POWERING COMMUNITIES TO NET ZERO FUND LOW CARBON TECHNOLOGY

ABOUT THE FUND

We're Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution - the electricity Distribution Network Operator (DNO) responsible for delivering power to millions of homes and businesses in central southern England and the north of Scotland.

We've established this fund to help communities in our power distribution network areas to improve their resilience and support their efforts to decarbonise.

The fund has a total value of £3m and runs annually, concluding in Spring 2028. The fund is open to applications from not-for-profit groups located within SSEN's network areas.

Who can apply?

You don't need to be a registered charity to apply, but your organisation must have a constitution (governing document or set of rules) and be set up on a not-for-profit basis.

Your projects must meet the Technical Specification Guidance (see section on page 4 for further information) and your organisation must be in an SSEN Distribution area. Please note, off-grid communities are not eligible to apply.

> **Advice and support**
> **Carol Masheter, Community Investment Manager, can provide further information on the fund. She can be contacted at carol.masheter@sse.com or 07721 443044.**

Application timetable

The key dates for this year's fund are as follows:

- **Fund opens**   **23 March**
- **Deadline**   **21 May at 12 noon**
- **Awards made**   **Late August 2026**

How much can I apply for?

The fund will be managed as one across the north of Scotland and central southern England.

- In most cases, you can apply for funding from £1,000 up to a maximum of £20,000.

- You can only make one application per year to the PCNZ fund.

- The panel will consider value-for-money and may award less than requested.

What the fund can support

The fund is designed to support low-carbon technology (LCT) projects which are part of a community's decarbonisation plans.

Examples of LCT which can be considered within the scope of the fund include:

a) **Solar panels** – where a community is looking to install solar panels on a community owned building.
b) **Heat systems** – replacement or upgrade of an existing heating system to a low-carbon heating system - including thermal storage, biomass, and ground or air source heat pumps. This could also include combined heat and power.
c) **Battery storage** – battery for communal use, including during a power cut or emergency situation, or alongside another low-carbon installation (such as solar panels), or to enable participation in Flexibility schemes.
d) **Renewable energy generation** – including a community wind turbine or a micro hydro project.
e) **Smart heating controls** – installation of smart heating controls for community buildings.
f) **Energy efficiency measures** – priority will be given to primary measures such as heat pump project, solar battery storage, etc; or projects that include both primary and secondary measures. General energy efficiency measures to be used to help reduce consumption in communal buildings or aggregated domestic properties.
g) **Electric vehicle charging** – electric vehicle charging points at community buildings or at a communal space which will be available for public use.
h) **Building management systems** – systems which can be used alongside battery or other electricity storage which enables participation in Flexibility schemes.

Aims and priorities for the fund

The fund will support projects that purchase and install LCT in community owned / operated buildings where the public will benefit, or where organisations such as social housing providers enable the provision of LCT in aggregated domestic properties.

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Please note – when assessing applications, priority will be given to:

a) Projects which support communities who are particularly remote or isolated.
b) Projects in areas considered deprived or with high fuel poverty rates.
c) Projects which see communities working together.
d) Projects which can evidence that they meet the Technical Specification to install their chosen LCT.
e) Projects that support communities make progress towards net zero ambitions.
f) Projects that have recently obtain an energy audit, which supports the proposed measures.
g) Projects that have the match funding confirmed. If your total project cost requires other funding - including where your organisation is contributing its own funds - you must list all the other funding sources and indicate whether this funding is confirmed.

We're aware there are often lengthy lead times associated with LCT project preparation, as well as getting planning consent and approval to connect for some LCT.

We advise applicants to only submit a project which has already been granted approval to apply in this current round.

If you're unsure of your project timescales you should contact carol.masheter@sse.com or colin.mcmillan@sse.com to discuss this in more detail before making an application.
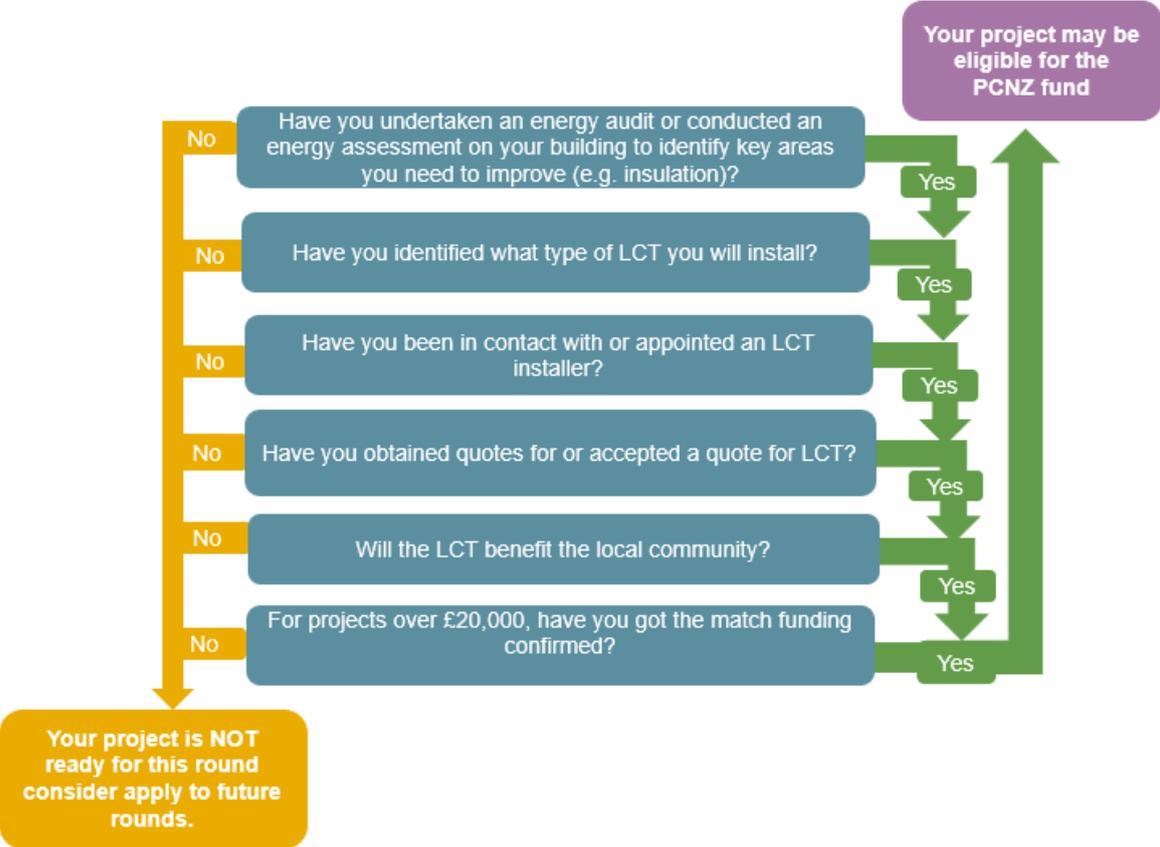
What the fund cannot support

- Projects which do not benefit communities within SSEN Distribution's areas.
- Actions that are in conflict to the interests of SSEN Distribution.
- Individuals or private businesses.
- The advancement of religion or politics.
- The repayment of loans or payment of debts.
- Costs already incurred or activities which will take place before we have made a decision on an application (retrospective funding).
- Payments for activities which are the responsibility of statutory authorities.

When must grants be spent by?

All awardees must be able to meet grant conditions and draw down funds before **31 March 2027**. **Grants should then be spent within 12 months of being paid**.

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Is your project ready to apply to the fund?

Your project may be eligible for the PCNZ fund

Have you undertaken an energy audit or conducted an energy assessment on your building to identify key areas you need to improve (e.g. insulation)?
- No
- Yes

Have you identified what type of LCT you will install?
- No
- Yes

Have you been in contact with or appointed an LCT installer?
- No
- Yes

Have you obtained quotes for or accepted a quote for LCT?
- No
- Yes

Will the LCT benefit the local community?
- No
- Yes

For projects over £20,000, have you got the match funding confirmed?
- No
- Yes

Your project is NOT ready for this round consider apply to future rounds.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION GUIDANCE

The panel will review each application based on its relevance to the priority themes identified earlier in this document.

- **Purchasing equipment:** consider if any planning permission is required to install low-carbon technology and ensure this is acquired prior to applying.
- **Maintenance:** if purchasing equipment, consider how it will be maintained and any associated costs covered in the future.
- **Quotations:** please provide at least one quotation for all items over £250. For larger capital items of more than £2,500 in value, we expect you to have sought at least two quotes. And for items with a value of more than £10,000, we expect you to have sought at least three quotations. If this is either not possible or appropriate, please tell us why.
- **Staffing costs:** ensure any staffing cost is provided at - or above - the Living Wage.
- **Project budget:** please make it clear in your application which elements you're requesting the funding for and if you've secured match funding if required.
- **Energy audit:** provide information from a recent energy audit or equivalent which shows evidence for your preferred technology.
- **Technical specifications:** if you're applying for a power source, the guidance below outlines the information and actions you should have taken before applying for PCNZ low carbon technology funding. It is important to remember that if your application is successful, you will not be fast tracked for any works you may need SSEN to complete to install or connect the LCT, including load checks, and you will still need to meet any connections costs.

Checklist

Before applying for funding, you should have completed the below actions:

- ✓ Establish details of the LCT you are looking to install.
- ✓ Have an Energy Performance Certificate or know the energy efficiency of the building where you want to install the LCT*. This will ensure the building is as energy efficient as possible to get maximum benefit from the LCT.
- ✓ Have been in contact with or appointed a LCT installer.
- ✓ Obtained a quote for the LCT.
- ✓ Have checked the LCT is compatible with the building and supply type.
- ✓ Have checked requirements and obtained planning permission as required:
  - o For projects in England - https://www.gov.uk/planning-permission-england-wales
  - o For projects in Scotland - https://www.mygov.scot/planning-permission
- ✓ Have a maintenance plan in place for the upkeep of the LCT.

*Excluding electric vehicle charging points

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Your installer should have the following information.

1. **Type of supply**

   o **Single phase –** this is commonly used in homes and small buildings / businesses, with one incoming service cable used to supply the building.
   o **3-phase –** electricity is delivered using three alternating currents (AC) voltage. This is commonly used in large buildings or for heavy machinery, with three incoming cables used to supply the building.
   o **CT metered –** this is commonly used in industrial settings and large buildings.
   o **Looped supply –** whilst not common, this is more likely to be used in urban areas and is where two or more buildings share a connecting cable. **Please note:** this can restrict the connection of the LCT.

2. **Input / Output of the LCT**

   o **Input** – This is the amount of electricity coming from the network to power the LCT and can be found in information for your chosen LCT.
      ▪ Maximum input is the maximum amount of electricity the LCT will use.
      ▪ Continuous input is the amount of electricity the LCT will need to remain operational.
   o **Output** –This is the amount of electricity the LCT could return to the network, and can be found in information for your chosen LCT. This does not apply to all LCTs, only those which are able to supply electricity back to the grid, such as Solar PVs or Vehicle to Grid EV chargers.
      ▪ Maximum output is the maximum amount of electricity the LCT could return to the grid.
      ▪ Continuous output is the amount of electricity the LCT could return to the grid.

3. **Voltage / Fuse / Load**

4. **LCT details ready to be registered once installed.**

If you're unsure of the load, we can complete a free load check for the property. **Please note:** charges may apply if an increase in load is required.

Important - if you're planning to install a heat pump, solar PV or energy generating system in a home or small business, you need to register this new energy device with ourselves as we'll be responsible for bringing electricity to the property where you're installing the device. For more information, click here to visit our Connections web page.

Other useful links

Energy Networks Association - Website for ENA providing guidance and advice on LCTs
https://connect-direct.energynetworks.org/

Connect Direct - National Database for installers to apply for LCT connections
https://www.energynetworks.org/industry/connecting-to-the-networks/connecting-electric-vehicles-and-heat-pumps

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APPLYING TO THE COMMUNITY FUND

SSE operates an online Community Investment Portal, ensuring all applicants' data is held securely as well as making it easier for groups to apply for and manage grants.

> **Accessing the Community Investment Portal -** You can access the PCNZ Community Fund application here

- We recommend you prepare your answers to the questions offline and then copy them into the online application. Carol Masheter (carol.masheter@sse.com) can provide a Word template of the questions if this would help you.
- 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 either accessing or using the SSE Community Investment Portal, please contact communityfundsupport@sse.com.

The process map below 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.

You'll be asked to upload the following documents during the application process:

- A copy of the group's constitution or equivalent governance documents.
- A recent bank statement in the name of the group applying for the grant dated within the last three months.
- The group's most recent approved annual accounts.
- The budget for the project – alternatively, you can use the budget template provided in the application form.
- Quotes for works or goods included in your project budget where these are over the values set out in the fund guidance notes.
- A copy of the community resilience plan (if available).
- If the project is for development work on a building, please provide evidence that your organisation owns the building or confirmation from the owner that they agree to these works being undertaken.
- A copy of a recent energy audit that supports your project's proposed LCT measures for community building projects (if applicable).
- A copy of your net zero plan (if available).
- Please include a project time schedule - the project must be able to demonstrate deliverability within twelve months of the grant award date.
- The group's child protection / vulnerable adult policy (if applicable).
- Any other documents which you think are required in support of your application e.g. architects' drawings, relevant permissions such as planning, building warrant, and/or listed building consent, letters of support.

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COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PORTAL MAP

1 FUND WEBPAGE	• Click on **"Begin New Application"**. • This will take you to the **SSE Community Investment Portal**.
2 CHECK ELIGIBILITY	• Answer **yes or no** questions to confirm whether your project is eligible.
3 SET UP USER ACCOUNT	*(For **new users only** – returning applicants can skip to Step 5)* • Click on **"Not Registered?"** • Enter your name and email address. • Check your email and click on the confirmation link. • Create your password. • Your **username** will be your email address with **.sse** added at the end — Example: joe.bloggs@outlook.com.sse
4 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT HOMEPAGE	• Repeat Step 1: go to the **fund webpage** and click **"Begin New Application"**. • Answer the eligibility questions again. • Log in to begin the application.
5 SET UP GROUP ACCOUNT	• Answer questions relating to your group. • **Important:** You must have your **group's constitution / governance document** ready to upload to complete this step.
6 APPLICATION FORM	• Answer the application questions. • Upload supporting documentation relating to the project applied for. • Guidance notes and example questions are provided at the end of this section. • Applications can be saved at key points. • To continue an existing application, click **"Continue Existing Applications"** on the fund webpage.

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GUIDANCE ON THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PORTAL

Stage 1 – Fund webpage

- To access the correct application, you need to visit the fund webpage. If you're creating a new application, click 'Begin New Application' and then follow the steps below.
- If you've 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 PCNZ Resilience Community Fund application for the first time you'll 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'll 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've previously used the Community Investment Portal, please log in using your username and password, and progress to Stage 5.
- If you've not used the Community Investment Portal before, you'll need to create an account.
- To create an account, click 'not registered?' and enter your name and email address.
- You'll then receive an email to confirm that the account has been registered, containing your username.
- Please click on the link in the email to create a password.

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

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Stage 4 – Community Investment Portal homepage

- Once you've created a password, you'll 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'll then be able to log in and continue with the below steps.

Stage 5 – Creating a group account

- When starting a new application, you'll be asked to select the group you wish to apply on behalf of. If you've already completed an application on behalf of a group previously, you can select the group from the drop-down menu.
- If this is your group's first time applying on the SSE Community Investment Portal, you'll 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 complete Stage 5 in **one** attempt to create an account on the system.
>
> You'll also need to upload a copy of the group's constitution at this stage, so please make sure you have this available before starting.

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

Question	Guidance on answering the 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	o On your group's board or management committee – in total, not just office bearers. o Employed by the group. o Who volunteer for the group.

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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 group's aims and objectives?	
What are the group's 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 – Completing your 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.

You need to upload a copy of the following documents in Stage 2 of the application:

• 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.
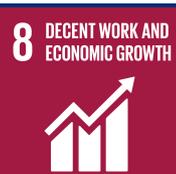
PCNZ LCT GUIDANCE

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About the project

Question	Guidance on answering the 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 where the project will be delivered.
Please provide a description of the project. Please us a maximum of 3,000 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? Please use a maximum of 3,000 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? Please use a maximum of 2,000 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? Please use a maximum of 1,200 characters.	Please tell us how you arrived at this figure. 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.
Will the project support any jobs?	If yes, we will ask how many.

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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.
Will this project help improve energy efficiency or climate change?	If yes, please provide details of the energy generation or carbon reduction potential of the project, where you know this.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

SSE's community programme supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We'll ask you to identify the primary UN Sustainable Development Goal that your project contributes to and you can also identify secondary goals.

UN Sustainable Development Goal	Example
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Your project will improve people's well-being, physical and/or emotional health, e.g. community care services, sports classes, befriending services.
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	Your project will support people to enter work, will help schools to deliver new activity and/or will help community members learn new skills.
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	Your project helps communities to have affordable and modern energy, e.g. insulation measures, new heating systems.
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	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.
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	Your project will help enhance the local community, e.g. improving a community hall, building a new community sports centre, running a community event.
13 CLIMATE ACTION	Your project will help to combat climate change, e.g. community renewables.

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	Your projects which help the local environment, e.g. community-owned forests, community gardens, community nature paths.

Your project aims and measuring its success

Question	Guidance on answering the question
Please explain how your project achieves the fund's aims and priorities outlined on page 2 of this guidance document. Please use a maximum of 4,000 characters.	Provide detail on the LCT you're installing and why you feel that is the best option for your project. Provide information on the process you have gone through in making this decision. Also, provide details on the building condition, ownership of land duration of lease agreements etc.

Project bank details and group finances

Question	Guidance on answering the 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.
Sort code and 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 three 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 emailed any grant offer letter for their countersignature.**
What are the main sources of income for the group? Please use a maximum of 1,200 characters	Provide brief details of how the group normally raises most of its income e.g. from local fundraising, grants, charges for services, etc.

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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. Please use a maximum of 2,000 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 in your application, please let us know why.

Project budget

Question	Guidance on answering the question
Please provide an accurate list of all costs involved in the work, services, and/or items required for the project. This should also include any project costs which you are not requesting a grant towards.	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 • 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. Please use a maximum of 1,500 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, and for 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 these costs. • If you're 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.
How much you are applying to the LCT 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.

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Checklist

We'll ask you to tick 'yes', 'no' or 'not applicable' in the following checklist:

- The group has the appropriate procedures in place to carry out your project safely.
- The group has at least three unrelated people serving on its management committee / board.
- The project doesn't require retrospective funding.
- If requested, you can provide the details of an independent referee.
- Any salaries are paid at, or greater than, the Living Wage.
- Does the project require 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 your application 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 find more information in 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.

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