

**Ards and North Down Borough Council
Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 2025/26
Guidance Notes**

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Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26

Closing Date 29 September 2025

PLEASE NOTE LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Background

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Tourism Service has secured a limited budget in 2025/26 to deliver a pilot grant scheme for eligible groups/organisations to support small *Neighbourhood Tourism initiatives. It will be open for one call only in 2025/26.

The Council recognises the importance of assisting residents to become ambassadors for their local area through the promotion of their city, towns and villages by sharing knowledge and telling local stories to visitors. Tourism NI, through its Embrace a Giant Spirit campaign believes that what makes Northern Ireland stand out is the people – it lies in the warmth of the welcome and passion that locals offer visitors**. This grant's intention is to support communities to develop capacity to deliver on this requirement.

Aim of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund

The aim of the Fund is to offer small grants to eligible groups/organisations to support the delivery of neighbourhood tourism initiatives within their community which can attract visitors or add to the existing tourism offering, thereby increasing dwell time and spend in their city, town or village whilst supporting local volunteers and increasing civic pride and a sense of belonging.

This will help us meet outcome 4 of the Big Plan that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy and the Council Corporate Plan economic priority of attracting more businesses and jobs.

****Definitions**

*Neighbourhood Tourism Initiatives – tourism products/experiences that support social and economic development of local neighbourhoods and communities.

**Visitor – someone from outside the Borough.

Objectives of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26

1. To enhance the sustainable visitor experience of the Borough.
2. To increase local tourism spend by attracting attendees and participants, especially those from outside the Borough.
3. To build the capacity of local groups interested in supporting local tourism.

ELIGIBILITY

Only **one** application per group/association is permitted.

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26 is not a core funder.

Eligibility Criteria

Applications will be accepted from

- Appropriately constituted not for profit groups/organisations and charities (a constituted organisation is one that has a simple set of rules to help make it clear to everyone involved what you intend to do and how you intend to operate).
- Must operate in the Borough of Ards and North Down.
- Application must meet the necessary criteria detailed below.
- Suggested neighbourhood tourism initiative must be open to the public.
- Must be in the position to submit all claim documentation by 31 March 2026.

We require all applicants to enclose the following documents with your application. If not included the application **will not be scored**.

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association
- Most recent AGM Minutes / Inaugural minutes
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts / Most recent Bank Statement as appropriate

Should your groups/organisations be recently formed or not been operational for long enough to have a set of accounts, please indicate this within the declaration within the application. In this instance, we require to see a bank statement showing the groups/organisations name or proof of the account being opened.

Organisations/groups can only apply for funding through **one** application. This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit and need.

Ineligible Applications

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders.
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions.
- Organisations not legally established in the UK.
- Associations/groups not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs.
- Retrospective activity undertaken, or items purchased outside the specified award period, or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed.
- Activity or any aspects relating to the grant outside of the Borough.

- Activity which conflicts with any Council run activity or project.
- Activity that does not foster Section 75, promote positive attitudes, equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group.
- Activity that is substantially a fundraising vehicle, whether for the association/group or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

General principles which apply to the Neighbourhood Tourism Fund

- Applications to this fund will be open to all associations/groups that can meet the eligibility criteria and aims and objectives of the fund, irrespective of whether they are established or emerging.
- If an application is successful in receiving funding, the award must be spent on eligible related costs and within the stated period.
- Neighbourhood Tourism activity should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of the Borough.
- Groups/organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations regarding the safe delivery of and access to their activity.
- It is a prime responsibility of Government to ensure the proper and efficient use of and the accountability of public monies. To this end, applicants must provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS - GUIDANCE

Ards and North Down Borough Council wish to support the development of Neighbourhood Tourism to positively impact the visitor experience and benefit the local economy.

The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. Please refer to guidance for each question. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of your application. It is important to be realistic and open in your responses as, if successful, some conditions within your Letter of Offer will be based on information in your application. You must include all relevant information within the required word limit.

Only information provided in the answers within the application form will be scored, no other information will be taken into consideration. Scores will be attributed as indicated.

1.1 Provide a brief description of your group, its history, structure and membership. (This section is not scored, max. 200 words.)

1.2 Please detail the current activity delivered by your association/group which is of interest to visitors. This should include, but not be limited to, any current activity/initiative embracing the theme of Neighbourhood Tourism, the types of customers/visitors currently engaged, how frequent and when it happens, location of activity/initiative and how they may increase spend locally. (Scored 0-4, max. 300 words) *e.g. tours of the village for visitors and members of the public who spend locally, running each weekend June and July, which have happened for the previous two summers and have included visitors from USA, Europe and GB.*

1.3 A: How will the funding be spent – detail what you will purchase, itemised cost in the table below.
B: Detail how the purchase will develop and support your group/organisation in enhancing your offering and the local tourism experience? (Scored 0- 4, max 300 words)

Please mention what you would spend the grant on – e.g. purchase of branded polo shirts for 10 volunteers who regularly engage with visitors, this would allow them to be identified on site or at activities helping them to assist with enquiries. Purchase of audio equipment will enable an

improved tour for those hard of hearing. Pop-up display boards will enable more of the story to be told on site for those not anticipating in a tour etc.

VAT Information: Please indicate your group/organisation's VAT status within the application and VAT number if applicable.

Please note - If your group/organisation is registered for VAT, costs listed should only be for the net amounts (ex VAT). If your group/organisation is a Registered Charity, costs listed should include VAT.

SECTION 2: BUDGET

Organisers may apply for a minimum of grant of £500 and maximum of £2,000 up to 100% funded.

Up to 50% of grant can be paid in advance*

- The full grant will be paid upon return of receipts and proof of payment are complete**

*Advance payments in relation to this grant can be issued by the Council where a specific written request is submitted demonstrating the need for the payment. The need for an advance payment may require a projected cash flow for the life of the project, along with an up-to-date bank statement.

**Subsequent payments will only be made following satisfactory verification of interim claims.

Table 2.1 - Expenditure – please list all items funding is being sought for in the table provided. (This section is not scored). Please be as accurate as possible.

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Items of uniform	Utility costs
Display Equipment (e.g. pull ups panels)	Insurances
Personal Radio / Mic equipment	Fees
Print	Hire fees
Training (not being provided by ANDBC in other activity)	Venue hire
Marketing, advertising, promotional materials	Charges, e.g. banking
	Prizes/awards
	Salaries, staff fees, consultancy fees
	Hospitality
	Cash payments
	Legal fees
	Membership fees
	Charitable donations

WHAT THE GRANT WILL NOT FUND

- General running costs.
- Events/Festivals.
- Projects.
- Purchase of machinery.

- Events, projects or activities which conflict with any Council run project, event or activity and or are not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.
- Groups/organisations not legally established in the UK.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

EVALUATION

Following the closing date, applications will be assessed and scored according to the scoring matrix below.

Evaluation Panel

Your application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least three officers of which one will be from the service delivering the grant. At least two other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.

Evaluation Criteria

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 4 using the matrix detailed in the table below.

Oversubscription to the Fund

Where the amount of the grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

Measure	Score
Excellent response that fully answers the question with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses	4
A good response to the question with good supporting evidence.	3
A response with reservations. Lacks convincing detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

A pass mark of 60% has been set for the Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 2025/26.

Oversubscription to the Fund

Where the total amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

DEADLINE

The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund will close at on **Monday 29 September at 12noon**. Incomplete applications or those received after this time will **NOT** be considered.

Return to

Email (preferable) tourism.admin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to: **Visitor Information Centre, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED** clearly marked **NEIGHBOURHOOD TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION**.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe.

TIMETABLE

Scheme advertised	21 August 2025
Scheme open	21 August 2025
Scheme close	29 September 2025
Date of Assessment	Week commencing 6 October
Award and regret letters issued	Week commencing 13 October
Letter of acceptance to be received by	Friday 31 October
Completion of grant period	31 March 2026
Claim to be submitted	31 March 2026
Monitoring Paperwork to be Submitted	28 February 2026

If your application is **unsuccessful**, you will be notified via email with the reasons clearly stated. You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure. Feedback on your application can be provided on written request. However, an appeal can only be made where an applicant can evidence that the process of assessment was not followed in accordance with the criteria detailed in the Guidance Notes.

The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications. Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.

If your application is successful, we will:

- arrange a meeting with Council officers to discuss and agree the Letter of Offer (LoO) conditions and our requirements for your grant.
- send you a LoO confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within four weeks of the date printed on the LoO.

Monitoring

- Expenditure Sheet

- Proof of purchases / Receipts
- Section 75 monitoring form (where applicable)
- Grant Claim Form
- Report on how the grant has benefited Neighbourhood Tourism activity provided to Council

Annex A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SAFEGUARDING

Individuals and organisations working with children, young people and/or adults who may be vulnerable must have an existing policy that ensures good practice guidelines are followed.

Further information on the Council's Safeguarding policy can be found at the following link:
<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Safeguarding>.

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) aims to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably than people who are not disabled. It covers access to goods, services, facilities, education and transport. This means that you have a duty to anticipate that disabled people will want to use your services and you should make changes accordingly to increase accessibility.

The DDA also requires employers not to discriminate against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments for applications and in the workplace.

We expect all applicants to be familiar with the DDA and have made reasonable adjustments that aim to provide equality of access, dignity and choice.

SECTION 75 CATEGORIES

Section 75 categories are:

Religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependents

CONTACTS

Email tourism.admin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Tourism Development, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED