**CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL FUND GUIDANCE AND CRITERIA**

**2025/2026**

1. **Purpose & Eligibility**

Ards and North Down Borough Council have established a Christmas Festival Fund. The purpose of the fund is to enable communities to run local festivals to celebrate the festive period and MUST include switching on of Christmas Lights.

1. **Restrictions**

The fund is restricted to the towns and village detailed below, where the Council provides Christmas trees and lights, but does not organise and run Christmas Festivals for the community.

Applications are welcome from the following towns and villages:

**Villages –**

Ballygowan Cloughey Kircubbin

Ballyhalbert Greyabbey Millisle

Ballywalter Groomsport Portaferry

Carrowdore Helen’s Bay Portavogie

Conlig Killinchy

**Towns –**

Comber

Donaghadee

Holywood

The Christmas fund is restricted to constituted community groups only.

Only one application per town or village will be supported. Therefore, where more than one constituted community group is active within a town or village, potential applicants are advised to collaborate and work in partnership with each other to run a Christmas Festival.

This funding is for Christmas Festivals **only**. Applications for other festivals will not be considered. The Christmas grants cannot be used in conjunction with any other Council funding streams.

**Applicants need to be aware that the date you have entered on the application may be subject to change due to availability (alternative dates would be offered) of Councils Works Team/Electricians.**

1. **Time frame**

The Christmas Festival applications open once a year with the opportunity to apply for up to £1000 for Villages and £3000 for towns (as listed above), subject to funds being available. They shall be advertised in the local press and on the council’s website and social media.

Opening/closing dates – grant opens **Monday 11th August 2025 at 9am**

**and closes Friday 29th August 2025 at 12 noon** for local festivals/Christmas light switch on taking place from 1st November 2025 to 31st December 2025.

The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register. If you would like to be registered please follow this link and complete the form: [https://bit.ly/ANDBC-CIR](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbit.ly%2FANDBC-CIR&data=05%7C02%7CNicola.McClurg%40ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%7Ced8de5dfad614d910dae08dc7b2044f1%7C39416dee5c8e4f5cb59d05c4bd0dd472%7C0%7C0%7C638520625736089367%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=z3YlHHwEEtLzSr6Fq3rwdkQ%2BRU7c3It0APHim0vqKl4%3D&reserved=0)

Council officers cannot complete application forms on behalf of applicants.

1. **Financial Information**

A Letter of Offer (LoO) will be issued to all successful applicants, outlining the details of the funding and the conditions of the award including adhering to publicity requirement, evaluation and monitoring returns. Advance payments of up to 50% may be paid to the applicant once the signed acceptance has been returned. An advance payment is subject to a written request outlining the need of an advance along with the submission of the most recent bank statements and a projected cashflow statement. All applicants will be required to submit original invoices, receipts, and bank statements in order to verify all funding awarded. If this information is incomplete or not provided or the funding is not spent in line with approved costs, the funding must be repaid to council. **The maximum amount available is £1000 for villages and £3000 for towns, per group per application.**

1. **Exclusions**

The Community Festivals Fund will not provide funding for the following activities:

* Individuals
* Political organisations
* Festivals taking place outside the Ards and North Down area
* Festivals of a commercial nature, organised to make a profit
* Trade or professional conferences/conventions
* Festivals that are primarily fundraising events, are heavily branded with charity branding or deploy potential sources of income from a festival to a charity
* Awards ceremonies or industry events
* Residential courses and associated events
* Festivals that are social events for an organisation
* Primarily tourism focused events where the organisation cannot demonstrate significant community involvement
* Retrospective festivals/events that have already taken place
* Festivals/events which conflict with any Council run festival/event
* Sports clubs
* Non-constituted community groups
* Communities of interest

In addition to the above exclusions, examples of eligible and ineligible expenditure are outlined below:

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| --- | --- |
| **Eligible expenditure** | **Non-eligible expenditure** |
| Insurance for the festival (day or period of time the festival happens) | Gratuities, gifts and prizes |
| Venue Hire | Charitable donations |
| Entertainment costs –  Such as: Bouncy Castles, face painters, balloon modelling etc. | Cash payments unsupported by an appropriate petty cash system or committee expenditure forms. |
| Equipment hires | General running costs |
| Catering | Any costs not approved by the assessment panel |
| Advertising and marketing | Any costs not in the application form |
| Printing | Alcohol |
| Administration related to the festival (stationery, postage etc) | Staff salaries/Professional fees |

1. **Assessment Criteria and Scoring of Applications**

Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Community Development Grants Team by the closing date: **Friday 29th August 2025 at 12 noon.**

**Please note: Late or incomplete applications unfortunately will not be considered. Please ensure you are submitting the 2025/26 version of the application form. Any adjustments to the application or previous applications versions used will unfortunately be deemed ineligible.**

Applicants must complete the following sections of the application form:

**Section 1** - About your group / organisation – Questions 1 to 4 to be completed by **all** applicants but not scored

**Section 2** – About your Christmas Festival including, how you will promote it, volunteer involvement, collaboration and how it promotes inclusion and community relations and the costs. Finance table is not scored but must be completed by all applicants. Failure to complete this table will deem the application ineligible. – Questions 5 to 9 to be completed by **all** applicants. Each question is scored 0-5.

**Section 3** – Required information and application declaration. To be completed by **all** applicants but not scored.

Following submission of applications:

* Application forms received will not be reviewed until after the closing date deadline.
* All applications submitted will be acknowledged by email within three working days of receipt of the application and supporting documents.
* Eligible and fully completed applications, received by the closing time/date, will be assessed by a grant assessment panel against the criteria outlined.
* To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.
* Late, incorrect application version or incomplete applications will not be scored.
* Successful applicants will need to submit a risk assessment 4 weeks prior to the Christmas Festival

Please see the scoring measure below –

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Measure** | **Score** |
| Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses. | 5 |
| A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement. | 4 |
| The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark. | 3 |
| A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 2 |
| An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 1 |
| The applicant failed to address the question. | 0 |

1. **Council Land**

If your application is successful, you should be aware that if the festival is to be held on Council land, that appropriate permission must be applied for. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section, [landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) as soon as possible to make these arrangements.

1. **Road Closures**

If your application is successful, you should be aware that if a road is to be closed as part of your festival, that appropriate permission must be applied for. To seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission, please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, [licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

or telephone 0300 013 3333.

1. **Risk Assessment**

Successful applicants will need to submit a risk assessment 4 weeks prior to the Christmas Festival. Please see a risk assessment template in the link below but you can also use your own -

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**Return of Completed applications:**

Completed applications should be returned preferably via email in pdf format with supporting documentation to [communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

If emailing your application please enter the name of your organisation in the subject line followed by - Christmas Festival Grant 2025.

Or hand deliver or post to :

Community Development – Christmas Grants 2025

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Signal Centre, 2 Innotec Drive

Balloo Road

Bangor

BT19 7PD

If you have any queries, contact Stephen Archibald – Community Development Officer 0300 013 3333 ext. 40351 or alternatively [stephen.archibald@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.archibald@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)