Application for the NHI Community Futures Fund

Discretionary Grants of £5,000 to £15,000

For your application to be processed efficiently, please ensure that you answer **ALL** questions on the application form and submit all required supporting documents.

Please submit by email to info@north-highlands.co.uk

Application Guidelines

The NHI Community Futures Fund (CFF) supports long-term community sustainability across the North Highlands by investing in organisational resilience, people and community-led solutions to the challenges of depopulation, rural isolation and service sustainability.

This fund complements, rather than duplicates, the existing Community Infrastructure Support Programme (CISP). Applications should focus on people, capacity, organisational resilience and access to services, rather than general infrastructure, building repairs or environmental improvements already eligible under CISP.

Funding Priorities

Priority 1: Community Sustainability and Capacity

We welcome applications that strengthen the long-term sustainability of community organisations, increase organisational capacity, support volunteer recruitment and retention, and build the leadership and skills needed to address local challenges.

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Development officer posts
- Community support worker posts
- Volunteer coordinator posts
- Youth worker and leadership posts
- Volunteer recruitment and succession planning

Priority 2: Rural Isolation and Access

We welcome applications that improve access to services and opportunities for rural communities, reduce isolation and exclusion, support innovative community-led solutions, and increase participation in community life.

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Community transport initiatives
- Mobile and outreach services
- Childcare and family support projects
- Digital inclusion projects

- Community-led access solutions
- Pilot projects addressing transport barriers
- Projects connecting isolated residents to services and support
- Community networking and collaboration initiatives
- Rural service innovation projects

Activities Not Supported Under CFF

- General building repairs
- Community hall maintenance
- Playparks and recreational equipment
- Public seating and paths
- Community gardens
- General environmental improvements
- Energy efficiency measures
- Small-scale infrastructure projects

These activities are already eligible under the existing CISP and should not be the main focus of a CFF application.

Geographical Area Covered by this Fund

We welcome applications from community organisations and partnerships working across the North Highlands and wider NHI area, including Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty and the islands of Orkney, Shetland, Lewis and Harris.

Funding Limits and Priorities

Applications will be considered for grant awards between £5,000 and £15,000.

Multi-year funding may be considered where appropriate, with awards of up to £15,000 per year for up to three years, subject to the applicant demonstrating a sustained need, clear outcomes and organisational capacity to deliver.

Funding will prioritise projects that focus on people and capacity, support organisational resilience and service sustainability, encourage collaboration and partnership working, and create long-term impact for rural communities.

Application Timetable

Applications will be accepted from 1st October 2026 until 5th January 2027.

NHI will review all applications on receipt and confirm with the applicant their eligibility and fit with the fund criteria.

All eligible applications will be reviewed after 5th January 2027 by the NHI funding panel to finalise awards. Grant awards and fund transfers are expected to be completed by the end of February 2027.

Application Supporting Documentation Required

- A copy of your organisation’s constitution or charitable information, including charity number if applicable.
- A copy of your organisation’s most recently approved financial statements, not older than 18 months.
- A project budget showing the full costs of the proposed activity.
- Written or email quotations for any goods or services required, where relevant.
- Evidence of match or partnership funding, where the application is submitted with confirmed income from other sources

Unconfirmed Funding from Other Sources

Applications with unconfirmed funding from other sources will be reviewed and may be considered by the funding panel. However, all required match or partnership funding must be secured and evidence provided before NHI finalises any grant award. The project must not commence until NHI has confirmed the grant and payment arrangements in writing.

Payment of Grant

Grant payments will normally be made in instalments over the grant period.

For multi-year grants, funding will be allocated and paid on an annual basis, with an initial payment made at the start of each year and the remaining balance paid later in that year.

The precise payment schedule will be confirmed as part of the grant agreement and may be subject to satisfactory progress, receipt of any required reports and compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

Use of the Grant

If any of the grant has not been spent by the agreed end date, you must tell NHI promptly. NHI will direct you either to repay the unspent funds or to use them for another charitable purpose. You must not repay the funds or use them for another purpose until NHI has authorised this in writing.

Project Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to provide reports at specified points during the grant period. Reports are linked to the release of grant payments and will normally be required before each subsequent instalment is paid.

For a one-year grant, the recipient will normally be required to submit a progress report before release of the second instalment, followed by a final report at the end of the grant period.

For a multi-year grant, a report will normally be required before release of the second instalment in each year. An annual report will also be required at the end of each grant year to demonstrate progress against the agreed activities and outcomes and to confirm how the funding has been used. A final report will then be required at the end of the grant period.

The grant agreement will confirm the specific reports and supporting documents required, their deadlines and the conditions that must be met before subsequent payments are released.

Supporting documentation may include evidence of expenditure, invoices, receipts, bank statements, photographic evidence or other relevant documentation, as specified in the grant agreement.

Recovery/Clawback

NHI reserves the right at any time to recover the grant, in whole or in part, to the extent that it is not used for eligible purposes, if NHI considers that any other terms or conditions of the grant are not being fulfilled, or if required by any applicable law.