

Application Guidance
Lewis Hub Local Fund

Document Classification | **Public**

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

What is the Lewis Hub Local Fund?

This Local Fund is funding for communities close to the Lewis Hub site at Arnish Moor.

This Fund is associated with infrastructure relating to the Lewis Hub:

- A High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Converter Station
- An Alternating Current (AC) Substation

The structure and priorities of this fund align with the preferences expressed by communities hosting the infrastructure listed above, following a consultation period in May and June 2026. The consultation report can be found here and the fund proposal, which was based on the consultation can be found here.

Who can apply?

The Lewis Hub Local Fund can support projects that are based in the following areas:

- North Lochs, Laxdale, Stornoway and Sandwick

Applications from organisations based outwith these areas will also be considered, provided there is evidence that the project provides significant benefits to those living in the area of benefit.

You don't have to be a registered charity to apply, but your organisation must have a constitution and not be set up for individual profit. The reason that we ask applicants to have a constitution is that it sets out the purpose, rules and regulations of your organisation. If you need support to write a constitution or set up your group, there is support available through the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and through your local Third Sector Interface. Please get in touch directly with the Community Investment Manager (community.benefit@sse.com) if you are unsure about your organisation's eligibility.

Statutory bodies, such as local authorities, are only eligible to apply for the fund if they do so in partnership with community organisation(s) and the community organisation must be the lead applicant. Funding is not available for any projects that are generally understood to be the primary responsibility of statutory authorities, so these partnership projects must show clear additional outcomes and impact.

A full list of project types which will **not** be accepted is available in the FAQ section.

What is the fund value and timescale?

The fund has a total lifetime value of £1,060,000 which will be delivered over a period of five years.

£212,000 will be available in this funding round. Funding is available for projects from £1,000 up to a maximum of £100,000.

- Applications open: 11 November 2026
- Application deadline: 12 noon on 3 February 2027
- Awards made: May 2027

What are the aims of the fund?

Based on the feedback from the community consultation, this fund will support projects that fall within the following themes:

1. Health and well-being (including tackling social isolation and intergenerational projects).

2. Accessible/affordable activities for children and young people (including activities, equipment and travel).

3. Community-led facilities and amenities (including community centres and leisure/gym/sports venues).
4. Capacity building of community bodies (including funding for skills development and people).

How are funding decisions made?

The decisions on who should receive funding will be made by the Western Isles' independent Local Investment Forum. This forum is made up of six community members and one SSEN Transmission representative, representing the communities of this and other local funds in the area. The forum will be supported by the SSEN Transmission Community Investment Manager to ensure consistent standards are applied throughout the decision-making process.

The forum is in the process of being selected through an open recruitment process to ensure that the members have the relevant expertise and best represented the area. Once the forum has been recruited a list of its members will be available on the Fund page on the SSEN web site.

How will applications be assessed?

Priority will be given to projects that deliver positive impacts within the area of benefit. Projects will be assessment on the following:

- **Fit with fund themes –** projects that fit the *fund themes* set out above.
- **Value for money** – providing evidence that the project has a high impact for the amount invested e.g. project outcomes, number of beneficiaries.
- **Community involvement** – evidence that the community/communities and relevant stakeholders have been engaged in the development and implementation of a project, e.g. surveys, service user involvement, community consultations, open days, letters of support, volunteering days etc.
- **Financial sustainability** – Evidencing that a project will continue beyond the funding period, or where this is not possible, defining an end point for the project and how it will be responsibly closed.
- **Community demand/need** – Evidence of an identified need and gap in local provision, e.g. Community Action Plan/Local Place Plan, service user surveys, research, SIMD data etc.
- **Deliverability** – Evidence that the project has been clearly thought through, that the required resources will be available to deliver the project (for example, through bringing in match-funding or loan finance) and that any partners needed to deliver the project are already committed to being involved. Contingency costs can also be included in your application. Whilst match funding is not a requirement, having other funding sources in place can provide supporting evidence of the viability of a project.

How was the value of the Lewis Hub Local Fund calculated?

All of our fund values are calculated based on the infrastructure values provided within UK Government Guidance on delivery of Community Benefit Funding for Transmission Infrastructure.

- **What level of funding is available?**

£1,060,000 is available over the lifetime of the fund (2027 to 2031). This means that £212,000 will be available each year for five years.

- **How were the fund themes identified?**

The structure and priories of this fund were developed and agreed with the affected local communities following a consultation period delivered over a month. The responses to the consultation were then sense checked with key stakeholders. During this time period, 92 people attended our in-person and online events and 158 completed our survey.

FAQs

- **Who is eligible to apply for funding?**

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be a legally constituted community group, a non-profit organisation, or a registered charity. Applications will only be considered if they are within the area of benefit, fall under the identified themes, and fit the fund assessment criteria.

Applications will not be considered if they fall under the following categories:

- The advancement of religion or politics (including requests to support the core activities of religious or political groups)
- Direct costs of energy consumption
- Community energy projects whose main purpose is generating electricity for sale
- The repayment of loans or payment of debts
- Trips abroad
- Feasibility studies
- Costs already incurred or activities which will take place before a funding decision has been made (retrospective funding)
- Payments towards areas generally understood to be the primary responsibility of a statutory authority

- **Can you apply for this fund if you have already applied for an SSE Renewables, other SSEN Transmission, or other SSE Community Benefit Fund?**

Yes – all funds are separate. Therefore, you can still apply for this fund if you have previously applied for, or are currently in the process of applying for, any other Community Benefit Fund.

- **What questions will I need to answer as part of my application?**

As part of your application, you will need to answer a series of questions designed to help us understand your project and its potential impact on the community. To assist you in preparing your application, we have provided a document that outlines all the questions you will encounter in the online application process.

We encourage applicants to familiarise themselves with these questions and prepare their answers in advance to ensure a smooth and efficient application experience. You can access the questions later in this document.

Taking the time to thoroughly prepare your responses will help us better evaluate your project and its alignment with our funding goals.

- **How do we find out which applications were successful?**

All organisations who apply will be contacted in May 2027 to advise whether your application has been successful. You will also be able to track the status of your application on the Community Investment Portal.

- **Who can I contact for advice and support?**

For advice and support contact Linsay Chalmers, Community Investment Manager at community.benefit@sse.com

If you have any problems in accessing or completing the application form using the Community Investment Portal, please contact communityfundadmin@sse.com. You can also read our dedicated SSE Community Investment Portal FAQ section.

Applying to the fund

- SSE operate an online Community Investment Portal. The portal ensures all applicant data is held securely and makes it easier for groups to apply for and manage grants.
- From 11 November 2026 you will then be able to click ‘Apply Now’ from the Lewis Hub Local Fund web page, which will take you to the SSE Community Investment Portal.
- To assist you in preparing your application, we have provided a sample form that outlines all the questions you will be asked in the online application process. We encourage applicants to familiarise themselves with the questions and prepare answers in advance to ensure a smooth and efficient application experience. You can view all the questions beginning on page 6 of this document below.
- SSE suggest you prepare your answers to the questions offline and then copy them into the online application.
- There are six stages to completing an application.
- You can view videos on navigating the SSE Community Investment Portal here.
- You can read Frequently Asked Questions about the SSE Community Investment Portal here
- If you have any problems in accessing or using the SSE Community Investment Portal, please contact the communtyfundsupport@sse.com

The process map overleaf visually outlines the application process for groups to become registered on the Community Investment Portal. The process is then outlined in more detail later in this document.

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Community Investment Portal Process Map

1 FUND WEBPAGE

- Click on "Begin New Application".
- This will take you to the SSE Community Investment Portal.

2 CHECK ELIGIBILITY

- Yes or No questions to ensure your project is eligible.

3 SET-UP USER ACCOUNT

- For **New Users only** (returning applicants skip to step 5).
- Click on "Not Registered".
- Enter your name and email address.
- Check your emails and click on confirmation link.
- Create your password.
- Your Username is your email address with .sse at the end, e.g. joe.bloggs@outlook.com.sse

4 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT HOMEPAGE

- Repeat Step 1 - Go to Fund Webpage and click on "Begin New Application".
- Answer Eligibility Questions again.
- Login to begin application.

5 SET UP GROUP ACCOUNT

- Answer questions relating to your group.
- **N.B. You must have your groups constitution/ governance document ready to upload to complete this step.**

6 APPLICATION FORM

- Answer questions and upload supporting documention relating to the project being applied for.
- Prepare in advance - application questions are provided at the end of this document .
- Applications will save at key points. To continue an existing application - click on the "Continue Existing Applications" on the Fund Webpage.

Guidance on the Community Investment Portal

Stage 1 – Fund webpage

- To access the correct application, you need to visit the fund webpage. If you are creating a new application, click 'Begin New Application' and then follow the steps below.
- If you have already created a draft application, please click 'Continue Existing Application' on the fund webpage, log in to your account, click 'My Applications' on the home screen, and then 'launch' next to your draft application.

Stage 2 – Eligibility

- When you access the Lewis Hub Community Fund application for the first time you will be asked to answer some yes and no questions to ensure your project is eligible for the fund.
- If your project is not eligible you will be directed to where you can find information about other SSE community funds.
- If your project is eligible, you will be directed to log on to the Community Investment Portal to access or create your user account.

Stage 3 – Setting up a user account

If you have previously used the Community Investment Portal, please log in using your username and password, and progress to Stage 5.

If you have never used the Community Investment Portal before, you will need to create an account.

To create an account, click 'not registered?' and enter your name and email address. You will then receive an email to confirm that the account has been registered, containing your username.

IMPORTANT

Please note that your username will be your email address with .sse at the end (e.g. joe.blogs@outlook.com.sse).

Please click on the link in the email to create a password.

Stage 4 – Community Investment Homepage

Once you have created a password, you will be automatically redirected to the Community Investment Portal homepage.

To continue with your application, please repeat Stage One (go to the relevant fund page, click 'Begin New Application' and complete the eligibility questions). You will then be able to log in and continue with the below steps.

Stage 5 – Creating a group account

When starting a new application, you will be asked to select the group you wish to apply on behalf of. If you have already completed an application on behalf of a group previously, you can select the group from the drop-down menu.

If this is your groups first time applying on the SSE Community Investment Portal you will need to register a group account. This information will be stored and used for all future applications by the group on SSE's Community Investment Portal.

IMPORTANT

You need to upload a copy of the group's constitution at this stage – make sure you have this available before starting.

You need to do stage five in one attempt to create an account on the system.

To create an account, you will be asked the following questions:

Question	Guidance to answer question
Name of group	This should be the name that appears on your group's governing document and bank account statement.
Type of group	You will be able to select from a list: Unincorporated voluntary or community organisation; SCIO; registered charity (other); Company limited by guarantee; Community Interest Company; Community Benefit Society; Community Council; Other If your group has one, you will be asked to provide its registered charity and/or company number so please have this to hand.
Phone number	Please enter a phone number on which we can contact the group to discuss the application or grant.
Website	
Number of people	○ on your group's board or management committee – in total, not just office bearers ○ employed by the group ○ who volunteer for the group.
Date Established	Please provide the date that your group's governing document was adopted, or if it is a registered company or charity, the date it was registered with the regulator.
What are the groups aims and objectives?	
What are the group' main activities?	Provide a summary of the main activities or services the group delivers and/or has delivered to-date.
Communities supported	State which communities or beneficiary groups your group supports. For example, all residents in the community your group is set up to benefit, or young people, or people who are not in education, employment or training.
Constitution upload	Upload the latest version of your group's governing document adopted by the members.

Correspondence address	
Registered address	This is the address at which your group or organisation is formally registered, which may differ from the correspondence address.

Stage 6 -Application form

You may prefer to prepare your answers to the project questions offline and then copy them into the application, The community investment manager can provide a word template of the questions if this would help you.

IMPORTANT

You need to upload a copy the following documents in stage two:

- A copy of one of the group's bank statements from the last three months
- A copy of the group's most recent approved annual accounts
- A copy of your project budget (or you can use the budget template provided in the application form)
- Copies of quotes for works or goods included in the project budget (if applicable)
- A copy of the organisation's Child Protection/Vulnerable Adult Policy (if applicable)
- Letters of support for your project (if applicable)
- Any other documents which you think are required in support of your application. For example, a business plan, and/or copies of any relevant permissions, such as planning permission.

PLEASE NOTE - due to GDPR we ask you not to include any photos which include people.

About the project

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please give a summary of the project or activity you are requesting a grant towards	The description should be no more than 25 words.
Please provide a postcode that best represents the project's delivery location.	The geographic area the project will be delivered in.
Please provide a description of the project (maximum 3000 characters)	We suggest you cover: • What you want to do. • How you will do this – e.g. the activities you will deliver, where/ when/ how often you will deliver them, how you will reach those you are seeking to benefit, any equipment needed, and how it will be used • How the community has been and/or will be involved in developing and delivering the project

	• Who will lead the project – their role(s), skills and experience • How you will monitor and evaluate the success of the project • The proposed start and end dates for the project.
How will you maintain / sustain your project after the period of our grant funding is finished? (maximum 3000 characters)	• If the project will continue beyond the period for which you are seeking grant funding, please let us know how you intend to continue it, including how you will secure any funding, volunteers, or other resources needed to do so. • Please also include relevant details if the project will help to make your organisation more self-sustaining.
How have you identified a need for this project within the local area? (maximum 2000 characters)	• Your project should address a current need and gap in local provision. • Where possible please provide relevant local data that demonstrates this e.g. from a local community plan, survey of your intended beneficiaries, labour market statistics, and/or neighbourhood statistics.
How many people will benefit from the project? (maximum 1200 characters)	Only include those who will benefit directly from the project. This may include any volunteers involved in delivering it. Please ensure the number you give is realistic. Please tell us how you arrived at this figure.
Will any jobs be supported by the project?	If yes, we will ask how many.
Will any community assets (e.g. community hall, footpath) be built and/or improved as part of the project?	If yes, we will ask how many.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

SSE's community programme supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will ask you to identify the primary UN Sustainable Development Goal that your project contributes to and will allow you to also identify secondary goals. You can find out more about the UN SDG's at: [Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)]

UN Sustainable Development Goal	Example
	Your project will improve people's well-being, physical health or emotional health e.g. community care services, sports classes, befriending services.

	Your project will support people to enter work, will help schools to deliver new activity or would help community members learn new skills.
	Your project helps communities to have affordable and modern energy e.g. insulation measures, new heating systems.
	Your project will enhance the local economy e.g. projects which employ people in the local area, the development of social enterprise activity, projects to increase tourism to the area.
	Your project will help enhance the local community e.g. improving a community hall, building new community sports Centre, running a community event.
	Your project will help to combat climate change e.g. community renewables.
	Your projects which help the local environment e.g. community owned forests, community gardens, community nature paths.

Project aims and success

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please explain how your project achieves the fund themes and priorities outlined on page 1 /2 of this guidance document. (maximum 4000 characters). Note this section relates to the fund themes and not the UN Sustainable Development Goals.	

Project Bank Details and Group Finances

Question	Guidance to answer question
Bank account holder's name	This is the name that your group's bank account is held in, as it appears on bank statements - it should be the name of your group.
UK FUNDS Sort code Account number	Please ensure the details you provide here are correct as this information will be used to make grant payments if you are successful in securing a grant.
Upload a copy of a recent bank statement	This should be from the last 3 months **This is a mandatory field on the form** so please make sure you have the statement available before starting the application.
Upload a copy of the group's latest accounts	This should be the version approved by the group's board or management committee. **This is a mandatory field on the form** so please make sure you have the statement available before starting the application.
Name, email address and position of an additional authorised bank signatory	You need to provide the details of a second person who is authorised to use your group's bank account. **Please ensure you enter these details correctly as this person will be e-mailed any grant offer letter for their countersignature.**
What are the main sources of income for the group? (maximum 1200 characters)	Provide brief details of how the group normally raises most of its income e.g. from local fundraising, grants, charges for services, etc
Total income and surplus/deficit from the uploaded financial accounts	The figures you provide should match those in the group's approved annual accounts that you uploaded earlier as part of your application
Current unrestricted reserves and why they cannot be used for this project (maximum 2000 characters)	Unrestricted reserves are monies which are not restricted (usually by a donor or lender) for any particular use. If your group's unrestricted reserves cannot be used towards the project you are seeking a grant from SSE for, we will ask you to explain why.

Project budget

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please provide an accurate list of all costs involved in the work, services, or items required for the project. This should include any project costs that	You will be able to select one of two option to add your project cost detail. Please **do not do both**. • Insert the information into a list/ table in the form

you are not requesting a grant towards. We expect you to use a Full Cost Recovery approach.	• If you enter costs in the list / table option, these will automatically be totalled. OR • Upload your own budget template. • If you choose to upload a budget file, enter the total project cost (as stated in the file) into the box provided.
Please explain how you have costed the project. (maximum 1500 characters)	• For larger capital items (e.g. building work, vehicles, equipment) of more than £2,500 in value we expect you to have sought at least two quotations, for such items of more than £10,000 in value we expect you to have sought at least three quotations. Please upload any quotations you have received towards such costs. • If you are seeking a grant to cover salary costs, please tell us what hourly rate will be paid. SSE is a Living Wage Friendly Funder; therefore, we require any roles paid for through our funding to meet or exceed the Living Wage.
Tell us how much you are applying to the Lewis Hub Local Fund for.	Only non-recoverable VAT costs should be included in any grant amount you are requesting from SSE.
Who are the project funders?	If your total project cost requires other funding (including where your organisation is contributing its own funds), you will be asked to list all of the other funding sources, including the amounts being applied for and whether this funding is confirmed.

Checklist

We will ask you to tick yes, no or not applicable to the following checklist:

- That the group has the appropriate procedures in place to carry out your project safely
- That the group has at least three unrelated people serving on its management committee / board.
- That the project doesn't require retrospective funding
- That, if requested, you can provide the details of an independent referee.
- That any salaries are paid at, or greater than, the Living Wage
- Whether the project requires your group to secure permissions, such as planning permission, a building warrant and/or listed buildings consent, prior to starting work. If it does, tell us whether these have been applied for / granted. If they haven't been applied for or granted yet, tell us when you expect this to happen.

Submitting the form

Your draft application will save at key points, so you can log out of the portal and resume drafting at a later date.

To continue drafting, click the 'Continue Existing Application' link on the fund homepage, click the 'My Applications' button on the home screen, and then 'launch' next to your draft application.

If you have any problems in accessing or completing the application form, please contact us on the details below. You can also read our dedicated SSE Community Investment Portal FAQ section.

Once you have completed your application form, press the submit button. A copy of your application form will be saved in your ‘My Applications’ section of the portal.