

# **Community Festivals Fund Grant Programme 2026-27**

## **Guidance Notes**

Deadline for Submission of Application
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<b>12.00 noon on Friday 6th February 2026</b>
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Guidelines Number	
Version Number	
Author	

Date of Screening of Policy	
EQIA Recommended?	
Date Adopted by Council	
Date Guidelines Revised	

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## 1.0 Introduction

These guidance notes provide an overview of financial support available through the Community Festival Fund (CFF) for 2026-27. They will help you and your organisation decide if the financial assistance offered is appropriate to support the needs of your community.

**Please Note that the number of questions on the application form has been significantly reduced from previous years.**

You may find it helpful to discuss your project with one of the Community Development Team before submitting your application:

Catherine Farrimond, Community Development Officer  
catherine.farrimond@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Adele McCloskey, Community Facilities Development Officer  
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## 1.1 Purpose of Grant Programme

The purpose of the Community Festival Fund is to support, promote and develop the capacity of communities to host community festival events across the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

The fund will also enable organisations to celebrate their unique cultural and community identity, to promote diversity and to strengthen good community relations within and between communities.

## 1.2 Overview of fund

- The Community Festivals Fund was established in recognition of the positive contribution that festivals can make to communities and to the local economy. A key priority of Department for Communities is 'to enable communities to enhance their quality of life through participation/engagement in culture, arts and leisure activities.' (*Department for Communities Community Festivals Fund Revised Policy and Guidance Framework October 2015*).
- A community festival is a series of events (or a single event with several elements) with a common theme and delivered within a defined time period. A community festival is a festival which has developed from within a community and should celebrate and positively promote what the community represents. Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social wellbeing of a community.
- This fund is for festivals that are developed by and for a community. They must be initiated and led by a community organisation or a community-led partnership. It is not enough to run a festival on behalf of a community - the community must play a strong part in the development and delivery of the festival and have ownership of it.

## What is a community?

There are two types of communities that may apply to the Community Festival Fund:

- Geographical communities - a town, village, neighbourhood, rural area.
- Communities of interest - a group of people who have a common interest, concern or characteristic.
- At least half of the participants in the Festival should be from the local community that the event is based in.
- For the purposes of the Community Festival Fund, Department for Communities has stated that the following will apply:
  - all Festivals must be culture based, where culture is defined as ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or social grouping
  - all Festivals must demonstrate their commitment to promoting social cohesion, social inclusion, equality of opportunity and good community relations.
- Project planning is an essential aspect of any successful event – evidence of appropriate project planning, consultation, permissions, licensing, risk assessment etc. will be requested.
- A key priority is to improve the capacity and sustainability of community festivals within the Borough.
- If your organisation is successful in securing a grant, your organisation will be contractually obliged to work closely with the Community Development Team in Council, including active participation in any review processes and the provision of monitoring and evaluation information as required.
- **Please Note: All grants awarded are subject to the allocation of central government funding through the Department for Communities (DfC) to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for this grant programme. Please note that no letters of offer can be issued before funding is confirmed.**

### 1.3 Levels of Grant Award

There are 3 levels of grants available within the Community Festival Fund

Community Festival Fund Grant Programme	Maximum Grant Amount
1. One day community fun day type events. Events must be programmed to be of at least 4 hours consecutive duration and include a range of at least 3 distinct types of activities open to the whole community.	Up to £1,000
2. Festival events lasting 2 consecutive days or more. Each of the days of the festival must include a range of at least 3 distinct types of activities open to the whole community and be programmed to be at least 4 hours duration. It is not enough to simply duplicate the same event on 2 days – the festival must have different activities on each day that it takes place.	Up to £1,750
3. Festivals lasting 3 consecutive days or more. Each of the days of the festival must include a range of at least 3 distinct types of activities open to the whole community and be programmed to be at least 4 hours duration and attract at least 500 people (participants & visitors). The festival must have different activities on each day that it takes place	Up to £ 3,250

"Please refer to Section **1.7 What Cannot Be Funded** for details on the types of events that are ineligible for funding."

Funding is competitive and based on how well projects meet assessment criteria. Grants can cover up to 75% of event costs, but the final award may be less than requested and is not guaranteed, even for organisations previously funded. The Council may adjust awards depending on value for money and available budget.

Applicants must provide full evidence of expenditure (e.g., receipts, bank statements) after the project. Failure to do so will prevent payment.

Funding applies only to festivals taking place between 1 April 2026 and 31 March 2027.

Applications are restricted to no more than one per organisation in any financial year.

## 1.4. General Principles

In line with Council's Grant Funding Policy the overarching principle for all Council grant funding is that of meeting local needs which have been identified and prioritised by Council or by others but acknowledged by Council. Any activity that cannot be shown to meet the following basic requirements will not be provided with funding:

- Have a clearly identified need.
- Can deliver outcomes which meet this need.
- Deliver cost effective and quality service provision, fitting with the purpose and remit of the funding.
- Be delivered by a credible organisation with the capacity to deliver the project as stated.
- Reflect the statutory remit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, aligning with Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant Service plan and that they can meet the specific criteria of the fund, in this instance the DfC Community Festivals Fund criteria.
- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to promoting Good Relations and Equality of Opportunity.
- In the interests of transparency, equality and accountability all applicants will have a right of appeal should their application be rejected.

## 1.5 Who can apply?

- Applications can be made by non-profit taking community and voluntary organisations that are based in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area or have their main activities based in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area.
- Festivals developed by public bodies or private sector companies cannot apply to the Community Festival Fund.
- To be eligible for grant-aid, you will have to show that your organisation is a bona fide organisation that is well run and that it has a properly adopted "Governing Document" such as a constitution or memorandum and articles of association which clearly show that it is non-profit making and taking. Evidence that a constitution has been formally adopted must be supplied.

**Only groups which meet these criteria can apply to the Community Festivals Fund.**

If an organisation is satisfied that it is an eligible formally constituted organisation as outlined, it **MUST** be in a position to meet the following criteria:

- Be committed to Equal Opportunities in terms of organisational policies and the delivery of services to those being served or represented.

- Be non-party political and open to the full range of local opinion.
- Have a constitution / governing document that has been adopted at a public meeting showing clearly defined purposes that are for the public benefit in line with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- Be able to demonstrate a fair and equitable ethos through established aims and objectives in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- Be able without prejudice to the obligations of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), to demonstrate regard to the desirability of promoting Good Relations between persons of different religious belief, political belief, political opinion or racial group.
- Be accountable to local people through an established constitution, open membership, committee elections, accounting procedures and Annual General Meetings. The Office Bearing positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer should be held as a minimum.
- Have appropriate and adequate insurance cover for all activities and all actions proceeding such as costs, claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever, arising from all or any of the group activities. To also ensure that any individuals or organisations worked with are properly insured.
- Ensure that all group activities abide by the law and that the necessary permissions are obtained for activities from the appropriate body/authority.
- Ensure that Child Protection Policy / Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures are in place and adhered to as and where appropriate.
- Have a bank/building society account and keep a proper record of group accounts.
- Be able to produce an annual statement of independently audited or certified accounts or be able to present a bank statement in the case of newly established groups.
- Have arrangements in place for dispersing the group's funds if they dissolve/ end.
- Agree to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's promotion, monitoring, evaluation, and training procedures as required.
- Be prepared to take part in any peer supported workshops that the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council deems necessary.

It is a stipulation of all successful grant applications that the DfC and Council's branding appear on all publicity material during the duration of the grant and that DfC/ Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's involvement is acknowledged. In order to ensure compliance it is essential that publicity materials are submitted to Council and DfC at least two weeks prior to the event. If requested, applicants must attend press opportunities.

Post event the applicant will be required to complete the Council's monitoring and evaluation form, and to provide information detailed, in order to demonstrate how the organisation met the criteria detailed in their application form. Organisations may be visited by Council officers to carry out a Post Project Evaluation.

## **1.6 What can be funded?**

### **Eligible items of expenditure may include:**

- Event insurance
- Venue hire
- Performance fees
- Transport within the community/ area that the festival is taking place in
- Equipment hire
- Signage
- Advertising, marketing and media costs
- Printing
- Administration (stationery, postage etc.)
- The assessment panel may consider other costs not listed above that the applicant can show are essential to the running of the festival, however there is no guarantee that these will be funded.

## **1.7 What cannot be funded?**

In general the following will not normally be eligible for funding through the Community Festivals Fund: -

- Festivals that do not take place in Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council area.
- Sports camps eg football academies, Cúl Camps etc. However a community fun day as part of such an event could possibly be eligible as long as it meets the criteria listed in section 1.3.
- Festivals that are primarily fundraising events are heavily branded with charity branding or deploy potential sources of income from a festival to a charity
- Festivals that are social events for an organization or only open to members of an organisation
- Events which consist mainly of competitions.
- Festivals of a commercial nature organized to make a profit
- Trade or professional conferences/ conventions
- Award ceremonies
- Residential courses and associated events
- Primarily tourism focused events where the organization cannot demonstrate significant community involvement

- Applications for funding which are considered to be the responsibility of another statutory organisation or Council fund or applications that have applied for and secured funding from another Council programme.
- Retrospective expenditure where projects have started or services/items have already been obtained and paid.
- Applications where the applicant will have a personal financial benefit.
- Costs that are not auditable e.g. Cash payments unsupported by an approved petty cash system.
- Core running costs including overheads such as electricity, rent, rates, membership fees and annual premises and organisational insurance. Some costs may be eligible where they can be specifically identified as related to the festival only.
- Staff salaries - however, where staff are specifically festival-related, Council may consider allowing a proportion of basic salary costs. This must be discussed with Council staff before submission of an application. Staff costs may amount to no more than 10% of total costs and may be capped at the discretion of the assessment panel.
- Festival management / organising fees & professional and consultancy fees.
- Purchase of equipment.
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt.
- Costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere e.g. VAT.
- Alcohol costs, hospitality, refreshments.
- Gratuities, gifts and prizes.
- Provision for depreciation of assets used in the festival; corporation taxation; capital expenditure e.g. equipment such as computers, digital cameras etc.
- Charitable donations
- Accommodation or subsistence for judges
- Transport outside of the area/ community that the festival is taking place in
- Any costs not approved by the assessment panel.

### **1.8 Exclusions**

In general, the following will not normally be eligible to apply for funding from the Community Festival Fund:

- Individuals
- Groups operating outside the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area
- Organisations with charitable fundraising as their main focus
- Organisations who have substantial, demonstrable reserves
- Political Organisations

### **2.0 How to answer the questions**

Applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens should be submitted online at <https://grants.ccqbcapps.com/>.

Guidance on completing the application online is provided on the web-site link.  
Hard copies can be made available. Please contact the Central Funding Unit on email  
[grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

A draft itemised festival programme must be provided within the application indicating dates and activities with approximate times. This can be an initial draft as we understand that you may not have finalized details of events. A final programme must be submitted to Council at least 2 weeks prior to the event taking place.

**All questions must be completed as fully and concisely as possible. Please remember to answer each question fully as the Grants Assessment Panel can only take into consideration your answer to each individual question when allocating a score.**

**Please see below for help in completing your application.**

**Q1a. Please tell us about how your festival encourages community participation.**

How is your community involved in the planning, organizing and delivery of your festival as well as participating in the festival events?

e.g. do you involve volunteers outside of your committee? Do you consult with the community/invite feedback/suggestions for the programme? How do you do this – surveys/ newsletter etc.? How do you encourage people to become involved?

**Q1b. Please tell us about how your festival provides opportunities for people to improve their personal skills or receive training.**

e.g. Are there opportunities to improve communication, organisational, team working skills of organising committee? Will you provide or avail of specific training for volunteers such as health & safety, child protection, first aid, stewarding etc.? Will you offer training or educational opportunities as part of the programme e.g. music tutoring, craft classes, dance classes, football coaching.

**Q1c. Please tell us about how your festival helps promote inclusion in your community.**

Think about the needs in your community and how you can put measures in place to encourage accessibility and inclusion from people in the various Section 75 groups. For example:

Will your festival take place in an area of deprivation? Do people in your area experience rural isolation? You might find it useful to look at the deprivation statistics for your area at the following link: <https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/local-stats/>. Have you considered the affordability of your events?

Have you considered accessibility of your events for people with a disability, and what measures can you put in place to address this?

Tell us about how your activities will help develop respect, understanding and tolerance of the diversity of the residents in your community from different religious beliefs, political opinions or racial groups

**Q2a** Please indicate if you intend to use Council property for any of your festival activities. Please specify exact locations. Please tell us if you have sought permission to do so and who you have been in contact in Council.

**Q2b** Please tell us about any activities that you are planning for which you will require permissions or licenses. For example will you be preparing food and serving food to the public? Will your event include street trading? Are you planning a fireworks display? Or parade? Please tell us if you sought permission/license and what stage you are at in this process.

**Q2c** Please tell us about what measures you will take to reduce waste at your festival. Environmental issues are becoming more important for individuals and groups across our Borough. Your group can be part of a growing number reducing waste during events. Please tell us about any actions you have already taken or could take to reduce your environmental impacts and what difference they would make.

For example

1. Reducing single use plastics like disposable cutlery
2. Encouraging people to take left over food home
3. Separating waste so it can be recycled

Further guidance can be sought from a Council Environmental Resource Officer.

**Q6** Please indicate the District Electoral Area (DEA) and the Electoral Ward that your project will take place in; you can identify these from the map below:



### **3.0 How we assess and score your application**

Every application that is received requesting a Community Festival Fund Grant will be assessed for the following:

- to ensure that the organisation is eligible to apply to this particular Grant Programme
- for reassurance of each organisation's capability to deliver the proposal, and
- how well the proposal meets community needs and contributes to Council's Strategic Priorities and Department for Communities objectives for Community Festival Fund.

An acknowledgement receipt will be electronically issued to you once your submission has been received. The Funding Unit will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid, it will be forwarded to the relevant section for a full assessment and scoring against the stated criteria.

### **3.1 Eligibility assessment**

The assessments in respect of Part 1 of the application are awarded a pass or fail eligibility rating.

If the organisation, based on the information supplied is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will progress to the next part of the process.

### **3.2 What if an application is not eligible?**

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately and the reasons will be outlined to you, if your application is deemed ineligible, it will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If an organisation is not eligible for funding from the Community Festival Fund Grant Programme, organisations should contact the staff member listed on page 3 who will help signpost to other sources of funding.

To avoid duplication of funding, if an organisation or its activities are deemed to be the responsibility of other Council Departments, statutory agencies or voluntary bodies then an organisation will be signposted to a relevant agency / organisation that they should apply to.

Whilst your application cannot be re-directed to another fund, you may be signposted to another fund, where you will be required to complete and submit the relevant application form.

### 3.3 Assessment and Scoring

Each application will be assessed and scored against the criteria listed below:

All questions will be scored out of 5 and weighting will be applied as detailed below:

Application form Question that we will score the criteria from	Criteria	Score out of a possible 5	Weighting	Possible Score
<b><u>1a</u></b>	Strong community participation		X1	5
<b><u>1b</u></b>	Opportunities for people to improve their personal skills or receive training relevant to the project		X1	5
<b><u>1c</u></b>	Promotes inclusion and proactively puts measures in place to encourage this		X1	5
<b><u>6</u></b>	NIMDM 2017Ranking/ Access to Services Measure Ranking		X1	5
<b><u>8,9,10</u></b>	Demonstrate value for money and maximise income		X1	5
				<b>25</b>

**Applications must score 65% in order to avail of funding. However in the event of oversubscription Council reserves the right to increase the threshold for applicants to avail of funding.**

### 3.4 How decisions are made

When the assessment scores are finalised the applications will be presented to the Leisure and Development Committee for consideration and recommendation to full Council for approval.

It will be at this point, that the successful/unsuccessful applicants will be notified

### 3.5 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue a letter of offer which is a legal agreement with the organisation to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form.

Signed Letters of Offer will need to be returned before any funding is released

Successful organisations are required to submit an end of funding evaluation report. Officers may discuss the monitoring information with the groups that were funded and also with some of the people who have benefited from the community activity.

### **3.6 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?**

If an application is not successful officers from the Council will be available to meet with the organisation to go through their application, develop a working relationship and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process / Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed by Committees for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently. The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review Panel that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or
- that the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

### **3.7 Fraud and Corruption**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to carrying out business fairly, honestly and openly and has a zero tolerance towards fraud, bribery and corruption. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council expects full compliance with the requirements of both the Fraud and Corruption Policy and Bribery Act 2010 from Groups or Individuals applying for, or in receipt of grant aid. This is also relevant to Councillors, Employees, Agents, Partners and Suppliers involved in your project/event. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining effective procedures and controls to prevent any occurrence of fraud and corruption. The Fraud and Corruption Policy can be found on the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council website.

All cases of irregularities or anomalies involving attempted or suspected fraud will be reported to appropriate authorities, including the Northern Ireland Audit Office, PSNI and any other relevant funding body (if applicable) or departments within the Council (if applicable).

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council reserves the right to disallow any other grant applications and claims submitted by a group or an individual member of a group in respect of the financial year and to apply a moratorium on Council funding to any group or individual

member of a group where fraudulent activity has been identified within the current financial year and for at least two forthcoming financial years. This also applies to individuals applying or claiming for bursaries.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will inform the group's Chairperson where attempted or suspected fraud has been identified.

### **3.8 Government Funding Database**

Please be aware we are required to check the Government Funding Database (GFD) prior to making awards in order to avoid duplication of funding.

If registered on GFD we ask you to state your organisation's Unique Reference Number (URN) to help with this process. Details of grants awarded will be uploaded to the GFD, it is the responsibility of the applicant group to ensure that the organisation details held on GFD are up to date.

### **3.9 Late applications**

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing. Applications received after the closing time/date will not be considered for funding. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

### **3.10 Use of Council Land**

**Please Note:** If you wish to use Council land to hold an event, you must submit *A Request to Use Council Land* to Land and Property section in Council in writing at least eight weeks before the proposed event. To hold a large scale event, e.g. a concert, your application should be submitted at least six months in advance. Request can be submitted online at: <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/council/land-and-property>

## Appendix 1

### Data Protection Act

- We will 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.
- We 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.
- We may also share information with other government 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.
- We 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.

### Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act, we will release it, subject to exemptions, although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).