

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	13 January 2026
Subject:	Green Enterprise Grants
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Natasha Bradshaw - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.
Responsible Officer:	Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist. Paul Deal - Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience.
Exempt:	None.
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	None.

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

Green Enterprise Grants help Mid Devon businesses to invest towards making their operations more sustainable through energy and resource efficiency. This proposal is to continue and improve the current scheme, to build on its success whilst learning from experience thus far.

Recommendation(s):

1. That Cabinet approves the Green Enterprise Grant scheme to continue to run for a new phase April 2026 to December 2028 inclusive.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, in consultation with the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience, to deliver the Green Enterprise Grant scheme.
3. That Cabinet require an interim performance review report after the 2026-2027 financial year and a final review report when the scheme ends.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's scheme of [Green Enterprise Grants](#) (GEG) ran as a 2024 pilot and a new phase launched in April 2025, due to conclude at the end of March 2026.
- 1.2 The purpose of the grants is to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) based in Mid Devon to invest in improved efficiency, for resource and energy savings and cost savings, to achieve reduced environmental impact and particularly climate impacts (carbon footprint).
- 1.3 Reducing resource and energy requirements can achieve considerable cost and efficiency savings, which lends financial resilience at a time of price volatility.
- 1.4 An annual Carbon Footprint - an assessment of emissions of greenhouse gases linked to the activities of an entity within any given year - is measured in tonnes, or kilograms, of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) (kgCO₂e).
- 1.5 The key performance indicator of the grant scheme is the estimated reduction in emissions from the annual Carbon Footprint of the enterprises supported.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Economy Team, working with the Climate and Sustainability Specialist developed the [Green Enterprise Grants](#) scheme for Mid Devon SMEs.
- 2.2 The scheme has offered capital grants covering up to 50% of eligible costs, with individual grants ranging from £500 to a maximum of £5,000 (for projects with total costs up to £30,000 inclusive of VAT).
- 2.3 This complemented the [Prosper business support programme](#) that provides SMEs with advice and support to identify and reduce their carbon footprint.
- 2.4 The original 2024 funding was from a bid to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (Local Growth Fund, £24,245). LEP functions transferred to principal local authorities in Devon and Somerset, 01 April 2024.

The next £30,000 phase was funded from the Council's climate and sustainability budget. Further external funding was sought out but none identified.
- 2.5 The scheme has been promoted with social media posts, a press release, emails sent out to known business contacts, as well as a targeted email to enterprises that had previously enquired about funding for energy saving renewables (latent demand). Outreach was undertaken via partner organisations and networks, and the team attended the Council's autumn 2025 'meet the funder' event.
- 2.6 Businesses send in Expressions of Interest via letstalk.middevon.gov.uk where the scheme guidance is provided. Each enquiry is acknowledged, and application forms are sent to all eligible businesses. Applicant liaison is managed through a dedicated business grants email address.
- 2.7 Due diligence and assessment of applications
- 2.7.1 Applications are subject to due diligence that included (as applicable) Companies House, Non-domestic rates and VAT registration checks.

- 2.7.2 Requiring three quotes is necessary as part of the due diligence process to ensure that applicants / potential grant recipients explore options for project delivery and obtain good value. Advice is available in circumstances where the applicants best endeavours to obtain prices / quotations has not been successful.
- 2.7.3 Our due diligence reflects Procurement regulations, as this is public expenditure.
- 2.7.4 Proposals and items of supporting evidence are assessed and scored in-house. Each completed application is evaluated and scored by officers, then a summary and an award recommendation is provided to the Decision Panel, comprising three Elected Members.

2.8 Performance

- 2.8.1 Overall, the latest phase of the Green Enterprise Scheme has engaged more businesses than the pilot scheme. The number of grant applications approved in 2025 was equal to the 2024 pilot, but the total value of the grants offered in 2025 was lower than in 2024, Table 1.
- 2.8.2 During 2025 the current scheme produced five grant bids, all approved, worth over £17,000 in total.
- 2.8.3 As the grants are always 50% or less of the total project value, the match funding from successful applicants (50% or more) is always equal to or more than the grant value awarded.
- 2.8.4 The estimated reduction in emissions from the annual Carbon Footprint of the enterprises supported is more than 9,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent per year (kgCO₂e / year).
- 2.8.5 Table 1: Green Enterprise Grant scheme performance in 2024 and 2025.

Year	Enquiries	SMEs advised	Eligible Bids	Grants Approved	Funds Offered	Emissions Reduction (kgCO ₂ e/year)
2025	50	30	5	5	£ 17,248	9,419
2024	40		5	5	£ 24,485	13,402

- 2.8.6 The next Decision Panel is scheduled for 20 January 2026 (date may be subject to change). Only applications that have been received in full and fully assessed in advance will be considered at the next panel meeting.

3.0 **Learning from the experience of the current phase and the earlier pilot.**

- 3.1 A scheme review report will inform a decision point for the project team prior to the launch of the next phase (if approved). Applicants who receive grant offers for the current scheme have until 31 March 2026 to complete their claims. Therefore a review report can be initiated after this date.

3.2 Engaging with businesses

- Businesses that proactively engaged with the programme team (asking questions and seeking advice) were more likely to apply for a grant.

3.3 Timescales and lead-in times

- Businesses need considerable time to bring together the required information for their application as well as to schedule in delivery / works at a time that is convenient for the business and their supplier / installer.
- Obtaining 3 quotes from contractors can be difficult and time-consuming.

3.3.1 An established longer-term scheme, run for longer than 1 year, would allow us to build deeper awareness across the area, thorough publicity, case studies and business visits. This would also allow us to target businesses / sectors with high carbon emissions and, if needed, look to provide specific support. This would ease the time pressure on businesses; currently they must apply, develop and deliver a project within the same financial year.

3.4 Planning

3.4.1 Scheme guidance and criteria make it clear that consents must be obtained prior to submitting an application.

3.5 Mandatory quality standards

3.5.1 Recognised standards are essential for certain projects e.g. [Microgeneration Certification Scheme](#) (MCS) certified installers for solar panels.

3.6 Scale and focus of the scheme

3.6.1 The team considers that the GEG scheme works well as a Capital small grant scheme, with a clear focus. Fair / comparable project evaluation could become a challenge if the remit were made too broad.

3.6.2 The maximum grant size and percentage support seem appropriate to this small-scale scheme, particularly given that businesses are likely to make energy / cost savings and there are other grant schemes that could potentially match-fund.

3.6.3 At the current scale, we felt able to assess the applications received. Larger, more complex projects could be challenging to assess in-house. Additional support such as technical expertise or a project partner could be a way to add capacity, add value and expand impact but would come at a cost.

3.7 Commercial property ownership

3.7.1 The majority of the applicants to date either own or are in the process of purchasing their properties.

3.8 Commercial Landlords

3.8.1 The grant can potentially incentivise a landlord investing to provide a greener 'offer' of premises with lower energy bills.

4.0 **Proposal**

4.1 To continue to run the Green Enterprise Grants scheme in Mid Devon for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

4.2 Delivery. Key details:

- Grants budget £20k per annum. (Grant award values from £500 to £5k.)
- Timeline: refresh engagement in March 2026 to promote the scheme; bid support workshops in spring 2026 and spring 2027.
- Grant claims submission deadline: 31 March 2028.

4.3 Changes to improve the scheme

4.3.1 Reduce the annual target budget for Green Enterprise Grants.

- Given the demand seen in 2025, a target annual budget of £20,000 seems realistic (£30,000 was allocated). The change would free up funds to support sustainability work.

4.3.2 Enable more bids

- We propose to extend the scheme timeline to allow applicants more time to develop a project and plan ahead. This could make bid preparation more realistic for small businesses and social enterprises.

4.3.3 Community benefit

- We will seek to expand eligibility and make it easier for community halls to apply (village halls, parish halls, church halls). Community bodies that run buildings for the benefit of their local community often cannot satisfy the threshold of over 50% income from trading, which is part of the definition of a Social Enterprise. We would not apply that threshold test to village halls.

4.3.4 Sharpen the focus on enabling transition to a greener economy

- The scheme will exclude bids for fossil fuel technology solutions (such as replacement fossil-fuel boilers).
- We will look into the potential to offer small grants for workplace EV (electric vehicle) chargepoints, which are currently excluded from GEG scheme. The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) [Workplace Charging Scheme](#) offering £350 per charger will close after March 2026. The GEG scheme could provide a similar offer (£350 rather than a 50% grant) and apply the same requirements i.e. proper consents in place and OZEV approved chargepoints which must be installed by an [OZEV authorised installer](#).

4.4 Administration - key details:

- The decision panel awarding grants will comprise 3 Elected Members.
- The administrative team will evaluate the completed eligible bids using a standardised process with a scoring protocol and assessment framework.
- Evaluation will consider quality of evidence (e.g. carbon footprints estimated savings and outputs) around the forecast benefit / impact and the match funding value of each project.
- Due diligence checks will be carried out as before.

- The administrative team will make recommendations to the decision panel and provide support to enable decisions, including research and specialist advice where required.
- Decisions on grant awards will be considered on a monthly cycle of emails circulated to the decision panel; those for which decision panel members request debate or discussion will be considered at (usually online) panel meetings, on a quarterly / responsive cycle.

4.5 Scope and eligibility. Key details:

- SMEs based in Mid Devon only.
- Eligible SME types will include Community Interest Companies (CIC).
- The scheme will be fairly administered to all eligible enterprises. However, bids will not be accepted from certain business categories for specific reasons.
- For the avoidance of bias and any risk of overlap with the Council's operations and climate action investments, business tenants based at Council assets will not be eligible to apply.

4.6 Review

- 4.6.1 An interim review report for the new scheme can be produced for late April 2027. The final deadline for grant claims will be 31 March 2028 and a final evaluation report would be produced thereafter. (For review by the new vested Authority.)

Financial Implications

The grants would be funded by existing approved budgets. External funding will also be sought, in order to support or extend the grant scheme.

Legal Implications

Any grant scheme would be subject to the current law around operational requirements and standards in public service. There are no legal implications associated with this proposal.

Risk Assessment

The main risks to the project (mitigating actions in brackets) are: lack of uptake by enterprises (promotion will build on a well-established relationship with the local business community); non-delivery of approved projects (guidance, agreements and deadlines will help to manage timely delivery); applicants lack sufficient project management time or investment capital to achieve their projects (the small grant scale is suited to small, manageable projects).

Impact on Climate Change

Based on the demonstrable ability for this form of grant scheme to create or accelerate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this proposal should contribute positively towards reducing climate impact. The funding could achieve a range of impact avoidance / savings annually between circa 1 and 10 tCO₂e.

Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equality impacts associated with this project proposal; the scheme would serve a target segment of enterprises and a specific geographical location but would be open to all eligible. Documentation will be available in accessible formats. The scheme will be promoted through a range of channels and community networks. Projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Corporate Plan 2024-2028, priority 1.2: Support the district's response to the climate emergency.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 16 December 2025

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 16 December 2025

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 16 December 2025

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 15 December 2025

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist. Email:

jball@MidDevon.gov.uk; Telephone: 01884 255255.

Background papers: The 07 January 2025 Cabinet [decision and supporting paper](#).