

**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme

**Meeting/Date:** Grants Panel – 5 March 2025

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing  
– Councillor S Wakeford

Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure  
– Councillor S Howell

**Report by:** Climate Co-ordinator

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme is a fund provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and is aimed at helping rural communities reduce their carbon footprint. A total of £257,376.60 is available for distribution as grants. This funding will be 'capital' funding, meaning it cannot be used to generate revenue for an organisation.

The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme welcomes applications from community groups and organisations who would like to support the District Council in achieving the following priorities that have been set out within the Corporate Plan for 2023-28:

- Improving the quality of life and well-being for everyone.
- Lowering carbon emissions.

And the Climate Strategy's district-wide key priorities:

- Sustainable travel with low emissions.
- Reduce energy use, shift to renewables
- Increase biodiversity and natural capital

There are 3 categories of project, as stipulated by the CPCA:

1. Tackling energy use and/or supporting energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings.
2. Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport.
3. Nature-based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings.

The projects must be able to demonstrate and measure the following impacts as relevant to their project:

- Reduce carbon emissions
- Reduce energy consumption
- Reduce running costs of community facilities
- Reducing the overheating of a building
- Demonstrating that a project can be replicated
- Ensure that the community are engaged in changes of behaviour towards tackling climate change

Applicants must have their projects geographically located in Huntingdonshire. The market towns of St Neots, St Ives and Huntingdon are excluded from this application.

Community groups and organisations were invited to submit expressions of interest from 16/12/2024 through to 26/01/2025. Successful expressions were invited to complete application forms from 03/02/2025 through to 28/02/2025. A panel will meet on 05/03/2025 to check the applications meet the criteria and select the successful applicants. Successful applicants will be announced on 10/03/2025. The final deadline as stipulated by the CPCA for the projects is no later than 14/03/2025.

The total amount to spend on this project is £257,376.60. Any unspent funds will be returned to the CPCA and shall not be carried forward.

All projects must be completed or before 28/02/2026.

**Recommendation(s):**

- a) To consider applications submitted to the Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme received by 23:59 on Friday, 28 February 2025 and determine whether they meet award criteria.
- b) To decide which applications will be allocated funding.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline details of the application process for the Net Zero Villages grant scheme. This scheme is available for applicants with assets based in Huntingdonshire (excluding the market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon and St Ives). The application window closes on 28/02/2025. Applications will be considered against the eligibility criteria documents.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?**

- 2.1 In setting the Combined Authority budget for 2024/25, £257,376.60 was set aside for Huntingdonshire District Council to award successful applications to the Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme.
- 2.2 From the commencement of the 2024/25 financial year, the panel has committed £23,894.00 to applicants, leaving £35,476.27 available for the remainder of 2024/25.
- 2.3 Grants start at £5,000 and will go up to £50,000 per project.
- 2.4 Successful applicants will be required to provide monthly project updates and submit an evaluation of their project once it has been completed to demonstrate the impact of the funding.
- 2.5 Once all funding has been allocated, the Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme will close.
- 2.6 Successful applicants will receive notification on 10/03/2025.

## **3. ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 Appendix 2 of the report provides a summary of applications that have been received. In establishing which Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme applications will be forwarded to the Grants Panel for consideration, funding criteria provided by the Combined Authority will be used, and it is against these criteria that the applications will be assessed.

## **4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS**

- 4.1 The funding awarded for the Net Zero Villages grant scheme must be awarded to projects applied for and approved before 14/03/2025, as stipulated by the CPCA.

## **5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 5.1 A grants panel will meet consider the applications in one sitting. Members will determine which projects should be allocated funding, scored against the criteria within the application eligibility documents. One grant panel meeting will be required as this is a one-off project. Officers will then advise all applicant organisations of the outcome.
- 5.2 Groups or organisations awarded funding must be able to confirm that their project can be delivered by 28/02/2026.
- 5.3 Any outstanding grant money at the end of the grant scheme will be returned to the CPCA.

- 5.4 If at any point before payment of an approved award, an applicant no longer requires the grant or the Grants Panel is informed that the criteria can no longer be met, the District Council will cancel the award.

## **6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

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## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme was advertised by the Council through a wide range of media including the District Council website, press releases and social media.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The funding of £257,376.60 allocated to the Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme is within the Combined Authority's approved budget.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 Applications recommended for consideration demonstrate that they satisfy the eligibility criteria set by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for the Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme.

## **10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

[Appendix 1 – Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme – Funding Criteria](#)

Appendix 2 - List of applications received, with officer comments – **TO FOLLOW**

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme Eligibility Criteria

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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