

Pots of Possibility: Your Pots Information & Guidance – 2026

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Key Dates

1 September: Expression of interest application form opens at 10am

7 September - 29 September: Advice and support available at drop-in sessions, via email, and by Zoom

30 September: Expressions of interest deadline - submit your application form by 11:59pm

6 October: Verification of applications - we'll tell you if your project can proceed to the next stage

7 October - 5 November: Record a short video with Lancaster District CVS via Zoom

9 November - 2 December: Encourage your supporters and networks to register to vote online or at the in-person event.

5 December: Attend the Your Pots Your Say Voting Day event at The Platform, Morecambe

Overview

What is Closing Loops?

Closing Loops is a five-year £1.5 million project (2022-27) led by FoodFutures, North Lancashire's sustainable food partnership. The scheme is delivered by six local organisations (LESS, Lancaster District CVS, Eggcup, Global Link, Shared Future CIC and Scientists For Global Responsibility), and is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

The Closing Loops project supports community-led action and local initiatives to create a zero-waste, circular and regenerative local economy in Lancaster District. As part of the project £300,000 in small grants is being distributed through the Pots of Possibility fund for community groups, organisations and social enterprises to develop creative ideas that enable people and the environment to thrive.

Find out more about Closing Loops, and what it aims to achieve at <https://foodfutures.org.uk/closing-loops/>

What is a Regenerative Economy?

The Closing Loops project aims to create a regenerative economy in North Lancashire. A regenerative economy is a network of local people, organisations and businesses who live and work in a way that protects and restores the environment, builds healthier communities and improves people's wellbeing.

A regenerative economy is made up of different regenerative enterprises. These could be community initiatives or groups, charities, social entrepreneurs and other types of not-for-profit business.

Some examples might include:

- A market garden that grows and distributes seasonal, organic veg locally and trains new growers who want to produce local food
- A village stall for swapping surplus veg, plants and seeds

- A community enterprise that makes use of a material currently going to waste (food, textiles, plastic, etc)
- A community group running workshops to learn about refurbishing, fixing and repairing

These ideas are explored in the [Spring 2023 edition of THRIVE](#). For inspiration, [have a look at some of the projects we've already funded](#).

The 'Pots of Possibility' Fund

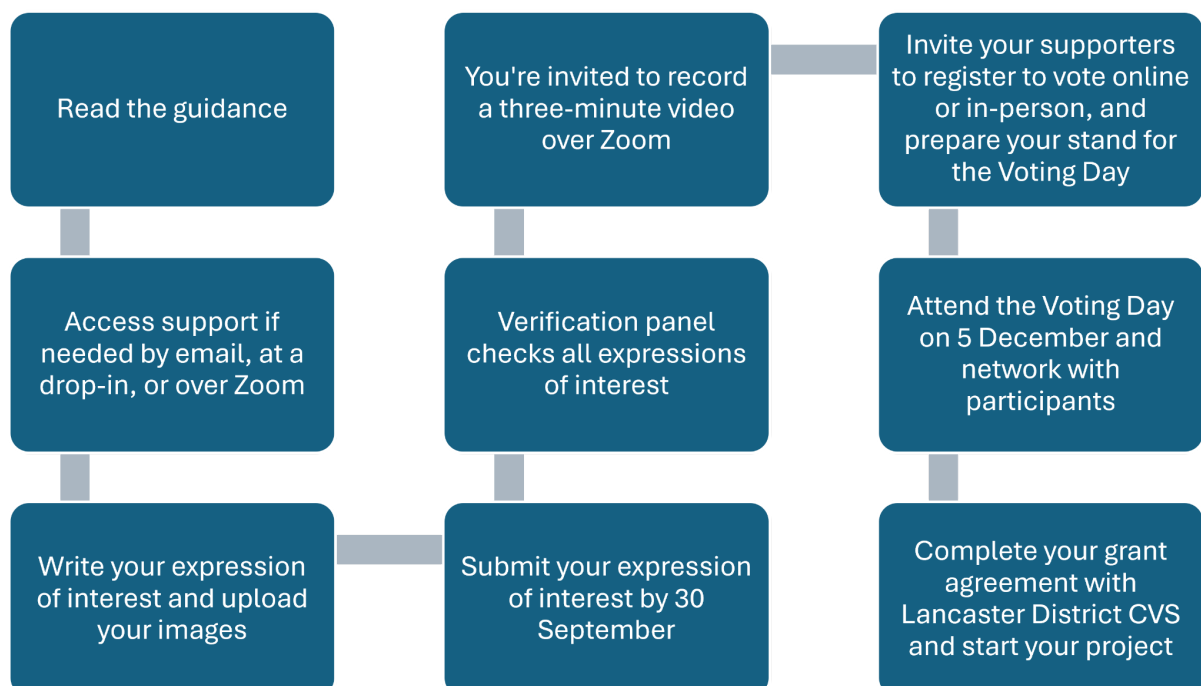
The fund offers two different grant opportunities.

- 'Community Pots' with grants of up to £5,000 to support pilots, test the feasibility of new ideas and support community projects. The final round of Community Pots took place in April/May 2026.
- 'Your Pots' are grants of between £5,000 and £10,000, awarded to grow ideas and scale up pilots that contribute to an ecosystem of regenerative initiatives and community enterprises locally.

Your Pots 2026

This guidance document relates to the 'Your Pots' participatory grant making which will distribute £200,000 over four rounds. There will be £50,000 available to distribute in autumn/winter 2026, which will be the fourth and final round.

'Your Pots' uses an innovative 'participatory budgeting' approach where everyone who lives in the Lancaster district can, if they choose, be involved in making recommendations about who receives funding. This process is sometimes called participatory grant making.



What kind of projects can receive 'Your Pots' funding?

The 'Your Pots' fund provides grants of between £5,000 to £10,000 for social enterprises, charities and other not-for-profit groups or organisations. Projects funded by 'Your Pots' must support the Closing Loops aim of creating a thriving, regenerative economy here in North Lancashire.

These include ideas in any of the following themes:

- *Repair*: Reusing, repurposing and repairing materials currently going to waste (e.g. textiles, electronics, packaging, surplus food, etc)
- *Shared Resources & Community Space*: Sharing resources (e.g. tools, materials, skills, etc) or repurposing unused space for community benefit
- *Communications, Arts & Festivals*: Inspiring people to use and buy things more sustainably and to produce less waste
- *Food Related Projects*: Growing, cooking and eating food that's local, seasonal and sustainably produced

If your organisation was awarded a Pots of Possibility Community Pots or Your Pots grant in a previous round you are able to apply again, but you must have completed your project and your End of Grant Return before submitting a new expression of interest.

We can fund a wide range of activities within your project, including:

- Putting on events or taking part in other people's events
- Publishing content like websites, videos, podcasts or books
- Providing training or education
- Reusing or repurposing equipment or resources (we recommend avoiding using funds to buy new equipment unless it has not been possible to source second-hand or shared community resources)
- Improving land or buildings
- Paying staff or consultants
- Working with volunteers and paying their expenses

There are some things we can't fund, which are:

- Activities which have already taken place or you have already spent money on
- Alcohol or tobacco
- Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
- Payment to some else to write your application
- Profit-making or fundraising activity
- VAT that the organisation can reclaim
- Religious activities (religious organisations can be funded for projects that benefit the wider community)
- Statutory activities (activities that statutory organisations are required to deliver)
- Activities that improve educational attainment
- Overseas travel
- Projects that take place outside the Lancaster District (defined by the Lancaster City Council area)
- Political activities

We are looking to support organisations that are serious about taking action to reduce their, and our District's carbon footprint whilst building local ability to cope with and respond to climate change.

We will not fund organisations or projects involved in destructive environmental and social practices. Although organisations farming animals will not be excluded, priority will be given to organisations which encourage alternatives to animal consumption.

Who can apply for 'Your Pots' funding?

Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations are all eligible to apply. Applicants must be at least one of the below:

- Unincorporated voluntary or community organisation with a constitution or rules
- Constituted group or sports club
- Registered charity
- Charitable incorporated organisation
- Not-for-profit company
- Community interest company
- School, College or University (as long as the project provides wider community benefits)
- Faith-based groups

The organisation also needs:

- To have at least two unconnected people on the board or committee, that is not a relation by blood, marriage, civil partnership, in a long-term relationship or people living together at the same address.
- To have a UK bank or building society account, in the legal name of the organisation, with at least two unrelated people able to manage it.
- To produce annual accounts, or plan to if less than 15 months old. Accounts should be produced by a method and in a format relevant to the size of the organisation.
- To have adopted relevant policies and procedures around issues such as equality and safeguarding
- To hold relevant insurances and qualifications where necessary.

When you make your initial application or expression of interest we will ask you to tell us about you and your organisation. The information you provide will inform the decision about whether your project is eligible to proceed to the next stage. The more information you can provide about your idea and your organisation, the better.

What about funding for individuals or private business, or a community organisation without a constitution or rules?

We can't fund applications from individuals, or from businesses or limited companies that are not also charities or not-for-profit social enterprises. To meet the rules of the National Lottery Community Fund, who have provided this funding to Closing Loops, we will need to see and check your group or organisation's constitution or set of rules.

Community Interest Companies that are limited by shares (rather than by guarantee) are eligible to apply as long as they are able to confirm that they follow the Regulator of Community Interest Companies' [guidance on shares, dividends and the dividend cap](#).

If you're an individual, or a business or community group without any kind of acceptable governing document, we might be able to work with you to find an organisation that is eligible to apply and willing to work in partnership with you to deliver your project.

The partner organisation will need to pass all our normal due diligence checks and will sign our grant agreement - so they will be legally responsible for the project and its finance.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible, it is very important that you ask for our advice before the 30 September 2026 deadline for expressions of interest.

What should we do if we want help or advice?

Drop-in sessions

We are holding drop-in sessions where anyone who has a question about the fund (including eligibility and how to apply) or wants to tell us about their idea can come along to find out more and receive in-person guidance. There's no need to book for these sessions, just turn up at any time during the hours below:

7 September, 10am - 12 noon at The Cornerstone (Sulyard Street, Lancaster LA1 1PX)

14 September, 1pm - 3pm at The Link (11-13 West Street, Morecambe LA3 1RB)

15 September, 3:30pm - 5:30pm at Carnforth Library (65A Lancaster Rd, Carnforth LA5 9DZ)

Pitch your idea and receive feedback

If you'd like to test out your idea and receive feedback by pitching it to someone else, you can [book an informal online session](#) with Jez Hall of Shared Future CIC. Sessions are being held at various times on 16, 23, 24 and 29 September.

Jez has worked with LESS and Lancaster District CVS to develop Your Pots and has supported several similar PB initiatives over many years. In your 20 minute session you can pitch your idea to Jez and receive some suggestions for improving your project outline. Jez doesn't take part in the decision-making process and will be able to provide independent and impartial advice.

Support via email

Contact LDCVS by email at hello@lancastercv.org.uk or by telephone on 01524 555900 for support on questions about the online application process, eligibility, documentation, and timescales. LDCVS will also provide advice to grant holders about their grant agreement, payments, and the monitoring and evaluation process. Staff are available to respond to calls and email during office hours Monday to Friday.

Contact Jo Stocking, Closing Loops REconomy Coordinator, by email at jo_cl@lessuk.org to get advice about Closing Loops themes, discuss project ideas, and find out more about the fund's approach to zero-waste and regenerative enterprises. Jo usually works on Mondays and Tuesdays.

If you have questions about 'participatory budgeting' generally, you can contact Jez Hall, of Shared Future CIC, who is advising on how this process will run. Contact Jez at jez.hall@sharedfuturecic.org.uk

Making your Expression of Interest (stage 1)

How do we make an Expression of Interest for Your Pots?

Apply by creating an account at morecambabay.grantplatform.com

This secure service allows you to work on your application, saving and returning to it as many times as you like before submitting. It is also where we will record information we create regarding your application and anything else you send us while you are delivering your project.

If you need a reference copy of the application form to use offline while planning your application, [it's available to download and print](#). You cannot apply using the paper reference copy.

In the application form, you will answer a few brief eligibility questions and then respond to several sections that let us know about your project and how to contact you. Not all sections are required at this stage so it's up to you whether or not you complete the optional ones. If your project is recommended for a grant in December then you will need to complete all the optional sections before we can issue a grant agreement.

Your answers to these questions will provide us with information that we will use at the verification panel stage. If you are successful after the public voting is complete, they will also form part of your grant agreement.

Most questions are limited to 100 or 200 words. You don't have to use all the words or be completely certain about costs to make an expression of interest.

You will also need to write a twenty-word summary of your project, and upload your organisation or group's logo (if you have one) alongside three images or presentation slides which illustrate your project. These will help us to create materials including a video about your project.

Your logo should be sent as the largest, most high-quality version you have as it will be used on printed materials as well as on the web. Your three images or presentation slides can be single photographs or drawings, or they can be collages of pictures and text, but bear in mind that they should be legible when viewed on a personal device as well as on a big screen in public.

If you send presentation slides, they should be in 16:9 (widescreen) ratio rather than 4:3 (standard), and should not contain any animations, audio or video. Use these links to find out how to change the size of your slides in [Microsoft PowerPoint](#), [Google Slides](#), and [Apple Keynote](#). If you send images, they must be no larger than 3,840 x 2,160 pixels.

What happens with our expression of interest?

After you have made your expression of interest to apply for 'Your Pots' funding, your project will be verified. Our verification panel will check your expression of interest against three criteria:

- Feasible: the amount of money requested and the way the project is planned means the project is likely to achieve its stated outcomes and benefits
- Impactful: the project aligns with the overall Closing Loops programme goals and is likely to contribute a stronger regenerative economy.
- Fair: the applicant isn't colluding with others to submit multiple applications for the same work, and the project doesn't damage existing work or exclude any members of the community from participation.

This isn't about deciding whether your project should receive a grant. Instead, the verification process makes sure that all the projects that go through to the next stage fulfil the purpose of Your Pots and meet the rules set out by the National Lottery Community Fund, who have provided the money for this programme.

What happens if too many people send in an expression of interest?

The only other reason a project might not progress to the next stage is if we receive so many applications that it is impossible to hold the public event safely or in a way which is fair to all the applicants.

In the unlikely case we feel there are too many applicants then the verification panel will be asked to complete an additional assessment of projects.

Lancaster District CVS is the accountable body which is responsible for the process, supported by the Closing Loops project partners, and will have the final decision in this situation.

Getting the go ahead (stage 2)

What happens next?

We'll help you get ready for the voting process. Anyone who is resident in the Lancaster district can register to vote as part of Your Pots. They can either vote in-person at the Your Pots Your Say Voting Day event on 5 December at The Platform in Morecambe, or they can vote online in the run-up to the event.

You will be invited to join us online to record a three-minute video about your project, which we will capture remotely using Teams, Zoom, Google Meet or similar. One person could deliver the entire statement, or you could split the content between two or more people. We will combine the recording with your logo and images, and give it titles and subtitles. Everyone who votes will see every project's video.

We'll publicise an online form that local residents will use to register to vote. The in-person event always books up quickly and organisations that have taken part before have told us that they'd like more help to encourage their supporters to attend, so we'll provide you with a special code for access to a small, fixed number of tickets for use by your own network.

You will have a stand at the event where people can come and talk to you about your project. Your project can have up to two representatives at your stand – you'll need to confirm their names in advance.

'Your Pots' is using 'participatory budgeting'. What is that and why is it being used?

Participatory budgeting (or PB for short) is a democratic process, where local people decide together about where local funding goes. It has been used extensively across the UK to give out grants like these.

If you would like to find out more about the participatory approach used for 'Your Pots' you can [watch a short video about what happened during the 2024 voting day](#).

You can also find out more about this democratic model of grant making [by reading this article](#) published by project partner Shared Future CIC.

Closing Loops is about doing things differently. Whilst planning the Closing Loops programme we decided it was valuable to test out participatory budgeting, as it enabled everyone to connect, collaborate and meet.

After running and evaluating three rounds of Your Pots we are confident it has worked really well, and we're building on that learning for round four.

How does the Your Pots Your Say event work?

We are still making final plans for the event. But we will ensure you have a full picture of what will happen.

In brief:

- The event will last about 3 hours, starting in the morning and finishing around lunchtime.
- Each applicant will have a stall where they can meet and talk to the public about their project.
- Everybody will receive a voting form which they will use to support the projects they think will have the most impact.
- Everybody will have at least 3 votes.
- If there are lots of projects, participants may be given as many as 7 votes.
- Every vote must be used for a different project.
- People attending as project stallholders won't be able to vote for themselves.
- The votes will be counted and combined with the results of the online vote.
- Projects are recommended for funding in order of votes received.
- Once the budget available has been allocated among the recommended projects we expect to announce the provisional results on the day, or within 5 working days if this isn't possible.
- Those who don't get funded will be offered support to find it elsewhere.

Receiving your grant

What happens if we are successful at the decision event?

If you haven't already done so, this is the point at which you'll need to complete all the optional sections on the expression of interest form and upload all your supporting documents. You will have one month to do this.

We will read all this information and if it passes our due diligence checks we will issue a grant agreement, which you should sign and return to Lancaster District CVS within a month of the date it was issued. The final decision about whether a project can and should be funded rests with Lancaster District CVS, as they are legally accountable to the National Lottery Community Fund for the distribution of these grants.

If you are unable to provide the information required or fail to return your signed grant agreement in time, we may have to reject your provisional offer of funding. In this case, or if you decide not to go ahead with your project for any other reason, we would talk to the highest-ranking unsuccessful project about receiving a grant instead.

Providing all of the information we need at the time of application will speed up the process of receiving your grant and we encourage you to do it as early as possible. The documents we require are:

a) A bank statement, showing the following:

- Your organisation's legal name
- The address the statements are sent to
- The bank name and/or logo
- Account number
- Sort code
- Date (must be within last 3 months)

For bank accounts opened within the last three months, we can accept a bank welcome letter. This must confirm the date your account was opened, account name, account number and sort code.

If you're a school using a local authority bank account, we'll need a letter from the local authority dated within the last 3 months. It should show:

- Your school name
- The bank account name
- Account number
- Sort code

b) Your most recent accounts

- c) Your organisation's memorandum and articles of association, certificate of incorporation, constitution, or rules.
- d) If your project works with children, young people or adults at risk of harm, provide your safeguarding policy which explains how they'll be safe.
- e) If your project includes activities which require public liability insurance and you already have this, provide the certificate of insurance.
- f) If your project requires people in your organisation who are running activities to have special qualifications, memberships or affiliations, and these are already in place, please provide evidence.
- g) If your project benefits the public through changes to land or buildings, such as starting a farm or garden or conducting a refurbishment, you will need to provide one of the following:
 - proof that your organisation owns the property;
 - proof that your organisation has a lease on the property that cannot be ended for at least five years;
 - or a letter from the owner of the property showing they intend to provide such a lease.

What happens after all our paperwork is complete?

After you've submitted all your paperwork successfully, your nominated contacts will receive a final email confirming your grant offer. You will be given a grant agreement to sign, and a named contact point.

You will also be given information on how you will need to report activity funded by your grant. We will ask you for a midway review, and a final evaluation, and will work with you to set appropriate deadlines.

As part of your agreement you will be asked to agree our terms and conditions for the Pots of Possibility Fund (which are also at the end of this document), and confirm that you are authorised to accept the grant, that all the information you've provided is accurate, and that you understand how we will use your data.

Check before you complete your expression of interest that you will be able to fulfil all these obligations.

Terms & Conditions

1. By submitting an application to Lancaster District Community and Voluntary Solutions (LDCVS), the organisation named in the application (referred to as “you” in these Terms and Conditions) agrees, if awarded a grant, to:

- 1.1. hold the grant on trust for LDCVS (referred to as ‘we’ or ‘us’) and use it only for your project as described in your application or otherwise agreed with us, and only for expenditure incurred after the date of your grant award;
- 1.2. provide us promptly with any information and reports we require about the project and its impact, both during and after the end of the project. These include, but are not limited to the following: at the beginning of your project, a basic equality and diversity monitoring form; half-way through your project, a monitoring report and/or interview; at the end of your project, a final report due within one month;
- 1.3. act lawfully in carrying out your project in accordance with best practice and guidance from your regulators, and follow any guidelines issued by us about the project or use of the grant and let us know promptly about any fraud, other impropriety, mismanagement or misuse in relation to the grant;
- 1.4. acknowledge Closing Loops and National Lottery funding using our logos in accordance with the relevant guidelines for recognising your grant, which will be supplied to you by email;
- 1.5. hold the grant in a UK based bank account or building society account, which is in the legal name of the organisation that is applying for funding;
- 1.6. adhere to our guidance on financial controls and banking arrangements, ensuring that no single individual has sole responsibility for any single transaction from authorisation to review and completion and that the account is managed by at least two unrelated and authorised individuals in your organisation;
- 1.7 maintain a register of assets purchased using the funding and share it with us during monitoring and evaluation meetings, maintain insurance covering these assets, depreciate these assets correctly according to your accounting practices, and tell us if you intend to sell an asset within five years of the end of the project. For the purpose of this clause 1.7, an asset is any piece of equipment or machinery costing over £500, or the purchase or refurbishment of any land or building costing over £500.
- 1.8 immediately return any part of the grant that is not used for your project or which constitutes an unlawful subsidy;
- 1.9. comply with The National Lottery Community Fund’s safeguarding policy for grant holders, which will be supplied to you by email;
- 1.10 co-operate with any research or evaluation-related activities which we carry out and further confirm that we may use any part of your application and/or project information for research or evaluation purposes.
- 1.11 comply with data protection laws and obtain the consent of your beneficiaries for us and you to receive and process their personal information and contact them;

1.12. keep accurate and comprehensive records about your project both during the project and for seven years afterwards and provide us on request with copies of those records and evidence of expenditure of the grant, such as original paper or electronic receipts, invoices, and bank statements;

1.13 allow us, representatives of The National Lottery Community Fund and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General reasonable access to your premises and systems to inspect project and grant records; and

1.14 LDCVS, FoodFutures, the Closing Loops project partners and/or The National Lottery Community Fund publicising and sharing information about you and your project including your name and images of project activities. You hereby grant us a royalty free licence to reproduce and publish any project information you give us. You will let us know when you provide the information if you don't have permission for us to use it in this way.

2. You acknowledge that we are entitled to suspend or terminate the grant and/or require you to repay all or any of the grant in any of the following situations. You must let us know if any of these situations have occurred or are likely to occur.

2.1. You use the grant in any way other than as approved by us or fail to comply with any of these Terms and Conditions.

2.2. You fail to make good progress with your project or are unlikely in our view to complete the project or achieve the objectives agreed with us.

2.3. You have match funding for the project withdrawn or receive or fail to declare any duplicate funding for the same project costs as funded by the grant.

2.4. You provide us with false or misleading information either on application or after award of the grant, act dishonestly or are under investigation by us, a regulatory body or the police, or if we consider for any other reason that public funds are at risk or you do anything to bring us or the organisations we work with and receive funding from into disrepute.

2.5. You enter into, or in our view are likely to enter into, administration, liquidation, receivership, or dissolution.

2.6. You receive any grant money incorrectly either as a result of an administrative error or otherwise. This includes where You are paid in error before You have complied with your obligations under these terms and conditions and Offer Letter. Any sum, which falls due under this paragraph 2.6, shall fall due immediately. If you fail to repay the due sum immediately, or as otherwise agreed with us, the sum will be recoverable summarily as a civil debt.

3. You acknowledge that:

3.1. the grant is for your use only and we may require you to pay us a share of any proceeds from disposal of assets purchased or enhanced with the grant;

3.2. we will not increase the grant if you spend more than the agreed budget and we can only guarantee the grant as long as The National Lottery continues to operate and we receive sufficient funds from it;

3.3. the grant is not consideration for any taxable supply for VAT purposes;

3.4. we have no liability for any costs or consequences incurred by you or third parties that arise directly or indirectly from the project, nor from non-payment or withdrawal of the grant, save to the extent required by law;

3.5. these Terms and Conditions will continue to apply for one year after the grant is paid or until the project has been completed, whichever is later. Clauses 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, 1.14, 3.4 and 3.5 shall survive expiry of these Terms and Conditions; and

3.6. if the application and grant award are made electronically, the agreement between us shall be deemed to be in writing and your online acceptance of these Terms and Conditions shall be deemed to be the equivalent of your signature on that agreement.