

£1 million Community Partnership Fund to boost Northern Ireland community and voluntary groups

2.3.2026 - Matthew Patrick | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Grant will enable a forum of Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector organisations to upskill other local groups and help them secure funding.

A new £1 million grant to strengthen and empower Northern Ireland's voluntary sector and grassroots community organisations has been announced by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). The Community Partnership Fund will harness voluntary sector expertise to support local community organisations, including those operating informally or in rural areas.

The grant will be awarded to a forum of established Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector organisations who will then work with other local community groups to help them develop ideas and skills to access funding opportunities.

It is the latest UK Government funding to benefit Northern Ireland communities, building on previous initiatives such as the £310 million which has been confirmed for Northern Ireland City and Growth Deals; the £40 million Pride in Place Programme investment to both Coleraine and Derry-Londonderry, and the £500,000 awarded to date to community and voluntary organisations across Northern Ireland through the NIO's Connect Fund.

NIO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Matthew Patrick said:

"Community and voluntary organisations improve the quality of life for people across Northern Ireland, and I'm proud that the Northern Ireland Office's Community Partnership Fund will ensure more organisations undertaking vital work have the skills, knowledge and networks to succeed.

"This initiative builds on the success of the NIO's Connect Fund, which has so far awarded 21 organisations almost £500,000, and is supporting a diverse range of projects across Northern Ireland.

"I've witnessed first hand how this is supporting local groups to thrive, and I encourage Northern Ireland organisations to come together and apply to administer the new Community Partnership Fund, to empower other deserving community groups."

The successful forum will support local groups by:

- Engaging the underserved: Identifying and supporting smaller grassroots community groups that are currently below the radar of traditional funding;
- Building networks: Creating crucial networking opportunities to help these organisations form new contacts;
- Fostering ambition: Empowering groups to generate ambitious ideas and pursue larger-scale projects and funding; and
- Navigating funding: Providing comprehensive support to help groups identify opportunities and guide them from initial idea generation through to final project delivery, while building

financial resilience to manage funding transitions and secure long-term sustainability.

In the coming months, the NIO will work closely with the voluntary and community sector to develop The Community Partnership Fund, ensuring it is targeted where community groups most need it. The grant will then be subject to a competitive process which will open later this year, and will require applicants to demonstrate that they have formed a strong partnership with other sector leaders to deliver a comprehensive programme for the benefit of wider Northern Ireland community and voluntary groups.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-million-community-partnership-fund-to-boost-northern-ireland-community-and-voluntary-groups>