

## **Aberdeenshire Town Centres “Phoenix Fund”**

**Launch : May 2020**

### **GUIDANCE NOTE FOR APPLICANTS**

Thank you for your interest in Aberdeenshire Council’s Town Centres Phoenix Fund.

This is a one-off Grant being made available to eligible town centres across Aberdeenshire to support the re-boot of our town centre economies following the Covid-19 lockdown period.

By the time the social distancing measures related to COVID-19 are relaxed, our town centre economies will have been impacted significantly. Restrictions on non-essential retail, food and drink and the closure of other services – public and private – will inevitably have and will continue to result in difficult decisions for business owners, big and small. We could also be faced with communities – and customers – with lower levels of confidence, and perhaps less disposable income.

So, as we emerge the other end, our town centres will still be there and their purpose will not have changed, though you may face several new – or bigger – challenges. You may need to remind people that your businesses are still here and that you have an ‘experience’ to offer them.

There are opportunities too! Could we use this moment in history to build on the renewed community spirit and greater sense of awareness of how we can all help each other? It could also be a time to look at what we all do, how we’ve always done things and see whether there are ways we can do things differently to respond to the ‘new normal’. Innovation, hard work, flexibility and creativity will be essential.

The Aberdeenshire Town Centres Phoenix Fund is here to help our town centres to get back on their feet, but also to start the discussions about how we support and re-imagine our town centre economies to improve experience, drive growth and collaboration and support future sustainability and resilience.

You need to be ready – individually and collectively! There is a future and it will be here before you know it and now is a good time for our town centre communities to work together to make up for lost time.

### **Call for Proposals**

Aberdeenshire Council is inviting Applications from any town centre listed as being eligible to apply. If your town centre is not listed, then you can still register your interest and we will contact you if there are funds available to extend the scheme.

If you intend to submit an Application to this Fund, you must notify us of your intention by e-mail to [phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) no later than **5pm on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020**. You do not need to have worked up the details of your project by this date.

We will then contact everyone who has registered their interest within one week informing you of the next steps.

If you are invited to proceed, applications can then be submitted at any time between **6<sup>th</sup> July and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020** using the Phoenix Fund Application Form which will be supplied.

Where possible, we aim to issue Funding Agreements within 3 weeks of an Application being submitted.

This is not a competitive fund so there is no need to rush in your application. Funding is guaranteed to be awarded to one application for each town centre listed below if the application meets the criteria of the scheme as outlined in this note.

### **Key features:**

1. Only 1 application per eligible town centre will be funded. If multiple applications from the same town are received, all projects will be asked to work together to agree and submit a single project;
2. Funding is for collaborative actions and for the collective benefit of businesses and services in the town centre;
3. This is a grant fund which can fund up to 100% of the costs of the project. Match-funding is not required, but if available could enhance the opportunities provided by the project;
4. This is not a competitive fund. Funding is guaranteed for applications that meet the minimum qualifying criteria.
5. The grant is accessed via a simple application form with 'light-touch' claiming and reporting requirements;
6. Projects can start as soon as funding is agreed (though timing of activities will depend on duration and status of the Covid-19 restriction measures);
7. Funding must be claimed by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and unused funds repaid to Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Who can apply?**

Projects must be private sector-led or with a strong private sector representation.

Only one Application will be accepted from each eligible Aberdeenshire town centre. This is likely to be from a Business or Traders Association or Network if they are formally constituted and have a bank account. Alternatively, a partnership with a lead organisation or company acting as the 'Accountable Body' could be proposed.

Other possible applicants could be Community Councils, BID Organisations, Rotary Clubs etc. if they are applying with the knowledge and agreement of town centre businesses and are able to enter into a formal grant funding agreement with Aberdeenshire Council.

Individuals cannot apply.

### **Eligible town centres**

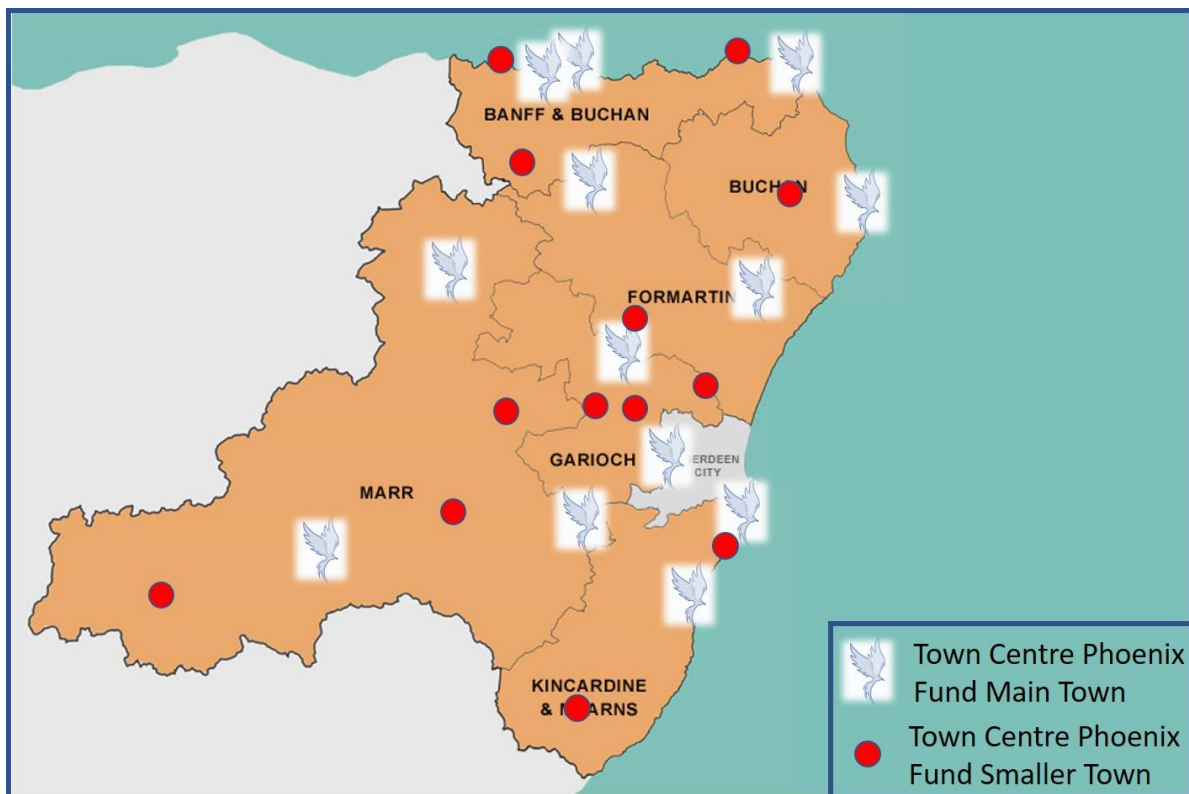
Unfortunately, it is not possible to fund activity in every Aberdeenshire town centre. The towns that have been selected for support have been chosen based on several indicators and characteristics.

**A Grant of £10,000** is available to each of the following 13 main towns centres in Aberdeenshire (one grant per town) and the funds are guaranteed if projects meet the minimum qualifying criteria:

- Ballater
- Banchory
- Banff
- Ellon
- Fraserburgh
- Huntly
- Inverurie
- Macduff
- Peterhead
- Portlethen
- Stonehaven
- Turriff
- Westhill

**A Grant of £5,000** is available to projects in the following 13 smaller town centres in Aberdeenshire (one grant per town) and the funds are guaranteed if projects meet the minimum qualifying criteria:

- Aberchirder
- Aboyne
- Alford
- Braemar
- Kemnay
- Kintore
- Laurencekirk
- Mintlaw
- Newmacher
- Newtonhill
- Oldmeldrum
- Portsoy
- Rosehearty



Where appropriate, towns can apply collectively and pool resources to deliver greater impact. Each town in such a partnership arrangement would still be entitled to receive the full Grant amount if this was needed.

#### **Non-eligible town centres**

Town centres that are not listed above but would like to participate can either:

- a) see whether there are any opportunities to get involved as a partner in projects in the eligible towns, and/or;
- b) register their interest to receive funding support by e-mailing [phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) by **5pm on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020**. When we have assessed the level of demand for the scheme, if there are funds remaining available, we will contact you within one week to inform you of the situation.

The Grants are awarded based on a flat rate amount (£10k or £5k) and any funds unspent at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 will need to be repaid to Aberdeenshire Council.

## Criteria

Funding **will** be made available to any project that:

- Is from one of the eligible towns in Aberdeenshire (one project per town);
- Has evidenced broad support, engagement and commitment from a wide business base in the town centre;
- Can show that it will be delivered collaboratively and in partnership to the collective benefit of the whole town centre economy and seeks to create a legacy of town centre co-operation and partnership;
- Proposes a reasonable, sensible and deliverable range of activities and initiatives to help ‘re-launch’ their town centre;
- Brings creativity and innovation to their proposal;
- Has an existing, or will set up a, project steering group (or similar) to manage and deliver the project and take decisions collectively;
- Has a lead Applicant who are constituted and are legally able to enter into a formal Grant Funding Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council and has a bank account;
- Attempts to source any purchases of goods and / or services to support the project as locally as possible.
- Agrees to participate in wider promotional or network activity across Aberdeenshire to recognise the importance of town centres to the economy and acknowledges the financial support of the Council.

## What can the Grant money be used for?

The fundamental principle of the Phoenix Fund is to help town centre businesses (collectively) to ‘re-launch’ their town centres, encourage footfall and economic activity following the COVID-19 lockdown.

Local business leaders know their town centres and their customers best, so we don’t want to be onerously prescriptive about what the Fund can and cannot be used for. You are best placed to decide what will and won’t work in your town. You should also bear in mind that the position with the relaxation – or even possible reinstatement - of lockdown measures could be fast-changing and unpredictable and therefore it is wise to plan for various scenarios.

The Fund is for revenue expenditure and likely to be used for the following type of activities, but we would encourage innovation and this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive:

- Communications and Marketing;
- Paid advertising – in the press, online, social media, local TV etc;
- Creating promotional materials, posters, leaflets, banners, videos;
- Loyalty schemes;
- Customer Offers and Incentives, Vouchers etc;
- Activities to increase footfall in the pre-Christmas period;
- New or extended shared digital platforms, e.g. websites, apps, social media;
- Competitions;
- Surveys and research to find out more about customer needs from their town centre;
- Shop window ‘messaging’;
- Events, markets, street parties (where such activity is allowed);
- Training, for instance skills development in customer service, digital commerce etc;
- Consultancy fees – for instance to support an understanding of longer-term town centre strategy, diversification, adaptation and resilience.
- Measures to help customer confidence and safety, e.g. to assist with social distancing principles and hygiene within the town centre.

## Exclusions

### The Grant cannot be used to pay for:

- Salaries, unless these are specifically linked to the direct cost of co-ordinating or delivering the project and in this case shall be limited to a maximum of 20% of the overall maximum Grant value;
- Capital costs, including substantial equipment purchases (unless these are specifically linked to measures to support hygiene / social distancing and benefit the overall town centre area);
- Making payment for an item or service that would otherwise be donated without charge;
- Subsidising activities or expenditure that was already planned (other than to significantly enhance the envisaged activities);
- Activities, items, or costs that benefit only one or a small number of organisations;
- Activities that are not compliant with Scottish or UK Government rules and requirements (advisory or formal) on social distancing or any other measures at any time during the project, or activities that are counter to any actions that Aberdeenshire Council is taking to facilitate the safe use of public spaces;
- Any costs associated with purchase or installation of Christmas lights.

The Grant money cannot be passed on to third parties unless they are purchasing goods or services as part of the project.

## Payment Arrangements

- The first 50% of the Grant will be paid upfront in advance upon agreement of the Application and acceptance of the Council’s Grant Funding Agreement;
- The remaining 50% will be paid on request – and no later than 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 - subject to demonstrating that the initial upfront funds are nearly used. To reduce the burden on the applicant at this stage, this can be done without any form filling and through a simple meeting or conversation to provide an update on the project.

- At the end of the project (and no later than one calendar year after the project physically starting), a short report and financial summary - including a list of expenditure items - must be produced to show how the funds have been used and the impact that they have had.
- Funding that is not used for the project shall be repaid in full to Aberdeenshire Council.

### Measures of Success

Each project will be different but will be expected to provide some basic measures to summarise the impact that their project has had. These will need to be considered at the outset and targets provided in the Application form. Output measures could include, for instance:

- No. of businesses involved / participating in the project;
- Increase in Footfall in the town centre;
- No. of Volunteers involved in the project;
- No. of Events held;
- No. of Attendees at Events;
- New Schemes, Products or Services launched / implemented
- No. of Marketing Campaigns
- Increase in social media engagements
- No. of Business networks created or enhanced
- Customer feedback

### Timings

Fund Launch	May 2020
Register Intent to Submit	By Friday 26th June 2020, 5pm (Mandatory)
Submission of Applications	Any time between 6 <sup>th</sup> July and 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Funding Letters Issued	Within 3 weeks of an Application being submitted
Projects to Claim Funds	By 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
Projects to End	Within one calendar year of starting

### Correspondence

All correspondence and queries; to register an intent to participate; or to submit an Application form for the Aberdeenshire Town Centres Phoenix Fund should be via e-mail to: [phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:phoenixfund@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

