for continued participation in project development.	Demonstrates strong community engagement, clear evidence of support from the local community, a credible and well-developed ownership model, and clearly articulated community benefits. The role of the	Demonstrates a credible ownership and community benefit proposition. Engagement activity has been undertaken and there is a reasonable basis for community support, although aspects of ownership or benefit	Limited evidence of community engagement, support, ownership arrangements or community benefit. Alternatively, the pathway to community ownership remains unclear or poorly developed.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Ownership) **Section 3: Community** (Community Benefits; Employment & Skills)

		credible ownership and governance model for the project.		community in decision-making and future ownership is clearly defined.	arrangements require further development.		
Finance, Including Value for Money	**25%**	That project costs are reasonable and proportionate, represent value for money, and that the applicant has a credible financial strategy for progressing the project towards investment readiness.	Detailed budget, procurement approach, quotes or cost estimates, value for money justification, financial accounts, funding strategy, and explanation of why grant support is required.	Provides a robust and well-evidenced budget linked directly to eligible activities. Demonstrates strong value for money, a credible funding strategy, realistic assumptions and a clear explanation of why grant funding is required. Financial information provides confidence in the organisation's ability to manage the proposed funding.	Budget and financial assumptions are broadly credible and costs appear reasonable and proportionate. Value for money and need for funding are explained, although some evidence may require further clarification during due diligence.	Costs are poorly justified, disproportionate or weakly evidenced. Alternatively, there are significant concerns regarding affordability, value for money, financial management or the need for grant support.	**Section 4: Funding** (Funding Requirement; Procurement; Financial Evidence)
Risks and How They Are Managed	**12.5%**	That you understand the key development risks affecting the project and have realistic plans to manage them and deliver the proposed Stage 2 activities.	Risk register, mitigation measures,	Identifies all major technical, planning, financial, legal, land, grid, procurement and governance risks and provides proportionate and credible mitigations..	Identifies the principal project risks and provides reasonable mitigation measures. Delivery arrangements are broadly credible and support progression of the project towards investment readiness.	Key risks are missing, poorly understood or inadequately mitigated. Alternatively, project arrangements do not provide confidence that the development programme can be delivered successfully.	**Section 5: Risks** (Delivery Risks)

Stage 3 - Assessment Framework

Scored questions will be awarded a score from 1 to 5. The descriptors below provide an overall guide to the standard of evidence expected across the questions contributing to each assessment area. For Stage 3 applications, weightings are detailed in the table below:

Assessment criterion	Weighting
Organisational capacity and governance	15%
Project viability and deliverability	30%
Community ownership and benefit	15%
Finance	20%
Risks and how they are managed	20%

Assessment Area	We are looking for you to demonstrate	You should evidence this by providing	High-scoring responses (4–5)	Medium-scoring responses (3 – Minimum Fundable Score)	Low-scoring responses (1–2)	Application Sections
Organisational Capacity and Governance	That your organisation, delivery partners and advisers have the capability, expertise and governance arrangements necessary to deliver, own and operate the project successfully.	Governance arrangements, project team structure, relevant delivery experience, technical expertise, key advisers, roles and responsibilities, operational arrangements and organisational capacity.	Demonstrates strong governance arrangements, experienced delivery personnel, access to appropriate technical, legal and commercial expertise, clearly defined responsibilities and sufficient capacity to deliver and operate the project.	Demonstrates appropriate governance arrangements, relevant experience and organisational capacity to deliver the project. The application provides sufficient evidence to support delivery, although governance arrangements, experience or capacity may be less developed, robust or comprehensive than would be expected in a high-scoring application.	Governance arrangements, relevant experience, technical expertise or organisational capacity are unclear or insufficiently evidenced, creating significant concerns regarding delivery.	**Section 2 (**Skills & Experience); **Section 4 (**Operations & Asset Management)
Project Viability and Deliverability	That the project has completed the development activities	Detailed project plan, delivery programme, planning status, land	Demonstrates a well-developed project with a high level of delivery confidence.	Demonstrates a broadly deliverable project with a credible route to construction and	Significant uncertainties remain regarding project viability,	**Section 2: Project Details** (Project Overview; Technical & Delivery; Technical Evidence; Planning; Grid

	necessary to reach construction readiness, including planning, land, grid, technical, delivery and financing requirements. That the project is construction-ready, technically viable and capable of being delivered within the proposed timetable and budget.	rights, grid arrangements, technical studies, generation estimates, carbon saving estimates and evidence of project readiness.	Planning permission in place, secured grid connection and land access agreements signed, and only minor technical concerns. The delivery programme is realistic and supported by robust evidence. Expected generation and carbon savings are clearly evidenced.	operation. Some outstanding issues remain, but there is a realistic plan to resolve them before project commencement.	delivery timetable, planning, land ownership, grid connection or technical feasibility.	Connection; Land Agreements; Delivery Programme; Project Plan)
Community Ownership and Benefit	That the project has clear and credible community ownership arrangements and will deliver benefits beyond energy generation alone.	Ownership structure, governance arrangements, community benefit proposals, revenue use plans, evidence of community engagement, local economic benefits and additionality evidence.	Demonstrates a clearly defined and credible ownership model, strong community influence over project decisions, significant and measurable community benefits, and a convincing case for wider social, economic and environmental additionality.	Demonstrates a credible ownership and benefit model with reasonable evidence of additionality and community benefit, although some arrangements require further development.	Community ownership arrangements, benefit proposals or additionality claims are unclear, weakly evidenced or insufficiently developed.	**Section 2: Project Details** (Ownership) **Section 3: Community** (Community Benefits; Community Ownership; Employment & Skills); **Section 4: Funding** (Ownership)
Finance, Including Value for Money	That the project demonstrates a clear need for public funding, represents value for money, has a credible and deliverable funding package, and can withstand financial scrutiny through due diligence. This includes consideration of additionality, the	Detailed financial model, project budget, funding strategy, evidence of match funding, financing agreements, procurement approach, financial accounts and explanation of need for grant funding.	Demonstrates a robust financial model, strong value for money, clear additionality, a credible and evidenced funding package, realistic assumptions and a convincing explanation of why grant funding is required.	Financial assumptions are broadly credible and funding arrangements appear achievable. Some matters require clarification or confirmation through due diligence but do not undermine overall viability.	Significant concerns exist regarding affordability, funding strategy, financial viability, value for money or the ability to secure required match funding.	**Section 4: Funding** (Capital; Additionality; Operations & Asset Management; Finances; Match Funding; Funding Requirement; Financial Evidence; Procurement)

	residual financing gap, match funding and the proportionality of grant support requested.					
Risks and How They Are Managed	That you understand the principal risks affecting project delivery and operation and have proportionate arrangements to manage them.	Risk register, project controls, delivery governance, procurement strategy, contingency planning, mitigation measures, monitoring and reporting arrangements.	Identifies and appropriately manages all major delivery, construction, operational, commercial, governance and financial risks. Risk ownership, mitigations and contingency arrangements are clearly defined and credible.	Principal risks are identified and generally well managed, although some mitigations require further development or assurance.	Key risks are missing, poorly understood or inadequately managed. Alternatively, risk management arrangements do not provide confidence in successful project delivery.	**Section 5: Risks** (Delivery Risks; Assurance Reviews; Health & Safety)

Annex

Annex 1 – Assessment and Decision Making

Score	Description
1	The response does not adequately address the question. Significant weaknesses, omissions or concerns remain.
2	The response addresses the question only in part. Important information is missing, unclear or insufficiently explained.
3	The response adequately addresses the question and provides sufficient information for assessment. Any weaknesses are not material.
4	The response addresses the question well and provides clear, relevant and convincing information.
5	The response addresses the question comprehensively and provides clear, convincing and well-supported information.

Applications will be assessed against the published assessment criteria set out in this guidance. Each scored question within the application form will be awarded a score between 1 and 5 based on the quality of the response and supporting evidence provided. Question scores will be combined to produce scores for each assessment area, which will then be weighted to reflect their importance to the objectives of the Fund. Applications must receive a moderated score of at least 3 in each assessment area; an application receiving a score of 1 or 2 in any assessment area will not be recommended for funding, irrespective of its overall weighted score, and will be removed from the process.

The allocation processes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 will ensure Northern Ireland, Wales and the five Local Net Zero Hub regions in England each receive a minimum level of funding. For each of these Stages, funding will initially be allocated on a region-by-region basis to the applications that remain in the process, allocating to the highest scoring applications from each region first, followed by the next highest, until the portion of the Stage's funding budget reserved for a region is exhausted. The remaining funding budget for each Stage will then be allocated on an all regions basis, again allocating in descending score order to applications that remain in the process until the funding budget is exhausted. GBE will be able to transfer any unallocated funding budgets for Stage 1 and Stage 2 between regions and between these Stages. Funding for Stage 3 will be allocated to applications that remain in the process in descending score order until the Stage 3 funding budget is exhausted.

Where two or more applications receive the same overall weighted assessment score and there is insufficient funding to support all of them, Great British Energy will apply the following tie-break sequence:

- The application with the higher score for Project Viability and Deliverability
- If applications remain tied, the application with the higher score for Community Ownership and Benefit.
- If applications remain tied at this stage, the application requesting the lower amount of funding will be funded.

Applications recommended for funding following assessment will be shortlisted for due diligence. Shortlisting does not guarantee funding and does not create any entitlement to receive funding. Applicants recommended for funding must successfully complete all due diligence checks before any funding offer can be made, and all funding offers are at the discretion of GBE. Applications that are not shortlisted for due diligence will be notified of the outcome of their application and may receive feedback.

Great British Energy reserves the right to offer a lower amount of funding than requested, where considered appropriate, and any funding offer will remain subject to completion of due diligence and agreement of a Grant Funding Agreement.

As this is a competitive fund with limited available budget, applications are encouraged to demonstrate a strong and compelling case across all assessment areas.

Annex 2 - How to Apply

Online portal applications must be submitted via the online application portal, available here. When completing the first stage of the application, organisations will be able to create a login and an application reference which will be used throughout all stages of the application. The individual who submits the first stage of the application must be the individual submitting all stages of the application as their email address will be used to access the site.

The online application allows for collaborators to be added by selecting 'invite collaborators' under the 'manage application' heading. The email address of the individual who submits the first stage of the application should be monitored for communications related to the application. GBE is fully committed to ensuring applicants are supported throughout the application process, and that applicants' questions are answered at each stage. If applicants require any further clarification or information relating to their application, please email LocalGrants@gbe.gov.uk and GBE will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.

GBE Local will publish an online Q&A encompassing all questions asked, which will be located at https://www.GBE.gov.uk/funding/gbe-community-fund/.

Privacy Notice

The Privacy Notice sets out how personal data will be processed. To continue with the application, the applicant must confirm that they have read the Privacy Notice.

Disclosure of Information

This section provides information relating to GBE's obligations (including the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)) in the event that a request for information is received. More information on the FOIA and EIR (including information on exemptions) can be found at: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/.

Applicants are required to co-operate with GBE in the provision of such information relating to GBE's mandatory reporting obligations. Great British Energy (GBE) is subject to a range of legal obligations relating to information and data handling, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

Applicants may be required to provide information to support GBE's statutory reporting and disclosure obligations and are expected to co-operate with reasonable requests for information.

Where GBE receives a request for information pertaining to an application, applicant, project of third party, it will consider the request in accordance with the applicable legislation and will determine whether any information should be disclosed or withheld. Further information about FOIA and EIR can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website.

Annex 3 - Application Portal FAQ's

Can I save the application as I go?

Yes, you can save the application responses as you work on the application. You can view progress against different sections of the application form which will show as completed, in progress or not started.

I haven't received the account confirmation email

Check your spam folder. Add the portal email address to your safe senders list. The address is noreply@GBECFgrant.energysecurity.gov.uk. You can then get the confirmation email to be resent by logging in again. If you think you may have mistyped your email address when creating your account, contact localgrants@gbe.gov.uk

I have forgotten my password

Use the forgotten password link on the login page.

My account is locked out

You may have entered an incorrect password too many times. If you know your password, wait for 10 minutes then try logging in again. You may not have an account associated with the email address you are trying to login with. Use the forgotten password link on the login page.

I am unable to create an account

You may already have an account, possibly from another scheme. Log in using the details you used to create the account originally. If you have forgotten your password, use the forgotten password link on the login page.

I am unable to log in

The email address you are entering on the login page may not match the email you used to create an account. Create an account via the link on the login page.

I am unable to complete the two-factor authentication stage when logging in

Log in using a recovery code:

1. Log in using your usual email address and password
2. When asked for a two-factor authentication code, click the link to "log in with a recovery code" instead of entering a code in the box
3. Enter a recovery code when asked.

You should now be logged in to your account If you did not make a note of your recovery codes when you first created your account, or you have lost them, contact LocalGrants@gbe.gov.uk.

After logging in with a recovery code, reset your authentication method:

1. Click on the “Account details” link in the top right corner
2. Click the “Two-factor authentication” link on the left side
3. Click the “Reset authentication method” link
4. Click the “Reset authentication” button and follow the instructions to set up an account for the portal in your authenticator app (as you did when you first created your account).

When complete, you will be able to use your authenticator app codes to log in as before If you did not make a note of your recovery codes when you originally created your account, or you have lost them, it is recommended that you generate and make a note of new codes after logging in as above. You can do this by going to the “Account details” link, then going to “Two-factor authentication”, then “Reset recovery codes”.