**Saddleworth Hydro Sustainability Fund**

**Guidance for Applicants**

The Sustainability Fund provides grants to stimulate and assist community sustainability projects in Oldham and surrounding areas, in particular those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Here we set out the purpose of the fund, how it will operate and how to apply.

**The basics**

Saddleworth Community Hydro Ltd is a Community Benefit Society. Our turbine provides zero-carbon electricity, thereby reducing (by a small amount) the rate of climate change. We sell the electricity and make a profit. Some of this money is put into a fund and used to support other sustainability projects in the area, so supporting the community. The fund is the Saddleworth Hydro Sustainability Fund (SHSF) and it is administered by Saddleworth Community Hydro Ltd.

We award a wide range of grants, covering a wide range projects but SHSF grants could also be used for to enable feasibility studies for larger projects or alongside grants from elsewhere to enable larger projects to go ahead. The grant can be used to pay for some or all of the project costs and should be spent over a period of 3 months to three years from the date of the award letter. If you are unclear if a SHSF grant is for you, get in touch and discuss it with us.

Please regard the application form as an expression of interest. Give as much detail as you can and if we need any further information or need to speak with you we can take it from there.

Large amounts would only be for exceptional projects and availability would be extremely limited. For larger grants we may well expect some kind of contributory funding.

Projects should be located within the borough of Oldham and neighbouring areas. We are prepared to be flexible with this, so if you project is a little distance away or geographically dispersed, get in touch first.

Funding rounds happen every 6 months and applications can be submitted anytime. The half-yearly deadlines are given on our website and are usually advertised in the local press.

Applicants must complete the application form that is on our website and submit it electronically. It asks the questions you would expect for any grant application, in order to check that you have thought your project through carefully and learned from others. Do answer all the questions, however, with sufficient text to demonstrate you have considered and addressed the question!

**What do we mean by ‘Sustainability’?**

The Fund envisages that it will give priority to projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions; for example by:

* + Renewable energy projects; such as fitting solar panels, heat pumps, extra insulation to prominent buildings, micro-hydro or wind energy generation, renewable energy storage devices etc,
  + Tree planting, providing sites can be found,
  + Reducing private car use, through home working, walking / cycling to school or work, car share etc,
  + Seeking additional cycle routes, repair & upgrade of existing footpaths and cycle ways,
  + Provision of electric or hybrid vehicles or charging points,
  + Showing people the cost savings made by, for example, turning down the thermostat.

Other sustainability projects will be considered in topics such as:

* Decrease unnecessary consumption and increase reuse, repair and recycling; for example by
  + Promoting, supporting and demonstrating repair, reuse and recycling projects,
  + Putting in place a ‘Buy local / buy British’ campaign,
  + Explaining the concept of ‘peak stuff’, pointing out that it is becoming ‘uncool’ to buy lots of things just because we can. Now the fashion is to buy experiences...
* Counteract loss of biodiversity; for example by:
  + Restoring and protecting ponds, woods and other habitats accessible by the community,
  + Increasing the number of households providing nesting sites for birds, food plants for butterflies etc.
* Increase food security; for example by:
* Getting additional allotments in place,
* Residents planting fruit trees,
* Food waste reduction by local businesses,
* Increasing the purchase of locally / UK grown food,
* Promote the health benefits of reducing red meat consumption.
* Reduce flooding; for example by:
  + Various actions to mitigate future flooding in the Tame Valley; would involving working closely with landowners and Councils,
  + Tree planting on hillsides, peat restoration on the moors, gully blocking, building bunds and other runoff capture structures,
  + Restoration of old mill lodges (ponds) and dams,
  + Discouraging building on flood plains,
  + Clearing roadside drains, ditches and gullies.
* Educational activity in the above areas, plus:
  + Projects that enable young people to participate in activities concerning renewable energy, reduction of carbon emissions and climate change. This supports The Oldham Pledge, which seeks to ensure all Year 7 pupils will be able to contribute to environmental sustainability (amongst other things).

These ideas listed above are not exclusive and the fund is open to other ideas that will enhance sustainability in and around Oldham.

**The community**

In order for a project to be funded, it must clearly benefit the community. If a business or community group apply, they must make the community benefit clear; the project should not primarily benefit them.

To strengthen the community, we will give preference to those projects that draw in participants from a variety of different groups of people i.e. different ages, genders, interests etc and thus enable them to work together.

We will not support projects proposed by organisations that discriminate against others or limit their membership in a way that is deliberately exclusive.

Groups may be asked to provide an equity statement.

**Applicants**

All applicants must be properly constituted organisations with at least three members on the governing body or board of directors. All organisations applying for funding must have their own bank account, which requires two unrelated people to authorise payments and make withdrawals (including debit card or internet purchases and cash withdrawals). This must be in the name of the organisation applying unless it is a school. Account details will be required before any funds can be paid to successful applicants.

**What we will not fund.**

Any fund of this type has to make clear what it will NOT fund; the list is long but necessary:

* Projects run by individuals or businesses primarily for their own benefit,
* Projects where the main activity and / or benefits occur outside Oldham and surrounding areas,
* Activities that would happen anyway, without support from the Fund,
* Activities that are the legal duties of others, such as the State or local authorities,
* Projects proposed by organisations that discriminate against specific groups of people,
* Projects where the main outputs or outcomes do not, in the opinion of the Fund administrators enhance sustainability,
* Activities that happen or start before we confirm that a grant has been awarded,
* Any costs you incur when putting together your application,
* Any expenditure incurred or committed before we confirm our grant (including deposits),
* Day-to-day running costs of your organisation (for example, utility bills, council tax, rent, insurance),
* Contingency costs,
* Endowments (to provide a source of income),
* Existing activities or repeat or regular events (by which we mean they have occurred in the last 3 years),
* Fundraising activities for your organisation or others,
* Items that are purchased on behalf of another organisation or individual,
* Land, buildings, refurbishment or property projects, or the purchase of vehicles, unless these items are necessary to the delivery of sustainability outputs and will continue to deliver those sustainability benefits for at least 5 years after they have been put into place,
* Land or building projects where the ownership or lease is not yet in place (including any planning permissions),
* Loans or interest payments,
* Ongoing staff costs (including salaries of permanent or fixed term staff),
* Political or religious activities,
* Projects where it is considered that assistance may have been received from a third party for their own personal or commercial benefit,
* Projects you cannot maintain because of high ongoing costs or the need for specialist skills,
* Purchase of alcohol or drugs,
* Routine repairs and maintenance,
* VAT that you can recover.

**The application and assessment process**

Applications will usually be submitted by a community group or public organisation rather than by an individual or a company acting on their own behalf. Groups and organisations must be properly constituted and have a bank account.

We actively welcome applicants asking for advice on their project concept and / or on the application process and the Fund managers will do their best to advise where it is in their competence to do so. Then it’s up to the applicants!

Applications can be submitted anytime but will only be assessed shortly after the half-yearly deadline. The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged.

Applications should be submitted on the form provided. Please send it by e-mail (as this will enable more speedy processing) though hard copy will also be accepted by post. Guidance on completion of the application form is provided on the form.

Decisions to fund or not fund applications will be made within a month of the deadlines, except in those cases where the committee requires more information. The panel may ask applicants to present their proposal to them and discuss it face to face but this will not usually be the case. Incomplete applications will be returned, which could result in your application not being considered in that funding round. In the case of minor omissions, we will, at our discretion, allow applications to be resubmitted up to 5 working days after the deadline.

The written submissions will be assessed by a panel of people drawn from the directors of Saddleworth Community Hydro Ltd, the Friends of Saddleworth Hydro and invited individuals with a strong background in sustainability or community matters.

The assessment panel may use a scoring system to enable us to choose between projects on those occasions when we have more applications than we can fund. Preference is given to projects that:

* Show strong evidence of need,
* Will clearly reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
* Will clearly increase sustainability in Saddleworth and neighbouring areas,
* Seek to involve as wide a range of people as possible,
* Are based on proven good practice elsewhere,
* Have clear goals and milestones and the means to clearly show when those have been met,
* Have realistic budgets and timescales,
* Are from smaller organisations, or ones with modest incomes,
* Will draw in support from other organisations, either in cash or kind.

We aim to assess each application equally and fairly and to be consistent across the batch of applications.

The decisions of this panel will be recommended to the Board of Saddleworth Community Hydro Ltd, who will make the final decision. That decision will be final.

Funding decisions will be communicated to applicants by e-mail unless the applicant has specifically requested otherwise.

**Distribution of grants**

For small or simple projects we would normally make one payment at the start of the project.

For larger or more complex projects, the period covered by the grant will start when project activity, as described in the application, begins. The first payment will be released at project start up, in order to enable work to begin. Thereafter funds will be released when milestones, as described in your application and agreed by the panel, are reached. Projects must submit evidence of expenditure and of work completed in the preceding stage, at each milestone. e.g. by presentation of invoices / receipts, photos of work done, in order to trigger release of funds for the next stage.

**At project completion**

For small or simple projects, please send us (electronically) a few photographs showing the completed works and/or the project in action. We also require a short statement, signed by the project leader, confirming the works are completed and the project is achieving what it set out to do.

For longer or more complex projects, we require a short report, not exceeding 4 sides of A4, within 1 month of project completion, setting out the extent to which the project achieved its aim and objectives, detailing lessons learned and providing a concise statement of accounts. A selection of at least 10 photographs should also be provided to the Fund by electronic means, with the freedom for the Fund to use these for public relations purposes.

**Data protection.**

We will use the information given to us during assessment and during the life of your grant (if awarded) to administer and analyse grants. We may give copies of all or some of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, administering the programme, monitoring grants and evaluating funding processes and impacts. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering our programme.

We may share information with organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in our grant programme. The names of successful applicants may be passed on to the media, local government and our Member of Parliament, for the purposes of informing them of the applicant’s success but contact details will not be released without your permission.

Because we will usually receive applications electronically and will thus store and share your application on our devices, your information may be transferred to an IT service provider based outside the United Kingdom. The usual terms and conditions of using services provided by Microsoft, Google, cloud storage companies etc will thus apply.

If you provide false or inaccurate information in your application or at any point in the life of any funding we award you and fraud is identified, we will provide details to fraud prevention agencies to prevent fraud and money laundering. If you are a company this will include the names of the Company Directors at the time of the fraud. You must undertake to inform all Directors, Trustees and Committee members of this notice.

Like all other organisations in the UK, we are covered by the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and should a request be made of us, we may be required to share information about you and your application.

We will not share your data with other organisations except as set out above and we certainly will not sell it to any commercial organisation.