Horticultural Grant Programme
Guidance Notes 2026-27

Version Number	Author	Purpose/change	Date
1.0	Parks	Grant Guidance Document	18 March 2025
1.1		Updated contact information and opening/closing dates	10 September 2025
1.2		Grant Guidance Notes updated	31 March 2026

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1.0 Introduction

Each year, the Council will award grants of up to £1,500 each for local community groups to delivering horticultural projects in the Borough on land accessible to the general public.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must be fully constituted community groups within the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough.

Successful submissions will involve projects that increase involvement in working with plants and/or the purchase of horticultural materials and features. Please note that at least 50% of expenditure must be for plants.

These conditions should be read in conjunction with the Grant Funding Policy.

1.1 Purpose of Grant Programme/Overview of Fund

These grants aim to assist in delivering horticultural schemes or projects within their local community, with the permission of the landowner. The primary purpose is to engage and inspire residents while enhancing their areas for potential recognition in local awards, such as Best Kept and Ulster in Bloom.

1.2 General Principles

The fundamental principles of this grant guidance document are:

Funding Award is based on evidenced need

The aim of grant funding is to provide financial support for projects and activities that add benefit to the Borough and contribute to improving the lives of local people and places. The following requirements MUST be met to be considered for funding:

- Have a clear purpose to the activity based on clearly evidenced need
- Be able to demonstrate how their project meets relevant funding criteria
- Can deliver high quality desired outcomes in a cost-effective manner
- The Applicant organisation can demonstrate that it is well run with the capacity to deliver the project as stated
- Reflect the statutory remit of the Council, aligned to the Corporate Plan and Community Plan

Accessibility

Information on all grant funding programmes will be publicly available through the Council's website and proactively promoted across Mailing Lists, Social Media channels and Borough Life. This will include:

- Guidance on completion of relevant grant application
- Grant Management System embedded into Council public facing platform with digital accessibility options available
- Centralised Grant Funding information on Council webpage

- Guidance notes for all individual grant streams
- Point of contact clearly communicated for relevant queries
- Annual Grant Funding calendar made available

We will strive to ensure the process is user friendly, transparent, and fully inclusive.

Accountability

The Council will always adhere to the Grant Funding policy and guidance criteria outlined within each grant funding programme.

- A clear decision-making process will be utilised, with clear rationale and demonstrable evidence to support funding decisions
- Decision making process will be robust and transparent
- Funding decisions will be approved through Committee and Full Council with details made publicly available
- Unsuccessful applicants will be entitled to receive feedback on their application
- An accessible Appeals process will be communicated as part of each grant's call

1.3 Who can apply?

Only properly constituted community, voluntary & charitable groups can apply to the grant aid scheme and must be able to meet the following conditions. The group must:

- Be democratically accountable through regular public meetings.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Be properly constituted and include a decision making process, and aims and activities that are acceptable to the Council.
- Be managed by a publicly elected committee; the office bearing positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer must be held as a minimum.
- Demonstrate a fair and equitable ethos through their established aims and objectives in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- Demonstrate that proposed activities are not a duplication of other activities.
- Produce an annual statement of independently verified or certified accounts, or a bank statement for new groups only.
- Agree to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's monitoring, evaluation, and training procedures if required.

Projects **must** take place between December 2026 and 31 March 2027 following Council approval, any activity outside these timescales will not be eligible for funding.

1.4 What can be funded?

Title	**Horticultural Grant Programme 2026-27 up to £1,500**
Eligible Expenditure	• Site preparation (e.g. hiring rotivator, contractor costs) • Hand tools/equipment • Plants, trees, shrubs, • Small infrastructure items such as containers and seating • Training costs will be considered if deemed relevant to the project- e.g. health and safety courses. **50% of expenditure must be for plants**

1.5 What cannot be funded?

Ineligible Items	• Salaries or wages • Volunteer expenses • Promotional costs or signage • Transport to visit gardens or insurance • Capital equipment such as fences **This list is not exhaustive**

1.6 Exclusions

Council will not normally fund the following:-

- Costs associated with projects operating outside of the Borough Council area.
- Applications for specific projects which are clearly the responsibility of another statutory organisation.
- Retrospective expenditure.
- Applications received after the closing date specified in the public advertisement.
- Salary costs.
- Unrelated professional fees.
- Bank charges, loans, deficits or fines.
- For profit enterprises.
- Costs that are already covered by other sources of funding.
- Organisations that are able to share out profits to individuals, members or shareholders.
- Charity, fundraising events and donations.
- Individuals.
- Costs that are not clearly linked to the project.
- Projects that provide no significant benefit to the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council area.
- Projects that duplicate what already exists.

- Projects that are not in line with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council policies.
- Individuals involved in the delivery of the project, that is, staff, volunteers or board members of the applicant organisation, cannot benefit personally from the award of this grant. This means that they cannot be paid for the provision of goods or services from the grant.
- It is unlikely that you will receive funding if you have previously received a grant from us that was not managed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Letter of Offer.
- The purchase of balloons and single use plastics.
- The purchase of flags and bunting without prior approval.
- Alcohol

2.0 How to answer the questions?

Each question in the application form is designed to help us understand your project and how it meets the aims of the fund. When responding, try to be clear, concise and specific.

Focus on explaining:

- What you plan to do
- Why it is needed
- Who will benefit
- What difference the funding will make

Use straightforward language and provide examples where possible. Avoid jargon and assume the reader may not be familiar with your organisation or community.

2.1 Information about your organisation

This section of the application form gathers information about your organisation, including contact details and insight on the purpose and work of your organisation, which will enable the assessment process to check eligibility.

2.2 Project Proposal

This section of the application form gathers information about your project proposal – what you want to do and why. This is the part of the form where you must clearly and sufficiently demonstrate how and why there is a need for your project, what beneficial outcomes will be created and how these meet the needs of the Council's Corporate Plan.

This section allows you to detail why you think this project approach will work for the proportionate impact you plan to make. The assessment process will focus on the quality, impact, and investment effectiveness of each proposal.

You might reference, for example, evidence of your approach working before, or how your proposal is an innovative way to reach more people or make a greater impact on a smaller number of participants.

Examples of successful projects may include:

- Provision of a restful feature in a communal garden landscape.
- Projects supporting outdoor schemes involving living and growing plants.
- Provision of a sensory plot or growing feature.

2.3 Project Delivery

This section of the application form gathers information about your project proposal – what you want to do and why. This is the part of the form where you must clearly and sufficiently demonstrate how and why there is a need for your project, what beneficial outcomes will be created and how these meet the needs of the Council's Corporate Plan.

This section allows you to detail why you think this project approach will work for the proportionate impact you plan to make. The assessment process will focus on the quality, impact, and investment effectiveness of each proposal.

You might reference, for example, evidence of your approach working before, or how your proposal is an innovative way to reach more people or make a greater impact on a smaller number of participants.

Grant Checklist

All applications should be accompanied by any relevant supporting documents requested at the beginning of the application form and shown below.

Title	**Horticultural Grant Programme - up to £1,500**
Supporting Documents Required	Applicants will need to upload the following documents: • a proper signed and dated constitution or other governing document - only required if you have updated your document or haven't submitted to Council within the last five years • a list of current committee members • a recent (within the last two months) bank statement showing the applicants name • minutes of last AGM/Public Meeting (within last 15 months) • Chairpersons letter to confirm permission for the project has been received by the landowner.

	A declaration for all other documents will need to be signed to confirm that these are in place should they be requested by Council.

3.0 How we assess and score your application

A panel will evaluate eligible applications against the category criteria. Applicants will be notified via email detailing the outcome of the application.

Each application will be considered on its own merits. To deliver the programme's aim and general principles, Applicants will need to demonstrate how their project meets the appropriate criteria. It is important to remember that the application will be assessed ONLY on the information provided in the application form and specifically in the box relating to the question asked. Any information that you do not include or that is contained in other parts of the application form will not be considered. Therefore, you MUST demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria as set out in these guidelines in the application.

3.1 Eligibility assessment

Applications received by Council will be logged and undergo eligibility checks. If eligibility information is missing at this point, you will be contacted and given 10 days to submit the missing information. Failure to provide all necessary eligibility information and complete forms as required will mean your application will not go forward for assessment in the current funding call.

If you are not sure whether you or your organisation and project meet the eligibility criteria, or you need more guidance on the application form, please contact the Grants team. You can find contact details at the end of these guidance notes.

3.2 Assessment and scoring

If your application has met all the eligibility criteria the panel will use the following criteria to score you application.

Each application will be scored against the following criteria and the highest scoring applicants will each be awarded a grant of up to £1,500 for their horticulture project.

No.	Criteria	Max Score
1.	**Eligibility Criteria:** Name and address of community group and evidence that they are constituted. All documentation has been received. 50% of grants costs are for plants	**25%**

2.	**Need for financial support:** What challenges do you face that limit your ability to deliver horticultural projects as a group for your local community? (max 300 words)	**25%**
3	**Please demonstrate how you will achieve the following objectives: -** i. How the project will add and improve wellbeing and enjoyment of the environment for all. ii. How the project will be sustained over future years – maintenance etc. iii. How the project will improve the environment for local residents. iv. How the project will encourage biodiversity and wildlife (while not essential, will be a positive)	**25%**
4	**Supporting other volunteers:** How could you ensure that bursaries to your group would help others to volunteer more? (max 300 words)	**25%**

A pass threshold of 60% needs to be achieved to deem the application successful for funding.

3.3 What happens if an application is successful?

3.3.1 In the event of a successful application a Letter of Offer will be issued together with procurement guidance and details of the claim process.

3.3.2 The Letter of Offer must be signed and returned within 10 days with the Grant recipient to provide details of a designated bank account for all transactions relevant to the funding.

3.3.3 The Grant shall be used only for the purposes of the Project as defined by the Applicant in the application form or variations, which the Council has agreed to fund.

3.3.4 The Council reserves the right to withhold any or all of the payments and/or require the Grant Recipient to repay part or all of the Grant if Council deems there to be a substantial or material change in the nature, scale or timing of the Project, or if the Grant is used for purposes other than those specified in the application or agreed variations.

3.3.5 Grant payments will be made paid 50% up front and 50% following submission and approval of completed Project Grant Claims. Claim forms must be supported by original receipts and supporting bank statements Payment will

be dependent upon fully acceptable documentation being in place to support the claim.

3.3.6 Council will release funds after verification of satisfactory receipts and evidence of payment (i.e. bank statements) (invoices will not be accepted). Claims must for the items specified in the Letter of Offer. Items paid for in cash will not be reimbursed.

3.3.7 Payment will only be released to a group bank account and that account is the same as the details on the application and supporting documentation.

3.3.8 The Council reserves the right to terminate or suspend authorisation of Grant Payments and/or to withhold any or all the financial assistance should the Project not be delivered in line with this offer of Grant Aid.

3.3.9 To meet Council's audit requirements, when making a claim, applicants should retain copies of receipts and evidence of payments made in the form of Bank statements/credit cards.

3.4 Monitoring and reporting

If your project receives grant support, you will be in receipt of public funding, and this must be accountable. Monitoring and reporting are an essential requirement for you in delivering your project.

We will also ask all organisations for auditing purposes, to check how the grant was spent and that the terms and conditions of the funding were met. You will be contacted by your local Council Lead, and you will be asked to provide invoices and bank statements for all the items you are claiming through the grant.

If your project does not meet its targets and outcomes, we can review and reduce the amount of funding awarded.

If any information in the application, monitoring or supporting information is found to be untrue or misleading, we will withdraw any grant. If we have already paid part of a grant to your organisation, you must repay it. This will have implications for any future applications or requests for funding. We may also review grants made to your organisation in the past.

3.5 Marketing and promotion

The Grant Recipient shall acknowledge the contribution made by the Council in all relevant publicity materials including brochures, leaflets, newspaper articles etc. The Council shall be entitled to publish details of the assistance referred to in this letter at such times and in such manner as is necessary without further agreement from the Grant Recipient. It is important to note that logos should be of a reasonable size and retain their original perspective. All promotional materials should be approved **in advance** by the Council's Public Relations and Marketing team. Please email all proofs to marketing@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk or media@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk.

If you have any queries, please contact the Council PR and Marketing team on Tel: 0300 123 468.

3.6 Breach of Letter of Offer and Claw-Back arrangements

If the Grant Purpose ceases to be carried out during the relevant Grant Period as a result of any act, omission or default on the part of the grant Applicant organisation, including any breach of the terms and conditions contained within the Letter of Offer, the Council will invoke clawback procedures to demand that the Applicant repays in part or full the Grant Funding awarded.

The Applicant will be considered in breach of their funding offer if the following apply – please note this list in not exhaustive: -

- They provide misleading or inaccurate information, by accident or deliberate during the application process
- Members of the organisation funded, including volunteers and staff at any time during the project act dishonestly or negligently causing directly or indirectly any detriment to the activity or bring into disrepute the reputation of the Council by association through funding award(s)
- The organisation funded is in receipt of duplicate funding from any other source for any element of the activity
- The organisation does not take positive steps to ensure equality of opportunity in its employment practices, delivery of and access to services
- The organisation by their own actions makes their facilities and/or activities less inviting to any sections of the community
- There is a change of purpose, benefit, ownership, or recipient, either during the project or within a reasonable period after its completion

Any reported or identified breaches or potential breaches that cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the Council will result in the grant award in part or in full being clawed back by the Council.

If funding is withdrawn or clawback procedures invoked the Applicant organisation will have no legal redress to have funding reinstated. The decision of Council in this case will be final.

Additionally

1. **Organisations:**

    - Must send in the monitoring and evaluation forms within the agreed timescales.

    - No aspect of the activity being funded should be party political in intention, use or presentation; or likely to be perceived as discriminatory on grounds of religion, colour, race, gender, or disability.

3.7 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If you are unsuccessful in your application, you will be sent the broad reasons why you have not received funding. You will receive feedback as to the strengths and weaknesses of your application.

3.8 Appeals procedure

An appeals procedure will be available to unsuccessful applicants. For further information please contact the officers detailed at the end of this document.

3.9 Fraud and Corruption

The Council is committed to the prevention and detection of fraud and the promotion of an anti-fraud culture.

The Council operates a zero-tolerance attitude to fraud and corruption, whether from internal or external sources. The Council requires staff and individuals/organisations that it deals with, to act with honesty and integrity, to safeguard the public resources and to report all suspicions of fraud and corruption.

Every case of alleged or suspected fraud will be thoroughly investigated in accordance with the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and where appropriate, referred to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Council will also seek to recover any loss suffered because of fraud and if appropriate, will take civil, and/or disciplinary action.

The following relevant policies can be located on the Council website:

Anti- Bribery Policy - April 2023

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy - April 2023

Financial Regulations – April 2024

Fraud Response Plan - March 2023

Raising Concerns Policy – November 2023

The Council reserves the right to disallow any other current, pending or future grant applications and claims submitted by an organisation or an individual member of the organisation in respect of the financial year and to apply a moratorium on Council funding to any organisation or individual member of an organisation where fraudulent activity is identified within the current financial year and for at least 2 forthcoming financial years. This will also extend to individuals in receipt or applying for a bursary.

The Council will inform in writing the Chairperson of the organisation, or the individual in case of bursary, where fraud is suspected or has been identified. In the case of a bursary where the recipient is underage of 18 years the parent/guardian will also be notified.

4.0 Application process

Call Number	Opens	Closes	Assessment/Notification of Outcome
1	1 April 2026	30 April 2026	June 2026
2	8 June 2026	31 July 2026	October 2026
3	1 October 2026	31 October 2026	December 2026

Applicants should note that this is a competitive process and awards are subject to the availability of funds and may be subject to change.

How to apply?

Interested applicants should book a place at one of the following in person/online Grant Information Sessions where officers will take groups through the grant funding available as well as the new application forms and online process.

Sharing the Benefits of the Support:

In return for the investment it is expected that the recipient groups should undertake the following over the course of the 12-month period:

- Find ways to use horticulture as a development tool for their local community
- Provide a short written report to the Council on how the group has used the grant awarded and how it has benefited their local residents.

Grant Information Sessions

Interested applicants should book a place at one the in person/online Grant Information Sessions where officers will take groups through the grant funding available as well as the new application forms and online process. For further information please visit Council's Grants and Funding webpage: https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/grants-funding/

Contact details:

For further information, please contact Parks Admin team:
nicola.boomer@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk or
nadine.campbell@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk or Grant Funding Unit E:
fundingunit@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk
T: 0300 123 4568

Appendix 1

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council are entitled to disclose your details to other government agencies and departments and bodies engaged in distributing funds (subject to the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998, known as General Data Protection Regulations GDPR from May 2018).

To process your grant application, applicants are advised that:

- Council use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.

- Council may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.

- Council may also share information with other departments, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.

- Council might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.