



Capital Funding for Community Buildings

Did you know that many community buildings are looking for capital funding to make improvements to their properties?

At Durham Community Action, we have been working closely with trustees and staff who manage community centres and village halls. There are several key factors to consider when planning capital improvements to these buildings, including:

- Planning Regulations – Understanding when planning permission is needed, especially for buildings in conservation areas or listed properties.
- Building Controls – Knowing when building regulations apply and who is responsible for organising compliance.
- Landlord's Permission – working out when permission is needed and how to obtain it.
- Proving Ownership of the Building – Some halls struggle to prove ownership due to lost deeds or unregistered properties with the Land Registry.
- Lease Issues – Halls leasing their buildings may face challenges if their lease term is too short. Many funders require at least seven years left on the lease (some require longer).

Planning Ahead for Capital Works

Trustees need to plan ahead when considering capital improvements, as these projects often take time. Processes such as obtaining planning permission and landlord approval can take months and unexpected issues may arise once contractors begin work.

Finding contractors can also be challenging. Many funders require at least three quotes, which may be particularly difficult for newer energy-efficient technologies, where there may be limited providers available.

Once funding is secured, organisations will have a deadline by which the money must be spent, making it essential to prepare as much as possible in advance.

Why Capital Improvements Matter

Investing in capital improvements is essential to keep community buildings safe, functional, and sustainable. With rising energy costs, many organisations are now looking to enhance their energy efficiency and transition to climate-friendly heating systems to move towards net zero.

It may be helpful to set up a working group to oversee the capital funding process, plan accordingly, and delegate roles to different members. This can help ensure all necessary steps are completed in a timely and efficient manner.

Durham Community Action offers support in various ways, including:

- Training and one-to-one support for community groups.
- Funding searches to help identify suitable grant opportunities.
- Networking opportunities to connect with other community organisations facing similar challenges.

As part of Village Halls Week, Durham Community Action, in partnership with solicitors, will be launching a guide for trustees of community centres and village halls to help them understand key legal aspects of managing their buildings.

We are also excited to launch our brand-new training course, 'Being Capital Funding Ready'. Keep an eye on our social media and mailings for further details coming soon.