Yellow River Community Benefit Fund – Applicant Guidance

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Contents

About SSE Community Funds

The SSE Yellow River Community Benefit Fund provides grants to local community groups and not-for-profit organisations located within 10km of the Yellow River wind farm. The funding supports projects that will create positive social and environmental impacts ensuring the communities adjacent to the wind farm receive tangible benefits from the development, creating a sustainable legacy. The funds support projects that encompass energy efficiency and social sustainability projects, to empower, and support communities in the transition to a net zero future.

What the fund can support

This fund supports projects that empower communities and strengthen resilience, particularly projects that address local challenges through inclusive, innovative, and sustainable solutions, and are also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) & Yellow River Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund Strategic Themes.

Local Fund

The Fund is open to local community groups and voluntary organisations, charities and non-profits, parent teacher associations and clubs and associations that have a constitution and bank account in the organisation's name. The Local Fund has been designed to directly empower grassroots initiatives and community development organisations to build sustainable change and long-term resilience.

Major Project Fund

The Fund will support the costs to develop large-scale investment projects. The Fund is open to not-for-profit groups such as community and voluntary groups, charities, community / social enterprises, clubs and societies who are active in the social economy and have a constitution and bank account in the organisation's name. It focuses on projects that demonstrate strong potential for community impact, scalability, and inclusivity, ensuring lasting benefits beyond the initial investment phase. Supplementary project application information and financial supporting documentation will be required.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

The Yellow River Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund will be underpinned by the 17 objectives of the UN SGSs, with a focus on the following 4 UN SDGs. Projects should align with one or more of the following UN SDGs:

UN SDG	Types of Initiatives
4 - Quality Education	Promote inclusive, equitable and lifelong learning opportunities
7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	Support access to renewable energy and energy efficiency
11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities	Build inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable local environments
13 - Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Yellow River Community Benefit Fund Strategic Themes and Objectives

The Community Benefit Fund is built around six key themes that reflect the values, guiding principles, and aspirations of the local communities. These themes act as focus areas for the kind of projects that will be supported with each one addressing strategic objectives of need and opportunity. Projects must demonstrate meaningful impact across at least one of the following themes:

1: Enhancing the Natural Environment

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 11 & SDG 13

Objectives	Types of Initiatives
1. Develop and Maintain Walking and Nature Trails	Create and maintain accessible walking and nature trails to encourage outdoor activities and foster a connection with nature.
2. Protect and Restore Woodlands and Forests	Implement conservation projects aimed at protecting and restoring local woodlands and forests.
3. Promote Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation	Establish programs to protect and enhance habitats for native wildlife species.
4. Engage the Community in Nature Conservation Efforts	Organise community-led initiatives, such as tree planting events, clean up drives, and educational workshops, to involve residents in conservation efforts.

2: Promoting Community Engagement

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 4, SDG 7, SDG 11 & SDG 13

Objectives	Types of Initiatives
1. Preserve and Celebrate Architectural Heritage	Protect and restore historic buildings and structures to maintain awareness of the cultural and historical identity of the community and architectural heritage.
2. Enhance Local Clubs and Organisations	Support the sustainability of local clubs / organisations and encourage the formation of new clubs that cater to diverse interests by providing resources, training and funding.
3. Improve Community Facilities and Services	Strengthen existing community services by improving accessibility, quality, and responsiveness to community need for all ages and backgrounds.
4. Facilitate Social Cohesion through Activities	Create opportunities for social interaction and networking through regular community activities, workshops, and social gatherings for all.

3. Promoting Lifelong Learning

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 4, SDG 7 & SDG 11

Objectives	Types of Initiatives
1. Enhance Access to Lifelong Learning Opportunities	Develop and support programmes that provide continuous education opportunities for individuals of all ages.
2. Strengthen Extracurricular Programs	Increase the availability and variety of extra-curricular activities to cater to different interests.
3. Expand Skills Training and Certification Courses	Offer a range of skills training programme and certification courses that align with current and emerging job market needs.

4. Preserving and Enhancing Waterways

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 4, SDG 11 & SDG 13

Objectives	Types of Initiatives

1. Conservation and Restoration of Waterways	Implement projects to clean and restore rivers and canals.
2. Develop and Maintain Walking and Cycling Paths	Create and sustain well-designed walking and cycling paths along waterways to promote healthy, active lifestyles.
3. Establish Outdoor Recreational Facilities	Develop outdoor facilities such as picnic area, fitness areas, and playgrounds to enhance the recreational use of waterway corridors.
4. Promote Sustainable Social Enterprise Tourism Projects	Support the development of social enterprise tourism initiatives that highlight the natural beauty and cultural significance of waterways.
5. Enhance Environmental Education and Awareness	Organise community events, workshops, and volunteer programs focused on environmental awareness, leadership and sustainable practices.

5: Regenerating the Built Environment

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 7, SDG 11 & SDG 13

Objectives	Types of Initiatives
1. Promote Energy Efficiency and Sustainability	Implement energy efficiency retrofits in community buildings and facilities to reduce energy consumption and environmental impact.
2. Enhance Community Buildings and Facilities	Develop, upgrade and maintain new and existing community buildings to ensure they are safe, accessible, and meet the diverse needs of the community.
3. Expand and Improve Outdoor Recreational Spaces	Create and enhance outdoor recreational facilities such as parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and green spaces to provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy the outdoor environment.
4. Develop Multipurpose Indoor Community Facilities	Promote the development of adaptable community centre's that can accommodate various activities and events, from sports and fitness to cultural and social gatherings.

6: Promoting Health and Wellness for All Ages

Priority UN SDG's – SDG 4 & SDG 11

Objectives	Types of Initiatives
1. Improve Indoor and Outdoor Recreational Facilities	Create and maintain high quality outdoor recreational spaces such as parks, trails, that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
2. Promote Active Community Programmes	Develop and support a variety of community programmes that promote physical activity focusing on inclusivity and accessibility for all community members.
3. Foster Community Engagement and Education	Organise health and wellness workshops, seminars, and events to educate community members to promote a culture of wellness and continuous learning within the community.
4. Support Active Aging, Health and Wellness Programmes	Support programmes that develop and enhance health and wellness programmes including activities that promote physical, mental and social well-being for all ages.

Further details are available in the Yellow River Community Benefit Funding Strategy under Useful Documents section.

What the fund cannot support

The Community Fund will not support the following activities or costs:

- The advancement of religion or politics.
- Activities that are the statutory responsibility of statutory authorities.
- Projects benefiting primarily those residents outside the Fund Area of Benefit.
- Activities contrary to the interests of SSE or its subsidiaries.
- Activities likely to bring SSE or its subsidiaries into disrepute.
- Anti-renewable energy / wind farm activities.
- Existing loans, debts, or retrospective funding (i.e. paying for costs incurred before a decision on an application to the Fund for support can be made).
- Recoverable costs (i.e. VAT costs that can be recovered).
- Applications benefiting only an individual.
- Operational running costs (i.e. day to day running costs, insurance, utilities etc.).
- Applications from for profit enterprises.

Applying to the Community Fund

- SSE operate an online Community Investment Portal. The portal ensures all applicant data is held securely and makes it easier for groups to apply for and manage grants.
- SSE recommend you prepare your answers to the questions offline and then copy them into the online application, the funds Community Investment Manager can provide a word template of the questions if this would help you.
- There are six stages to completing an application.
- You can view videos on navigating the SSE Community Investment Portal [here](#).
- You can read Frequently Asked Questions about the SSE Community Investment Portal [here](#).
- If you have any problems in accessing or using the SSE Community Investment Portal, please contact the fund Community Investment Manager.

Community Investment
Portal Process Map

1 **FUND WEBPAGE**	• Click on "Begin New Application". • This will take you to the SSE Community Investment Portal.
2 **CHECK ELIGIBILITY**	• Yes or No questions to ensure your project is eligible.
3 **SET-UP USER ACCOUNT**	• For **New Users only** (returning applicants skip to step 5). • Click on "Not Registered". • Enter your name and email address. • Check your emails and click on confirmation link. • Create your password. • Your Username is your email address with .sse at the end, e.g. joe.bloggs@outlook.com.sse
4 **COMMUNITY INVESTMENT HOMEPAGE**	• Repeat Step 1 - Go to Fund Webpage and click on "Begin New Application". • Answer Eligibility Questions again. • Login to begin application.
5 **SET UP GROUP ACCOUNT**	• Answer questions relating to your group. • **N.B. You must have your groups constitution/ governance document ready to upload to complete this step.**
6 **APPLICATION FORM**	• Answer questions and upload supporting documention relating to the project being applied for. • Prepare in advance - application questions are provided at the end of this document . • Applications will save at key points. To continue an existing application - click on the "Continue Existing Applications" on the Fund Webpage.

Guidance on the Community Investment Portal

Stage 1 – Fund webpage

- To access the correct application, you need to visit the fund webpage. If you are creating a new application, click 'Begin a New Application' and then follow the steps below.
- If you have already created a draft application, please click 'Edit and submit your draft application' on the fund webpage, log in to your account, click 'My Applications' on the home screen, and then 'launch' next to your draft application.

Stage 2 – Eligibility

- When you access the Community Fund application for the first time you will be asked to answer some yes and no questions to ensure your project is eligible for the fund.
- If your project is not eligible you will be directed to where you can find information about other SSE community funds.
- If your project is eligible, you will be directed to log on to the Community Investment Portal to access or create your user account.

Stage 3 – Setting up a user account

- If you have previously used the Community Investment Portal, please log in using your username and password, and progress to Stage 5.
- If you have never used the Community Investment Portal before, you will need to create an account.
- To create an account, click 'not registered?' and enter your name and email address. You will then receive an email to confirm that the account has been registered, containing your username.

IMPORTANT

Please note that your username will be your email address with **.sse** at the end (e.g. joe.blogs@outlook.com.sse).

Please click on the link in the email to create a password.

Stage 4 – Community Investment Homepage

- Once you have created a password, you will be automatically redirected to the Community Investment Portal homepage.
- To continue with your application, please repeat Stage One (go to the relevant fund page, click 'Begin New Application' and complete the eligibility questions). You will then be able to log in and continue with the below steps.

Stage 5 – Creating a group account

- When starting a new application, you will be asked to select the group you wish to apply on behalf of. If you have already completed an application on behalf of a group previously, you can select the group from the drop-down menu.
- If this is your groups first time applying on the SSE Community Investment Portal, you will need to register a group account. This information will be stored and used for all future applications by the group on SSE's Community Investment Portal.

> **IMPORTANT**
>
> You need to upload a copy of the group's constitution at this stage – make sure you have this available before starting.
>
> You need to do stage five in one attempt to create an account on the system.

To create an account, you will be asked the following questions:

Question	Guidance to answer question
Name of group	This should be the name that appears on your group's governing document and bank account statement.
Type of group	You will be able to select from a list: Unincorporated voluntary or community organisation; registered charity (other); Company limited by guarantee; Community Interest Company; Community Benefit Society; Other If your group has one, you will be asked to provide its registered charity and / or company number so please have this to hand.
Phone number	Please enter a phone number on which we can contact the group to discuss the application or grant.
Website	
Number of people	o on your group's board or management committee – in total, not just office bearers o employed by the group o who volunteers for the group.
Date Established	Please provide the date that your group's governing document was adopted, or if it is a registered company or charity, the date it was registered with the regulator.
What are the groups aims and objectives?	Provide an overview of the group's core purpose and the outcomes it aims to achieve.
What are the group's main activities?	Provide a summary of the main activities or services the group delivers and / or has delivered to-date.
Communities supported	State which communities or beneficiary groups your group supports. For example, all residents in the community your group is set up to benefit, or young people, or people who are not in education, employment or training.
Constitution upload	Upload the latest version of your group's governing document adopted by the members.
Correspondence address	

Registered address	This is the address at which your group or organisation is formally registered, which may differ from the correspondence address.

Stage 6 – Application Form

You may prefer to prepare your answers to the project questions offline and then copy them into the application. The Community Investment Manager can provide a word template of the questions if this would help you.

> **IMPORTANT**
>
> You need to upload a copy the following documents in stage two:
>
> • A copy of one of the group's bank statements from the last three months.
>
> • A copy of the group's most recent approved annual accounts.
>
> • A copy of your project budget (or you can use the budget template provided in the application form).
>
> • Copies of quotes for works or goods included in the project budget.
>
> • A copy of the organisation's Child Protection / Vulnerable Adult Policy (if applicable).
>
> • Letters of support for your project (if applicable).
>
> • Any other documents which you think are required in support of your application. For example a business plan, and/or copies of any relevant permissions, such as planning permission.
>
> PLEASE NOTE - due to GDPR we ask you not to include any photos which include people.

About the project

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please give a summary of the project or activity you are requesting a grant towards	The description should be no more than 25 words.
Please provide the location / s that best represents the project's delivery location.	The geographic area / s the project will be delivered in.
Please provide a description of the project (maximum 3000 characters)	We suggest you cover: - What you want to do. - How you will do this – e.g. the activities you will deliver, where / when / how often you will deliver them, how you will reach those you are seeking to benefit, any equipment needed, and how it will be used. - How the community has been and / or will be involved in developing and delivering the project. - Who will lead the project – their role(s), skills and experience.
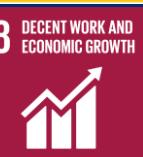
	• How you will monitor and evaluate the success of the project. • The proposed start and end dates for the project.
How will you maintain / sustain your project after the period of our grant funding is finished? (maximum 3000 characters)	• If the project will continue beyond the period for which you are seeking grant funding, please let us know how you intend to continue it, including how you will secure any funding, volunteers, or other resources needed to do so. • Please also include relevant details if the project will help to make your organisation more self-sustaining.
How have you identified a need for this project within the local area? (maximum 2000 characters)	• Your project should address a current need and gap in local provision. • Where possible please provide relevant local data that demonstrates this e.g. from a local community plan, survey of your intended beneficiaries, labour market statistics, and / or neighbourhood statistics.
How many people will benefit from the project? (maximum 1200 characters)	Only include those who will benefit directly from the project. This may include any volunteers involved in delivering it. Please ensure the number you give is realistic. Please tell us how you arrived at this figure.
Will any jobs be supported by the project?	If yes, we will ask how many.
Will any community assets (e.g. community hall, footpath) be built and / or improved as part of the project?	If yes, we will ask how many.
Will this project help improve energy efficiency or climate change?	If yes, please provide details of the energy generation or carbon reduction potential of the project, where you know this.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

SSE's community programme supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will ask you to identify the primary and secondary UN Sustainable Development Goal that your project contributes to. You can find out more about the UN SDG's at: Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme
SSE's priority UN SDG's are Goals 4, 7, 11 and 13.

UN Sustainable Development Goal	Example
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Your project will improve people's well-being, physical health or emotional health e.g. community care services, sports classes, befriending services.

		Your project will support people to enter work, will help schools to deliver new activity or would help community members learn new skills.
		Your project helps communities to have affordable and modern energy e.g. insulation measures, new heating systems.
		Your project will enhance the local economy e.g. projects which employ people in the local area, the development of social enterprise activity, projects to increase tourism to the area.
		Your project will help enhance the local community e.g. improving a community hall, building new community sports Centre, running a community event.
		Your project will help to combat climate change e.g. community renewables.
		Your projects which help the local environment e.g. community owned forests, community gardens, community nature paths.

Project Aims and Success

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please explain how your project achieves the Fund aims and priorities outlined on pages 1 and 2 of this guidance document (maximum 4000 characters).	

Project Bank Details and Group Finances

Question	Guidance to answer question
Bank account holder's name	This is the name that your group's bank account is held in, as it appears on bank statements - it should be the name of your group.
IBAN number	Please ensure the details you provide here are correct as this information will be used to make grant payments if you are successful in securing a grant.

Upload a copy of a recent bank statement	This should be from the last 3 months **This is a mandatory field on the form** so please make sure you have the statement available before starting the application.
Upload a copy of the group's latest accounts	This should be the version approved by the group's board or management committee. **This is a mandatory field on the form** so please make sure you have the statement available before starting the application.
Name, email address and position of an additional authorised bank signatory	You need to provide the name, role and email address of a second person who is authorised to use your group's bank account. This cannot be the same name or email address as the person applying for the grant. **Please ensure you enter these details correctly as this person will be e-mailed any grant offer letter for their countersignature.**
What are the main sources of income for the group? (maximum 1200 characters)	Provide brief details of how the group normally raises most of its income e.g. from local fundraising, grants, charges for services, etc.
Total income and surplus / deficit from the uploaded financial accounts	The figures you provide should match those in the group's approved annual accounts that you uploaded earlier as part of your application.
Current unrestricted reserves and why they cannot be used for this project (maximum 2000 characters)	Reserves are the funds your organisation holds that are freely available for use. Reserves are typically divided into three categories; Unrestricted reserves: these are extra funds that your organisation can use at its discretion to support any new projects or discretionary operating costs. They are not ringfenced or committed to specific projects or expenses. Restricted reserves: these funds are committed for specific purposes (projects, annual costs). They cannot be used for any other reason. Designated Reserves: These are unrestricted funds that the board or governing body has set aside for a specific purpose. While not legally restricted by a third party, they are internally earmarked (e.g. future capital projects, strategic development). Designations must be noted within the AGM minutes. By providing clear information about your reserves, you demonstrate transparency and can demonstrate the need for the grant funding and explain why the reserves recorded in your accounts cannot be used to fund this project.

Project Budget

Question	Guidance to answer question
Please provide an accurate list of all costs involved in the work, services, or items required for the project. This should include any	You will be able to select one of two options to add to your project cost detail. Please **do not do both**. • Insert the information into a list / table in the form • If you enter costs in the list / table option, these will automatically be totalled.

project costs that you are not requesting a grant towards.	OR • Upload your own budget template. • If you choose to upload a budget file, enter the total project cost (as stated in the file) into the box provided.
Please explain how you have costed the project. (maximum 1500 characters)	• A quote is required for all items listed as costs. • For any spend with a single supplier, or item costing over €10,000, you must seek 3 comparable quotes and upload them with your application.
Tell us how much you are applying to the Community Fund for.	Only non-recoverable VAT costs should be included in any grant amount you are requesting from SSE.
Who are the project funders?	If your total project cost requires other funding (including where your organisation is contributing its own funds, or has fundraised specifically for this project), you will be asked to list all the other funding sources and / or bridging finance, including the amounts approved or pending.

Checklist

We will ask you to tick yes, no or not applicable to the following checklist:
- That the group has the appropriate procedures in place to carry out your project safely.
- That the group has at least three unrelated people serving on its management committee / board.
- That the project doesn't require retrospective funding.
- That, if requested, you can provide the details of an independent referee.
- That any salaries are paid at, or greater than, the Living Wage.
- Whether the project requires your group to secure permissions, such as planning permission, a building warrant and / or listed buildings consent, prior to starting work. If it does, tell us whether these have been applied for / granted. If they haven't been applied for or granted yet, tell us when you expect this to happen.

Required Documentation

To ensure a transparent and robust assessment process, all applicants must submit the following documentation (where applicable). These documents allow SSE to verify eligibility, ensure good governance, and confirm that projects can be delivered safely, legally, and with strong value for money.

1. CONSTITUTION
Your group / organisation must be formally constituted. Please provide a **signed and dated constitution** that clearly outlines:
- the purpose and objectives of your group
- the governance and committee / board structure
- how decisions are made

- membership rules (where applicable)

2. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
Applicants must provide **recent financial statements** that comply with the requirements of the:
- Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA), Companies Registration Office (CRO)
- These financial statements should include:
    - Income & Expenditure statement
    - Balance Sheet
    - Notes to the accounts
    - Auditor / independent examiner report (if applicable)
    - Record all grants and provide key details for each grant received: Source, purpose, restricted / unrestricted, project spend.

3. ORGANISATIONAL BANK STATEMENT
Please provide a **recent bank or credit union statement (within the last 3 months)** showing:
- the organisation's legal name
- IBAN & BIC (ROI)
- account branch address details

4. QUOTES FOR COSTS
Applicants must provide quotations for all items and works listed in the project budget.
Minimum requirements:
- **1 quote** for every item of expenditure
- **3 comparable quotes** for any single item, or spend with single supplier **over €10,000**
- Each quote must be **named identically** to the item in the application budget (e.g. "Solar Panels – Q1")

5. CHILD PROTECTION / VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY
If your project works with children or adults at risk, you must submit your organisation's:
- Child Protection Policy
- Vulnerable Adult / Safeguarding Policy

Policies must include:
- the name of your Designated Liaison / Safeguarding Officer
- reporting procedures
- staff / volunteer vetting procedures

6. AGM MINUTES
A copy of the organisaton's most recent AGM minutes may be requested, where applicable to support the assessment of governance and decision-making processes.

7. LAND OWNERSHIP OR LEASE AGREEMENTS
Required for any project that involves physical works, installation, renovation, or upgrades to a specific building or site (e.g. solar panels, insulation, green infrastructure, community facilities). You must provide:

- proof of ownership **or**
- a valid lease / rental agreement **or**
- a letter of permission from the landowner

8. PLANNING PERMISSION EVIDENCE

If your project requires planning permission (e.g. construction, renewables installation, major site works), you must submit:
- confirmation that planning permission has been granted, or
- evidence that it has been applied for (acknowledgment letter, application reference number, etc.)

9. LETTER OF CONFIRMATION FROM BIODIVERSITY OFFICER OR ECOLOGY EXPERT

Biodiversity projects require a letter of support from a suitably qualified person outlining that the proposed project is in line with the local and regional Biodiversity Plan or evidence the proposed project aligns with the local biodiversity plan.

10. SOLAR PV Projects

Solar PV generation projects must provide evidence in relation to connection agreement requirements from ESB Network.

11. School Projects

To apply for SSE funding, schools must provide evidence from the Department of Education that:
- Full funding is not available from the Department, or only partial funding is provided.
- The Department supports the project and confirms it complies with all relevant rules and regulations.
- The project is included in the school's Digital Learning Plan (DLP) and aligns with the priorities of the Digital Strategy for Schools (if applicable).

Submitting the form

Your draft application will save at key points, so you can log out of the portal and resume drafting at a later date.
To continue drafting, click the 'Continue Existing Application' link on the fund homepage, click the 'My Applications' button on the home screen, and then 'launch' next to your draft application.

If you have any problems in accessing or completing the application form, please contact us on communityfundsupport@sse.com or you can contact your SSE Community Investment Manager on YellowRiverCBF@sse.com. You can also read our dedicated SSE Community Investment Portal FAQ section.

Once you have completed your application form, press the submit button. A copy of your application form will be saved in your 'My Applications' section of the portal.