

Northumberland County Council

COVID-19 Discretionary Grant Fund Scheme

In response to the Coronavirus, COVID-19, the government announced there would be support for small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, delivered through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund.

This additional Discretionary Grant Fund is aimed at some of the small and micro businesses within Northumberland which were not eligible for either the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Fund.

This Discretionary Grant Fund widens access to support to businesses who are struggling to survive due to the Coronavirus shutdown but are unable to access other grant funding.

Scope of this Discretionary Grant Fund

The Government has set national criteria for the award of funds under this scheme. The grant funding under this scheme is primarily aimed at small and micro businesses (described below), businesses with high ongoing fixed property-related costs, and businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Northumberland County Council recognises that a number of small sized businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry are vital to the economy of the County, but have missed out on a grant under the earlier Government funding streams.

Which businesses this scheme will support

This grant is aimed at businesses that are significant tourist attractions in Northumberland - destinations for tourists seeking an educational experience connected with the history, heritage and outstanding natural beauty of Northumberland.

Only established tourist attractions that have been operating for 12 months or more will be eligible.

Examples of the types of business that will and will not be eligible are shown in the table below.

Eligible	Not Eligible
Museums, educational and outdoor learning businesses. e.g. a museum or attraction celebrating unique aspects of the county's history, heritage or culture. e.g. outdoor learning centre, including those aimed at people with specialist educational needs. Organisations providing access to inaccessible landmarks and areas of the	Indoor or Outdoor sporting activities or events businesses. e.g. sporting activities, events or facilities that are not unique to Northumberland, including soft play areas, adventure companies, festival and events companies. Holiday parks and accommodation. e.g. B&Bs, Hostels, Campsites, Self-Catering facilities.

<p>county as tourist and / or educational attractions.</p> <p>e.g. educational trips to islands off the Northumberland coast.</p>	<p>Businesses or organisations with no significant non-residential property or leasing costs or other overheads.</p>
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Level of Grants available

The value of the grant funding will be determined by the evidence provided of the extent of the loss of income and ongoing fixed costs incurred during the COVID period with grants of up to £10,000, £10,000 or £25,000 being awarded.

Eligibility Criteria

- 1 Northumberland County Council can only accept applications from small and micro sized businesses operating from a location in Northumberland.
2. This grant funding is for businesses that are not eligible for other support schemes. Businesses which are eligible for cash grants from any central government COVID-related scheme (apart from the Self Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) are ineligible for funding from the Discretionary Grants Fund. Applications cannot be accepted from businesses which have received funding from (or are eligible to receive funding from) the following funding schemes:
 - Small Business Grant Fund
 - Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant
 - The Fisheries Response Fund
 - Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS)
 - The Zoos Support Fund
 - The Dairy Hardship Fund
 - Discretionary COVID 19 grants
3. Only businesses which were trading on 11 March 2020 are eligible for this scheme.
4. Companies that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made are not eligible for funding under this scheme.
5. Any payments which would breach State Aid rules cannot be made by the County Council under this scheme. Detailed State Aid requirements are attached as Appendix A to this document. The County Council requires applicants to confirm that by accepting payments under this Scheme, grant recipients are in compliance with State Aid rules.
6. Businesses will need to demonstrate that they have suffered a loss of income as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions.
7. Businesses will need to demonstrate relatively high ongoing fixed costs associated with operating your tourist attraction i.e. Utilities, Rent, Insurance, Leasing, Licence, etc.

It is envisaged that only one payment will be made per business, in order to maximise the number of businesses in Northumberland which can be supported under this Scheme.

Please note, grant income received by a business is taxable therefore funding paid under the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund will be subject to tax.

How to apply for the COVID-19 Discretionary Grant Fund

This grant funding scheme must be applied for by means of an online application form, available on Northumberland County Council's website, which [can be accessed here](#).

Queries regarding this scheme can be addressed to the County Council at the following dedicated website address:

NCCdiscretionarygrants@northumberland.gov.uk

The online form guides businesses through the application process and prompts applicants for the information required, as well any supporting documents needed (see 'Evidence to support application' below).

All applicants will be required to demonstrate loss of income related to Covid-19 as part of the application process. The applicant must make a declaration regarding this, and provide supporting documents with their application. The Council may write to ask for additional supporting documentation where necessary.

Evidence to support applications for a discretionary grant

Applicants for funding under this Discretionary Scheme will be required to provide proof of their eligibility for funding under this scheme, i.e. their compliance with the eligibility criteria set out above.

Applicants will also be required to provide financial records to demonstrate that they have suffered a drop in income related to the COVID-19 restrictions, along with documentation to demonstrate information such as rateable value of premises, annual value of rent or other fixed property costs, etc.

The information required and examples are included as prompts within the online application form.

Timescale for Applications

Applications will open from the 29th July to the 16th August.

Variation to the Fund

The Council reserves the right to vary the terms of the scheme at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so.

If the fund is oversubscribed with the applications received, the Council reserves the right to amend the grant levels on a pro-rata basis.

Appeals

There is no appeal process.

Managing the risk of fraud

Neither the government nor Northumberland County Council will accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.

It is important that applicants ensure that they provide accurate bank details for grant payments and that these relate to the business concerned.

More information on Business Grants

The full Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy guidance on the Discretionary Grant Scheme can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887310/local-authority-discretionary-fund-la-guidance-v2.pdf

For more information on the earlier business grants – the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund, please visit:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881040/business_support_grants-local_authorities_guidance.pdf

To apply for the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund, please visit:

https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/covid19_emergency_grant

Appendix A:

State Aid Requirements – Northumberland County Council Discretionary Grant Scheme

Any business seeking to receive a grant under this Scheme will, by submitting their application by way of the online form available on Northumberland County Council's website, be required to confirm that they have read and understood the following paragraphs relating to State Aid.

Businesses are also required to make a statement that acceptance of any grant funding by them conforms with State Aid requirements.

Confirmation of State Aid received under the COVID-19 Temporary Framework for UK Authorities scheme

Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the European Commission has approved schemes to aid businesses affected by the Coronavirus outbreak on the basis of their Temporary Framework, including the COVID-19 Temporary Framework scheme for the UK.

The maximum level of aid that a company may receive is €800 000 (€120 000 per undertaking active in the fishery and aquaculture sector or €100 000 per undertaking active in the primary production of agricultural products). This is across all UK schemes under the terms of the European Commission's Temporary Framework. The Euro equivalent of the Sterling aid amount is calculated using the Commission exchange rate applicable on the date the aid is offered, and may be accessed here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro_en

Any aid provided under this scheme will be relevant if you wish to apply, or have applied, for any other aid granted on the basis of the European Commission's Temporary Framework. You will need to declare this amount to any other aid awarding body who requests information from you on how much aid you have received. You must retain this letter for four years after the conclusion of the UK's transition from the EU and produce it on any request from the UK public authorities or the European Commission.

Aid may be granted to undertakings that were not in difficulty (within the meaning of Article 2(18) of the General Block Exemption Regulation) on 31 December 2019, but that faced difficulties or entered in difficulty thereafter as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The General Block Exemption Regulation can be accessed here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02014R0651-20170710>

If you are an undertaking in difficulty within the meaning of Article 2(18) of the General Block Exemption Regulation you may still be entitled to de minimis aid if you have received less than €200,000 in de minimis aid in the last three years. You should contact us if you consider that you may qualify for de minimis aid on this basis.

This aid is in addition any aid that you may be have received under the De Minimis regulation allowing aid of up to €200,000 to any one organisation over a three fiscal year period (i.e. your current fiscal year and previous two fiscal years), and any other approved aid you have received under other State aid rules, such as aid granted under the General Block Exemption Regulation.