

# Closed Churchyards and Cemeteries Grant Scheme

## 1. Purpose of the Scheme

The Closed Churchyards and Cemeteries Concurrent Grant Scheme (“the Scheme”) has been established to support Parish Councils within North West Leicestershire that are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of closed churchyards and closed cemeteries.

The Scheme recognises that Parish Councils often assume statutory responsibility for closed burial grounds under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 without the transfer of equivalent long-term funding, placing ongoing financial and operational pressure on parish budgets. The Scheme is intended to assist Parish Councils in ensuring that closed burial grounds are maintained in a safe, dignified, and sustainable condition, that health and safety risks associated with memorials, trees, pathways, and built structures are appropriately managed, that local heritage and community assets are protected, and that environmental or biodiversity improvements are supported where these are appropriate to the character and use of burial grounds.

The Scheme will operate concurrently alongside other North West Leicestershire District Council grant programmes. Eligible Parish Councils will be able to apply to this Scheme without prejudice to other funding streams, subject to the requirement that overall public funding does not exceed the actual cost of works and that subsidy control requirements are met.

## 2. Scope of the Scheme

Funding provided under this Scheme is strictly limited to works and activities relating to closed churchyards and closed cemeteries where statutory responsibility for maintenance rests with the Parish Council.

Open or active churchyards and cemeteries, or sites that remain open for burials or interments, are explicitly excluded from the Scheme and will not be eligible for funding.

## 3. Eligible Applicants

Applications under the Scheme may be submitted only by Parish Councils that are wholly or partly within the administrative area of North West Leicestershire District Council.

The applicant Parish Council must have legal responsibility for the maintenance of the closed churchyard or cemetery to which the application relates and must be able to demonstrate ownership, control, or statutory maintenance responsibility for the

site. Parish Councils must also be able to demonstrate that they have appropriate governance, financial management, and decision-making arrangements in place.

Applications from individuals, churches, community or voluntary groups, dioceses, or private landowners will not be accepted under this Scheme.

#### **4. Eligible Sites**

To be eligible for funding, a site must be a churchyard or cemetery that has been formally closed, either by Order in Council or by other lawful means.

Responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the site must have transferred to the Parish Council, either automatically under statute or through a formal legal or administrative process. The site must be located within the boundaries of North West Leicestershire District Council and must normally be accessible to the public, unless access has been restricted or limited for health and safety reasons.

#### **5. Eligible Expenditure**

Funding under the Scheme may be used to support both revenue and capital expenditure that is directly related to the maintenance, safety, accessibility, or improvement of eligible closed churchyards and cemeteries.

Eligible expenditure includes grass cutting and general grounds maintenance where this is necessary to maintain safety and accessibility, tree inspections, management and remedial works, memorial safety inspections and stabilisation works, repairs to boundaries such as walls, fences and gates, repairs to pathways and access routes, litter clearance and waste disposal, and ecological or biodiversity improvements where these are compatible with the respectful use of burial grounds.

Professional fees may also be supported where they are directly related to eligible works, including arboricultural reports, structural surveys, or specialist safety inspections.

#### **6. Ineligible Expenditure**

Funding will not be provided for works relating to open or active churchyards or cemeteries, nor for religious or faith-based activities or services.

The Scheme will not support the creation of new burial provision or the extension of existing burial grounds. Routine Parish Council administrative costs, including staffing and general overheads, are not eligible for funding. Retrospective works that have been completed prior to the formal approval of a grant award will not be funded, and the Scheme will not support works that are already fully funded from another public grant source, in order to avoid double funding.

## **7. Grant Value and Intervention Rate**

Grants will normally be awarded up to a maximum annual amount, which will be determined by the Council through its approved budget allocation for the Scheme.

Funding may cover up to one hundred per cent of eligible costs, subject to an assessment of value for money and the availability of funding. In some cases, Parish Councils may be required to demonstrate a local financial contribution or match funding where this is considered appropriate or proportionate.

The Council reserves the right to award less than the amount requested by an applicant and to part-fund individual elements of an application rather than the full project.

## **8. Concurrent Funding Arrangements**

The Scheme will operate concurrently with other North West Leicestershire District Council grant schemes.

Parish Councils may apply to this Scheme in addition to other Council funding, and awards made under this Scheme will be considered separately and will not automatically reduce eligibility for other grants. Applicants must declare all other funding applied for or received in relation to the same site or project, and total public funding must not exceed the actual cost of the works.

## **9. Application Process**

Applications must be submitted using the Council's approved application form and must include sufficient information to allow the Council to assess eligibility, need, and value for money.

Applications will be required to provide a description and location of the closed churchyard or cemetery, evidence of closure and Parish Council maintenance responsibility, details of the proposed works and associated costs, quotations or estimates for the works, a proposed project timetable, and a declaration of all other funding sources.

Incomplete applications may not be assessed.

## **10. Assessment Criteria**

Applications will be assessed against a range of criteria, including confirmation of statutory responsibility and eligibility, the extent to which the application addresses health and safety risks, the condition and urgency of the proposed works, value for money and proportionality, environmental and heritage considerations, and the ability of the Parish Council to deliver the works within the proposed timeframe.

The Council is not obliged to fund all applications that meet the eligibility criteria.

## **11. Decision-Making and Governance**

Decisions on grant awards will be made either under delegated authority or by Members, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Financial Procedure Rules.

The Scheme will operate within the approved budget allocation, and all awards will be subject to formal grant offer letters and associated conditions.

## **12. Monitoring and Conditions**

Successful applicants will be required to use grant funding solely for the approved purposes and to maintain appropriate financial records and evidence of expenditure.

Parish Councils will be required to confirm completion of works and demonstrate the outcomes achieved. The Council reserves the right to require repayment of grant funding where conditions are breached or where funding is misused.

## **13. Subsidy Control, State Aid, and Legal Compliance**

The Scheme will operate in compliance with UK Subsidy Control requirements, the Council's Constitution and Financial Procedure Rules, the Equality Act 2010, and data protection legislation.

Most grants awarded under this Scheme are expected to fall outside subsidy control requirements, as the activities funded are non-economic in nature and relate to statutory and community responsibilities.

## **14. Review of the Scheme**

The Scheme will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to align with Council priorities, represents an effective use of public funds, and remains relevant to the needs of Parish Councils.

The Council reserves the right to amend, suspend, or withdraw the Scheme at any time.