

East Suffolk Rural Business Investment Fund

Guidance

IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM.

ABOUT THE FUND

Rural England Prosperity Fund

This grant scheme is funded by the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), which aims to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

For a summary of the fund please see: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

Funding available

East Suffolk's rural towns and areas are some of the major destinations within the visitor economy, others are much less well known outside East Suffolk, relying instead on local service functions, family-owned businesses and small and micro- enterprises. Much of East Suffolk is rural and sparsely populated, with communities living in hamlets and villages, many in remote locations. These rural locations are often beautiful, nestled within the outstanding environment we enjoy in the district.

East Suffolk Council's Economic Strategy provides a clear vision of our economy over the next five years, this being: we want to offer support and encouragement to businesses, so they develop, grow and invest locally in a way which creates opportunities for our residents. Within the strategy, one of our overarching aims is to support businesses to become and remain resilient in the face of both ongoing, known and new challenges as well as supporting established local businesses to invest and grow in East Suffolk.

East Suffolk's economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises, with 88.9% of all enterprises in the district being micro, and we want to enable more to be established and thrive. To achieve this, we want to enable the provision of appropriate workspace and premises for small businesses, to equip small business owners / managers with the skills they need and enable them to access all the support that is available to them. Many of East Suffolk businesses have significant sustainable growth potential and we want to encourage local businesses to innovate and in doing so, develop new products, processes, services and markets.

East Suffolk Council are offering a unique opportunity for rural small-to-medium sized businesses within the district to access capital funding to support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of benefit to the local economy.

We are seeking small to medium scale projects that will see one of the following priorities be met:



- Diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start-up, expansion, or scale-up of these businesses, including where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses – i.e. rural leisure and tourism facilities.
- Development of local visitor experiences in rural areas based on the local offer.
- SME investments in new products or facilities to ensure the rural business offer and that meets an identified market demand.

Please note: REPF must not be used to fund farming equipment or infrastructure or to diversify within agriculture. Applicants looking for funding for this type of activity must use existing Defra grant schemes, such as the Farming Investment Fund:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farming-investment-fund>

Grants of between £10,000 - £30,000 per application are available.

The maximum grant intervention will be for 75% of eligible costs. This means that the minimum project cost we can support is £12,500.

Please note that all expenditure must be completed by 31 March 2026, as the scheme will close on this date

TYPES OF PROJECTS

Capital funding only is available under this grant scheme. Your project must demonstrate how the grant will support your business to develop new products, facilities or services. Below is a list of example projects we can support:

Capital project examples:

- Diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture – creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses, i.e. creating an event venue or farm tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities, and provision of facilities for pet and equines such as kennels, livery and pet health venues. Other examples under diversification of farm businesses, include purchasing new process and packaging machinery such as brewing equipment and onsite vending machines for farm shops.
- Development of local visitor economy experiences – development of tourism activities, such as bike hire, attractions and other experiential offers.
- SME investment in new products or facilities to ensure the rural business offer - machinery, equipment, hardware, refurbishment of premises.

These examples are given as a guide and are not exhaustive.

As a condition of the grant, all capital (physical assets) expenditure approved will require evidence of three quotes obtained to ensure value for money. This applies to all total project costs of over £2,499. Expenditure over £25,000 will require a formal tender process. Please provide any quotations that you have obtained for the project along with the completed application form. Please provide any quotations that you have obtained for the required project



along with the completed application form. **please note that by three-quotes, this means that you can evidence you have tried to obtain three-quotes, it does not necessarily mean that all potential suppliers contacted will provide you with a quote.*

AM I ELIGIBLE?

We can confirm this quickly, but if you are a UK registered enterprise and you are an SME (employ no more than 250 people, turnover is no more than £36m and total assets no more than £18m) then you may be eligible. We will also accept applications from sole traders.

However, due to Government guidelines for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, we are not able to fund projects within the following locations. If you have any questions or would like to check your eligibility, please email: economicdevelopment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

- Lowestoft – including Carlton Colville and Pakefield
- Corton
- The area of Scalesbrook Lane Halesworth and the former RAF site Halesworth – please email us for specific location details or see figure 1 below.
- Sizewell B
- Woodbridge
- Martlesham Heath (including Brightwell Heath and Adastral Park) - please see figure 2 below.
- Kesgrave

If you are a business / organisation that falls within the boundary lines, please do ensure that you email us to check your eligibility.

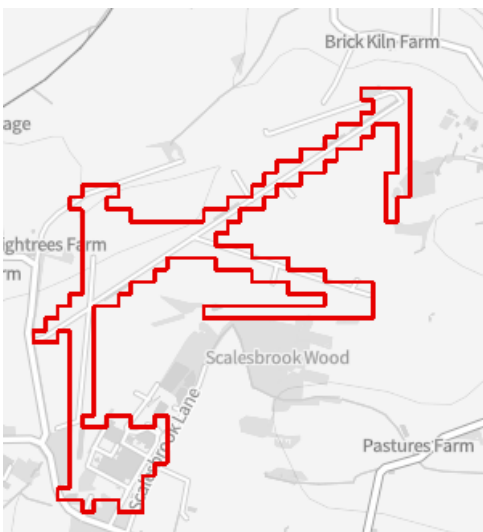


Fig. 1: Halesworth, Scalesbrook Lane area

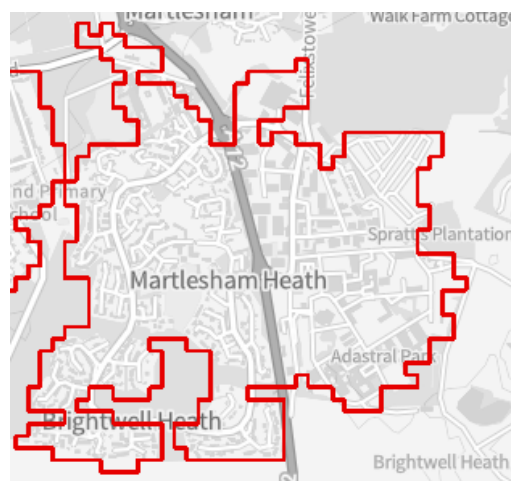


Fig.2: Martlesham Heath boundary lines

This funding will support businesses in any sector, except for primary agriculture (including processing and marketing of agricultural products).



Please note: REPF must not be used to fund farming equipment or infrastructure or to diversify within agriculture. Applicants looking for funding for this type of activity must use existing Defra grant schemes, such as the Farming Investment Fund: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farming-investment-fund>

We are unable to offer grant support if your business is ailing or insolvent, or you have received rescue funding which has not yet been repaid. Financial checks will be undertaken.

IS MY PROPOSAL ELIGIBLE?

If you are applying for any physical upgrades or improvements that will require planning permission, grants will only be approved if planning permission has already been provided or if there is evidence that planning permission is currently being sought and the grant will be awarded on a conditional basis that planning permission is approved.

To find out more about how to gain planning permission, please visit:
<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/>

You will also be asked within the application form to declare any other permissions or licences that are required for your project and when they will be obtained.

If your project is taking place on rented / leased / tenanted land or premises, please ensure you submit a letter of authority from the land or premises owner or that the owner applies for the grant funding direct.

WHAT KIND OF REASONS JUSTIFY MY GRANT PROPOSAL?

You will need to convince the funding panel there is a case for using grant funding to support your project, for example by:

- Providing evidence of the market need for your project and explain what research has been undertaken to support this.
- Demonstrating that the investment project would not proceed without our help;
- Showing the assistance will enable the project to be undertaken in a shorter timescale or it can go ahead earlier;
- Illustrating the financing will enable you to do additional things;
- Showing that without funding the proposals would proceed on a lesser scale;
- Demonstrating help is needed because of the risks involved;
- The project is doing something innovative and support would help;
- Illustrating financial assistance would help you do something different from your current plans;



- Showing funding would prove a catalyst - for example by providing confidence to lenders or investors.

As part of the application process, you will be asked how you have considered:

Environmental impacts associated with the project and to explain how you have considered any equality and diversity impacts associated with the project, including how you have considered the impacts on the following groups: ethnicity, disability, age, gender, religious beliefs, marital status, gender reassignment and sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

This means outlining how you have or will ensure your project will not negatively impact the local environment and how your project will ensure that no group in the community is discriminated against. For example, you may include a wheelchair ramp to a facility / business as part of your project.

Your submitted project must indicate how you will meet at least one of the following outcomes:

- Jobs created as a result of the grant support
- Jobs safeguarded as a result of the support
- Number of new businesses created as a result of the grant
- Businesses experiencing growth as a result of the grant
- Adopting new to the firm technologies or processes
- Improved business productivity
- Number of farm diversification projects supported
- Reported increased export capability

IS MY PROJECT VALUE FOR MONEY?

To ensure we support value for money projects, you will need to provide evidence of your proposed project costs. You must use a third-party supplier and must not use a linked or connected business to provide the services or goods.

What you need to provide depends on the amount you plan to spend per contract or supplier. The following table outlines the minimum procedures.

(The minimum invoice we would support is £250).

Value of Purchase	Procedure to be followed
£0 - £2,499	Direct Award (meaning you can choose who is awarded the works without obtaining any quotations)
£2,500 - £24,499	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services
£25,000 and over	Formal tender process

WHAT WE CANNOT FUND:

- Do not include VAT in your project costs if you are able to claim it back.
- Routine organisation running costs, stock purchases and staffing costs
- Items or services that are not essential to the success of your project
- Projects unable for immediate start
- Projects that fail to be completed within 2 months of award date
- Activities promoting political or religious beliefs
- Payments towards endowment funds, deficit funding or loans
- Overseas travel for individuals/groups unless for participation in trade fairs.
- Sponsored or fundraising events
- Funding for trips abroad or hospitality to other organisations
- Repeat funding – i.e., if your local council, or other body has previously provided a grant for the same activity
- Items or projects which only benefit an individual
- Retrospective costs e.g. costs incurred prior to grant approval confirmation
- Projects that will displace existing provision
- Activities that are to meet statutory obligations



Before applying, please note that this funding cannot be used to replace lost income / profits / hardship experienced as a result of the pandemic, although it can be used help you to resume activities suspended due to Covid-19.

We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme - funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies to deliver projects on climate, nature, people and place
- The Farming Investment Fund - grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits, covering 2 funds - the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and the Farming Transformation Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund - grant funding over 3 years (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities.

SUBSIDY CONTROL

You will be required to make a declaration of the subsidies that your business has been awarded on the application form.

Please be aware that all applicants are expected to complete the subsidy declaration within the application form for both schemes.

The EU State aid rules no longer apply to subsidies granted in the UK following the end of the transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020. This does not impact the limited circumstances in which State aid rules still apply under the Withdrawal Agreement, specifically Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The United Kingdom remains bound by its international commitments, including subsidy obligations set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the EU.

East Suffolk Council will be providing this grant to the business / organisation as a Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022).

MFA subsidy limit is £315,000 over a three-year period (including your current financial year and the previous two financial years).

For more information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund subsidy control please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-subsidy-control-7>

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

You can access the application form via the East Suffolk Council website: https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural_business_investment_fund

You will be required to provide routine documents in support of your application as follows:



- **Application Form**, fully completed, e-signed and dated
- **Relevant permission(s)/licence(s)** for the proposed project (if applicable), e.g., a copy of planning permission/landlord's permission/business change of use

MAY I APPLY FOR ANOTHER GRANT?

If you have already been successful with the East Suffolk Rural Business Investment Fund, funded by the REPF, priority will be given to new applicants; however, we may be able to support a new project via this scheme so please stay in touch with East Suffolk Council. If you cannot re-apply, we might refer you to an alternative programme or business support organisation.

How to apply

If you would like to access funding through the East Suffolk Rural Business Investment Fund please complete an application form via the following link:

https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural_business_investment_fund

Process

If the application is fully complete (i.e. all the required information is provided) it will be taken to a Panel Meeting which will be up to three weeks after the grant deadline below. See the diagram below for more information on the application process.



Received applications

All received applications are appraised by the East Suffolk Funding Team after the deadline of each funding round.

Potential queries are raised with applicants following appraisals.



Panel meeting

The appraised applications are taken to a panel of officers to discuss the outcome of the applications.



Outcome

Applicants will be informed of the decision by email, and for those that are approved, the applicant will receive a grant acceptance / offer letter.

Deadline for Applications

Round	Round dates (applications open and close)	Dates of Appraisals	Panel Meeting
Round 1	2 nd May 2025 – 29 th May 2025	2 nd June 2025 – 26 th June 2025	w/c 30 th June 2025
Round 2	7 th July 2025 – 7 th August 2025	11 th August 2025 – 29 th August 2025	w/c 1 st September 2025
Round 3	8 th September 2025 – 10 th October 2025	13 th October 2025 – 30 th October 2025	w/c 3 rd November 2025
Round 4	8 th December – 31 st December 2025	6 th January 2026 – 23 rd January 2026	w/c 26 th January 2026

These dates set out above are subject to change if a high number of applications is received.

If your application is successful, you will be notified of the decision through a Grant Acceptance (via email) within 5 working days of the Panel meeting.

Funds through this grant scheme **should only be spent on the items/purpose detailed in the application form and Grant Acceptance** by no later than **31 March 2026**. You must indicate on your form if you have applied for or intent to apply for match funding for this project. If the grant is not spent on the approved purposes or there is an underspend, the Council has the authority to



reclaim part or all of the grant. If you are proposing to make any changes to your approved project, please inform us as soon as possible.

An evaluation and monitoring form will be sent for completion **after the stated project completion date on your application form (which cannot be beyond 31 March 2026)**. Please keep copies of receipts and invoices related to the project / activity – we will ask to see these as part of our monitoring process as we spot check a proportion of successful applications.

Applications will be scored as per the below scoring matrix:

SCORING CRITERIA				
	Criteria	Strong projects will have...	Weak projects will have...	Scoring
A	Impact on the business through small scale investment	The project will have a positive impact on the business, and it is clear how the project is supporting the business to reach its longer term aims / business plan.	It is unclear how the project will benefit the business and it is not clear how the project is supporting the business to reach its longer term aims / business plan.	<p>- 1 = Does not show how the investment will support the business to reach its longer term aims.</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some information but lacks full clarity</p> <p>- 5 = Strong demonstration of how the project will enable the business to reach its clear ambitions and long term objectives.</p>
B	<p>Clear links to the priority of the fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start-up, expansion, or scale-up of these</i> 	The applicant has clearly articulated how the investment will meet one of the three fund priorities set out in the grant guidance.	The applicant has not clearly articulated how the investment will meet one of the three fund priorities set out in the grant guidance.	<p>- 1 = Does not show how the investment will meet at least one of the three fund priorities.</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some information but lacks full clarity on which</p>



	<p><i>businesses. including where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Development of local visitor experiences in rural areas based on the local offer.</i> <i>SME investments in new products or facilities to ensure the rural business offer and that meets an identified market demand.</i> 			<p>priority the project meets.</p> <p>- 5 = Strong demonstration of how the project will meet at least one of the three fund priorities.</p>
C	Evidence of Need for the project and market need and demand	The applicant has demonstrated the required knowledge of need for the project and market need and demand.	The proposal is based on anecdotal evidence and it's unclear whether this project is needed.	<p>-1 = Does not show evidence of need and market need and demand</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some information but lacks full clarity</p> <p>- 5 = Strong demonstration of evidence of need and market need and demand identified.</p>
D	Value for Money	The project has been realistically costed and the impact of the project is appropriate in relation to the amount of funding that has been requested. Required quotations have been provided.	<p>The project is either significantly under costed or over costed which creates a risk to the project and its outcomes/impact.</p> <p>There are concerns about connections between the</p>	<p>1 = Does not demonstrate value for money, has not been costed realistically and quotations are not provided.</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some on project costs / details and some quotations are provided but may not meet grant scheme requirements.</p>



			business and supplier.	- 5 = Clear breakdown of costs, demonstrate value for money and full quotations provided.
E	Deliverability	The project is realistic and achievable, and it is clear how and when the project will be delivered and by whom.	It is unclear whether the project is realistic and achievable, and it is not clear how and when the project will be delivered and by whom.	<p>1 = Does not show how the project can be achieved in the required timescale and no clear understanding of how the project will be delivered.</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some information on the project timeframe but lacks full clarity of how it will be delivered and by who.</p> <p>- 5 = Strong demonstration that the applicant can meet the grant scheme delivery timeframe and has clear strategies in place to ensure timely delivery of the project.</p>
F	Project legacy and sustainability	The applicant has considered project sustainability after the funded project has been completed i.e. it is clear how the project will continue after the grant funding has ended (if relevant).	It is unclear how the project will continue after the funding has been spent and whether what has been proposed is achievable.	<p>1 = Does not show how the project will be sustained after the grant funding.</p> <p>- 3 = Provides some information but lacks full clarity, i.e. speculative about applying for other grant schemes.</p> <p>- 5 = Strong demonstration of how the project will be continued and</p>



HM Government



EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

				become self-sustaining.
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