

SOLAR PV AND BATTERY GRANT REPORT

08/10/2026

PART I

**SOLAR AND BATTERY GRANT UPDATE AND EXTENSION REQUEST
ADE**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to revise and extend the Solar PV and Battery Grant Scheme to increase uptake and maximise the impact of the Council's £50,000 climate change funding allocation.
- 1.2 The proposed changes include increasing the maximum grant from £3,000 to £6,500, reducing match-funding requirements, extending eligibility to community buildings, and continuing the scheme until March 2028.
- 1.3 Evidence from previous grant programmes suggests that higher levels of support are needed to stimulate investment in solar PV, while community buildings offer significant additional opportunities for renewable energy deployment.
- 1.4 The revised scheme aims to increase local solar generation, reduce carbon emissions and energy costs, support the local low-carbon economy, and ensure the approved budget delivers meaningful environmental and community benefits.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That:
- 2.2 Policy and Resources Committee approve the revised terms of the Solar PV and Battery Grant Scheme:
 - increasing the maximum grant available from £3,000 to £6,500 per eligible SME, with a requirement for 50% match funding
 - extending eligible organisations to include community buildings, in addition to eligible SMEs
 - extending the duration of the grant scheme until March 2028

Report prepared by: Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change Manager

3 Details

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources committee 26 January 2026 approved the use of £50,000 of climate change budgets across financial years 25/26 and 26/27 to support SME's to install solar and batteries, requiring match funding of 75% up to £3,000.

- 3.2 The UK Solar Roadmap has identified that by 2030, 20% of UK Solar PV capacity should come from non-domestic rooftops and ground mounts (i.e. car park canopies).¹ Non domestic buildings account for 53% of the electricity use in the district, compared to 47% in domestic buildings.² Although non-domestic electricity usage accounts for only 7% of total district emissions, uptake of solar on non-domestic buildings is very low at just 1-2%.^{3,4}
- 3.3 The SME solar and battery project was launched to try to stimulate growth of renewable generation in this sector and to reduce dependency on grid electricity, thus providing financial resilience for SMEs, reduced impact on the grid, and economic opportunity for local installers.
- 3.4 The SME Solar and Battery grant followed a UKSPF grant which supported 9 local SMEs to install energy efficiency measures, 7 of which included a solar and/or battery. The UKSPF grant offered £10,000 per eligible business and did not require match funding, although it did generate £250,000 of investment.
- 3.5 The SME Solar and Battery grant has been marketed extensively through the council's Greener Living and Business e-newsletters, social media, letters and emails direct to businesses, and via installers advising them of the grant so they can make potential customers aware.
- 3.6 Despite the extensive marketing, there has been a very limited response with only 8 enquiries, 3 of which were for community buildings who were precluded from the grant.
- 3.7 Some of the enquiries provided feedback on the reasons for not progressing which were varied:
- Tenanted property.
 - Grant too low to encourage uptake
 - Project not progressing
 - Enquiry not progressed with no reason provided
- 3.8 The climate change team would like to change the terms of the grant to encourage greater uptake. The funds are provided within the climate change revenue budget. The proposal is to increase the maximum grant per eligible organisation to £6,500, require 50% match funding, include community buildings and extend the grant scheme until March 2028
- 3.9 The proposed definition of a community building for the purposes of this grant scheme would be:
- A non-residential building that provides, or is regularly used to provide, facilities, activities, services or space for the benefit of the local community, and is operated by a community, voluntary, charitable, faith, public-sector or other not-for-profit organisation, or is otherwise operated for community benefit.

¹ [UK Solar Roadmap 2025](#)

² [Regional and local authority electricity consumption statistics - GOV.UK](#)

³ [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [The MCS Data Dashboard - MCS](#)

- 3.10 There are 237 Buildings in the district in the education, emergency services, community services and medical centres.⁵
- 3.11 Community buildings are held under a range of ownership and leasehold arrangements, including local authority, charitable trust, community organisation and institutional ownership. While lease structures vary, many community buildings benefit from long-term occupation arrangements, meaning ownership is not expected to be a significant barrier to the delivery of small-scale solar installations where the relevant approvals can be obtained. By comparison, many SMEs operate from leased commercial premises where shorter lease terms, landlord consent requirements and business mobility can present additional barriers to installing solar PV. As a result, while ownership structures vary across community buildings, they are not expected to constitute a significant barrier to the delivery of a small-scale solar grant programme.
- 3.12 A maximum grant of £6,500 per eligible organisation is proposed, following learning from our two previous schemes which indicate that the level of financial support offered is a key factor in driving uptake. A grant of up to £10,000 under the previous UKSPF scheme generated strong interest from local SMEs, resulting in seven solar applications, whereas the current scheme offering up to £3,000 attracted no solar applications. This suggests that grants need to make a meaningful contribution towards upfront installation costs to overcome financial barriers. A grant of £6,500 is therefore considered a reasonable balance between providing a sufficiently attractive incentive and maximising the number of organisations that can benefit from the available funding.
- 3.13 Community buildings could seek to raise community energy funding via organisations such as Grand Union Community Energy to pay the co-funded element of the installation, reducing the need for organisations to fund installations entirely from their own reserves. A TRDC grant would help de-risk projects and unlock additional investment, enabling more community organisations to proceed with solar installations. This approach can help provide long-term certainty over energy costs and maximise the financial benefits retained within the local community
- 3.14 By reducing the upfront cost of installation, the SME Solar and Battery grant scheme can help unlock investment that would not otherwise occur. This provides a direct boost to local economic activity through demand for solar installers, electricians and related services, while also supporting the development of the local low-carbon supply chain. Alongside lower energy bills for participating organisations, this contributes to wider economic resilience and supports the transition to a net zero economy within Three Rivers, further reducing pressure on the national grid.

4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Local evidence suggests that a £3,000 grant is insufficient to stimulate solar uptake among local SMEs, whereas a £10,000 grant on a previous scheme generated strong demand. The proposed £6,500 grant strikes a balance between providing a meaningful incentive and maximising the number of SMEs and community organisations that can benefit from the approved funding allocation
- 4.2 The revised scheme would support greater deployment of renewable energy across SMEs and community buildings in Three Rivers, helping to reduce

⁵ [Address Base Core | Data Products | OS](#)

emissions, improve organisational resilience through lower energy costs, and stimulate local economic activity through investment in the low-carbon supply chain.

- 4.3 As there was no uptake of the grant in 2025/26 the proposal is to extend the grant for a further financial year, as the funds have been rolled forward into financial year 2026/27 and any unspent funds in this year could be rolled forward into 2027/28.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is entitled Climate Emergency Change and Sustainability Strategy and was agreed on 12 December 2023

- 5.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators.

- 5.2.1 CP 52 District Emissions

- 5.3 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

Installing solar on community buildings and SMEs will reduce carbon emissions from these buildings and thus the district.

6 Staffing, Community Safety, Public Health and Health & Safety Implications

- 6.1 None specific

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Maximum budget of £50,000 across the two years, already approved 26 January 2026, and earmarked within the climate change budget. The unspent funds from 25/26 have been carried forward to 26/27.

REVENUE IMPLICATION	Current Year 2026/27 £	2027/20 28 £
Revenue		
Expenditure	20,000	30,000
Income/savings	0	0
Net Commitment	0	0

8 Fraud Potential, Risk Management and Prevention

- 8.1 Fraud is a concern with grants that are allocated to businesses and community buildings, and the mitigations can be found in Appendix 2 Fraud Risk Assessment.

9 Legal and Staff Implications

- 9.1 See Appendix 1 SME Solar PV and Battery Grant Proposal.

10 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 10.1 No direct Risk or Health & Safety implications associated with the Solar PV and Battery Grant. Requiring the use of MCS accredited installers reduces the risk of poor-quality installations.

11 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 11.1 A Short equalities impact assessment was completed – see Appendix 3, and no negative impacts were found. To ensure that organisations supporting groups with protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups learn about the grant, it will be promoted through established partnerships – Connecting Three Rivers, The Equalities Forum and Watford Three Rivers Trust

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 The grants will enable buildings across the district to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and show leadership in their communities to encourage others to follow the same course of action.

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.67
Travel	
Goods and Consumption	3.50
Biodiversity & Nature	
Adaptation	
Engagement and Influence	3
Total Overall Average Score	3.4

12.1 Customer Services Implication

- 12.2 Customer Services will be briefed to ensure they are able to efficiently pass on enquiries to the climate change team

13 Communications and Website Implications

Support from Communications and Digital teams will be required in modifying marketing materials and launch documentation. All the template documentation from the current scheme is in place.

The website page will need to be updated which contains a link to a grant application form using the Granicus platform will be required. Marketing materials will include a poster/leaflet and social media graphics.

A press release will announce the launch of the grant and encourage applications from eligible organisations. Our partners Sustainable Three Rivers, Grand Union Community Energy, Watford Three Rivers Trust, the Three Rivers Information Partnership and the Healthy Hubs will all be asked to share the offer.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

14.1 The subject of this report is covered by the climate and sustainability service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat terminate, transfer)	Residual Risk
Fraudulent	Grant funding awarded to organisations that do not meet eligibility criteria, or for installations that are not completed as claimed, resulting in financial loss and reputational damage to the Council.	Separate Fraud Risk Assessment (Appendix 2); eligibility checks; requirement for invoices and proof of payment; payment made retrospectively; visits to each applicant	Treat	3
Low uptake of the grant scheme	Approved budget remains unspent and the scheme delivers fewer carbon savings, economic benefits and community outcomes than anticipated.	Increased grant value; reduced match-funding requirement; expanded eligibility to community buildings; targeted marketing through business networks, community organisations and installers; periodic review of scheme performance.	Treat	4
Reputational damage arising from grant-funded projects	Negative experiences with installers, project delays, or performance issues may be attributed to the Council, reducing confidence in future grant programmes and climate initiatives	Clear applicant guidance on roles and responsibilities; disclaimer that the Council does not appoint or endorse installers; minimum installer accreditation requirements; monitoring of complaints and lessons learned; proactive communications with grant recipients.	Treat	3

- The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely Likelihood ▼ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact Low ► Unacceptable				

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote (≤5%))

- In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

Data Quality

Data sources:

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025) *Solar Roadmap*. London: Crown Copyright. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/solar-roadmap> (Accessed: 12/08/2026)

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025) Regional and local authority electricity consumption statistics. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-and-local-authority-electricity-consumption-statistics> (Accessed: 12/08/2026)

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2026) UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics (2005 – 2024). Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics> (Accessed: 06/06/2026)

MCS (2026) The MCS Data Dashboard. Available at:

<https://datadashboard.mcscertified.com/InstallationInsights> (Accessed 12/08/2026)

Ordnance Survey (2026) OS Address Base Premium (Release date: 25/05/2026) [Geospatial dataset]. Southampton: Ordnance Survey. Available at: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk> (Accessed: 25/05/2026)

Data checked by:

Rory Shenton

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	
3	High	x

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: SME Solar PV and Battery Grant Proposal

Appendix 2: Fraud Risk Assessment

Appendix 3: Short Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 4: Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat terminate, transfer)	Residual Risk
Fraudulent	Grant funding awarded to organisations that do not meet eligibility criteria, or for installations that are not completed as claimed, resulting in financial loss and reputational damage to the Council.	Separate Fraud Risk Assessment (Appendix 2); eligibility checks; requirement for invoices and proof of payment; payment made retrospectively; spot checks; declaration of accuracy by applicant; right to recover grant funds where fraud is identified.	Treat	3
Low uptake of the grant scheme	Approved budget remains unspent and the scheme delivers fewer carbon savings, economic benefits and community outcomes than	Increased grant value; reduced match-funding requirement; expanded eligibility to community buildings; targeted marketing through business networks, community organisations and	Treat	4

	anticipated.	installers; periodic review of scheme performance.		
Reputational damage arising from grant-funded projects	Negative experiences with installers, project delays, or performance issues may be attributed to the Council, reducing confidence in future grant programmes and climate initiatives	Clear applicant guidance on roles and responsibilities; disclaimer that the Council does not appoint or endorse installers; minimum installer accreditation requirements; monitoring of complaints and lessons learned; proactive communications with grant recipients.	Treat	3

