**Guidance for Applicants**

**SOLAR / BATTERIES AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY**

The fund is committed to supporting communities to care for and improve the natural environment, reduce environmental impact, and become more sustainable and applications to address these issues can take a variety of formats.

The fund (like other funders) is seeing an increase in applications to install solar panels and other technologies to reduce energy use and environmental impact.

***We do not fund this type of work on private homes and properties***: Solar panel grants are available from several sources, including the government, local authorities, and energy companies. The amount of money available varies, but it can be significant – enough to cover the cost of installation in some cases and the community was clear that the fund should not replace other support available and that this fund is to support community and business activity not individual households.

However, we can and do provide grants and loans to support the installation of solar panels in both **commercial and community facilities**

**This is because the community have asked the fund to:**

• Encourage the sustainability – both financially and environmentally – of community buildings and spaces

• Reduce environmental impact of community buildings.

• Take steps to reduce carbon dependency by the community.

• Consider practical steps to reduce the environmental impact of groups, individuals, or businesses in the area.

**Private Business / Commercial Properties**

Almost £5 billion of funding is available to help UK businesses become greener as part of the government’s commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Whilst the picture of available support can change quickly, in 2022 there were over 35 government backed schemes to support businesses and as we move towards 2050 more schemes will continue coming on board. Grants specific to solar panel use are more limited but the grants and subsidies to help businesses make their current energy usage more efficient, as well as for heat pump installation, the removal of greenhouse gases and much more can often include potential for solar panels.

However, we recognise that sometimes there is a funding gap or sometimes premises may be ineligible for other support and so we will accept applications.

When considering an application from a commercial premise we would assess:

a) Are we substituting or replacing existing money that is available?

b) Has the business had impartial advice and expert assistance?

c) Is the premises owned by applicant and if not, what length lease do they have (we are unlikely to consider an application if a lease of less than 5-10 years)

d) Is the applicant confident that the roof structure and rest of building is in a good condition?

e) Has the applicant also considered other green improvements such as heating, windows, heat pumps, biomass boilers, rain water collection etc. We would expect to see that solar is only part of the solution and applicant taking steps to reduce energy use and environmental impact

When you apply, we would expect you to address the questions above.

Any support offered to a commercial premises would likely be in the form of a loan if there is a clear benefit (i.e., a ROI of less than 5 years).

Loans are generally interest free, with small payment holiday and repayments would be linked to expected energy cost savings.

**Community Facilities (including clubs that are run as not for profit)**

We will accept applications from community facilities and generally support would be in the form of a grant (unless there is a profit making arm linked to premises, in which case we may consider a partial loan, but we would discuss this with you).

When considering an application from a community facility we would assess:

a) Have you had energy survey and is this work recommended?

b) What length lease do they have (we are unlikely to consider an application if a lease of less than 5-10 years)

c) Is the roof structure and rest of building in a good condition?

d) Has the applicant also considered other green improvements such as heating, windows, heat pumps, biomass boilers, rain water collection etc. We would expect to see that solar is only part of the solution and applicant taking steps to reduce energy use and environmental impact

e) Has the applicant approached any other funders for match funding?

When you apply, we would expect you to address the questions above.

**Quotes**

Generally we would expect to see two comparable quotations but we recognise that this can be challenging and so may be able to accept one quote if we can compare ourselves to similar building.

All quotes should contain an estimated return on investment and if there is a ROI of more than seven years, we are unlikely to consider because it doesn't provide value for money for us or you.

Additionally, if you mostly operate at night and have not taken battery storage into account with the work and quote, we are unlikely to consider as it will not be cost-effective.

*As always, compliance with this guidance note does not guarantee funding will be awarded, it is just that, a guidance note and each application is assessed on a case by case basis. If you have read this and have some questions or would like to chat, then please get in touch with the team.*