

# Criteria & Application Guidance for Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme

This guidance sets out the criteria under which businesses will qualify to make an application to the Shop Front Improvement Scheme; and the evidence required to support an application.

## 1) Aim

This grant is aimed at supporting businesses in North Shields town centre and the North West ward boundaries; to invest in the external appearance of their commercial premises and encourage future business growth.

This grant is for any retail unit with a ground floor shop unit or doorway access / signage for an upper floor commercial premises, which is accessible to the public and seen on the high street; based within the North Shields Town Centre or North West ward boundaries as shown in appendix 1.

## 2) Grant Value

100% grants of up to £2,500 are available to cover eligible project costs.

There is a limited budget available, and grants will be awarded on a first come, first served basis and priority given to those with a demonstrable requirement for shop front improvements.

**Projects must be completed and claimed within 10 weeks of grant approval.**

Projects over £2,500 will be supported however, the maximum grant towards the project is £2,500; applicants will be required to pay for any project spend over £2,500 (for example, should the project be £3,500, the business would be liable for £1,000 of the project spend).

## 3) Eligibility

For a business to be eligible for grant funding, all the following criteria must apply. Applicants must:

- be based within the North Shields town centre or North West ward boundaries (see appendix 1)
- be able to demonstrate that there is a requirement for shop front improvements
- have a minimum of 1 year remaining on the premises lease (not applicable if premises is owned by the business)
- have eligible project costs of a minimum of £250
- have a lease for the premises and registered with HMRC on the day the grant application is submitted
- meet the definition of a small to medium business (max 250 staff, £42m turnover)
- supply all of the relevant evidence detailed in Section 5

Businesses are **not** eligible for support if:

- They are industrial units
- They are upper floor offices without publicly accessible doorways and visible signage
- The works are direct replacements of functional existing measures
- They are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made
- They do not qualify under state aid/subsidy control rules

- They are part of a regional or national chain with more than 2 outlets
- They are in the gambling or sex industry sectors

The Council reserves the right to withdraw the scheme or vary the terms of the scheme at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so. Where there are exceptional circumstances, the Council reserves the right to award a grant in excess of the stated grant values. Its decisions regarding the scheme will be final.

#### 4) Eligible Project Costs

Shop Front Premises Improvements which are visible to the public when on the High Street.

This includes:

- new signage
- external cosmetic improvements (painting, graffiti removal etc)
- enhanced accessibility

All works must be carried out by a qualified tradesman or business.

Work which has already commenced or has been committed too (i.e. deposit paid or works instructed) prior to the date of application and/or receipt of a grant offer **cannot** be claimed for.

The following are **not** eligible costs for the purpose of this scheme:

- shop frontages - windows, doors
- security shutters
- Statutory costs (such as planning fees)
- Vehicles
- Stock
- Overheads & salaries
- working capital
- maintenance works (including roof repairs, flooring and direct replacements of windows & doors)
- lease/hire purchase costs
- landscaping / groundworks
- Removable items (such as seating, heaters, planters, window displays etc)
- Internal works

Due to the timescales for spend, any works which are subject to planning approval cannot be funded.

#### 5) Evidence Requirements

For the application to be considered, we require businesses to demonstrate that they meet the eligibility criteria above.

To do this, you will need to declare the following in the application form:

- Company registration number (if applicable)
- Business rates account number
- State aid compliance including the value of the business support received over the last 3 years
- Confirmation of eligibility to the grant scheme outlined above

- Confirmation of trading figures

Applicants will need to email copies of the following additional evidence after completion of the online application form:

- A photograph of the current shop front
- Copy of 2 formal quotations (from a qualified tradesman where appropriate) for all proposed project expenditure, including one from a tradesman based within the borough of North Tyneside – ***handwritten quotes, SMS/Facebook messages etc will not be accepted, quotes must be on headed quotations or emails.***
- Copy of a bank statement from your business account dated within the last 3 months, clearly showing the sort code, account number, and transactions (balance details can be redacted)
- (if applicable) Copy of lease or confirmation from landlord that there is 1 year remaining
- Any relevant planning documentation

Audit checks will take place including checks with Trading Standards and Environmental Health.

You may be asked to supply additional evidence to support the information in your application. Should you be unable to provide satisfactory evidence, your application may be refused. Should planning approval or quotations be delayed, we may consider your application on a case-by-case basis. Any offers will be subject to full documentation being received before the grant claim can be made. If you have already received a grant, you will be required to return this to North Tyneside Council. We reserve the right to request additional evidence at any time.

## 6) Grant Process

Applications for the grant can be made online and where appropriate, additional evidence must be emailed to [business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk](mailto:business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk) within 48 hours of the initial application. Applicants will receive a confirmation email once the evidence has been received.

Step by step process:

- Business gather 2 quotations (from a qualified tradesman where appropriate) for all proposed project expenditure, including one from a tradesman based within the borough of North Tyneside
- Business completes grant application online
- Business emails quotations and other evidence to [business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk](mailto:business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk) with their reference number
- Assessment of application including audit checks
- North Tyneside Council emails an Offer of Grant or rejection notification to the applicant
- Once the Offer of Grant has been received, the business can then commit to the project and start making expenditure
- Business makes payment to the suppliers and obtains a receipt
- After project expenditure has been completed, the business will submit the monitoring form and copies of bank statements showing the expenditure being paid to [business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk](mailto:business.grants@northynteside.gov.uk)

Grants will be paid in arrears, directly into a business bank account in one instalment, on receipt of proof of purchase and completed monitoring form. In exceptional circumstances grant payments may be made in advance subject to prior agreement.

No commitment must be made to the purchase of goods before an offer of grant is received and receipts must be dated after the Offer of Grant is received. Grants should be claimed within 10 weeks from the date of approval in principal.

## **7) Miscellaneous**

Grant income received by a business is taxable therefore will be subject to tax. Only businesses which make an overall profit once grant income is included will be subject to tax.

The Council can, at their discretion make payments in advance of payment to supplier, however, cannot make payments direct to the suppliers. These advance payments will be subject to strict terms & conditions to ensure that funds are used in the correct manner.

The Government and the Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back.

The Council does not accept any liability for any issues that may arise for businesses because of applying for, receiving, or not receiving grant payments under this scheme.

We are required by law to protect the public funds that we administer. We may use any of the information you provide to us for the prevention and detection of fraud. We may also share this information with other bodies that are responsible for auditing or administering public funds including the Cabinet Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, and other local authorities, HM Revenue and Customs, and the Police. Further information can be found [here](#).

Enquiries about the scheme can be emailed to: [Business@northynteside.gov.uk](mailto:Business@northynteside.gov.uk)

## **8) Subsidy Allowance**

The grant being provided is classed as a 'subsidy', a subsidy is where a public authority provides support to an enterprise that gives them an economic advantage, meaning equivalent support could not have been obtained on commercial terms. This includes, for example, a cash payment, a loan with interest below the market rate or the free use of equipment or office space.

Within the Subsidy Control Act 2022 there are exemptions, one of which is Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA). This exemption allows public authorities to award low-value subsidies (up to £315,000) without the need to comply with the majority of the subsidy control requirements. This payment is being made for the improvements of the Shop Fronts and is being awarded by way of MFA.

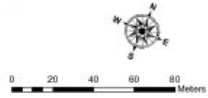
You will be asked to confirm in the application form that including this grant amount (up to £5000), your business will not have received total subsidies in excess of the maximum subsidy amount of £315,000 by way of MFA in the current and previous 2 years.

Further information on this allowance can be found here - [guidance](#)



# **NORTH SHIELDS** **December 2024**

- Primary Shopping Frontage
- Secondary Shopping Frontage
- Town Centre
- Town Retail Types
  - Food/Drink
  - Leisure
  - Retail
  - Service/other
  - Vacant



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