Chorley Shop Front Improvement Grant
Guidance Note

What is the Chorley Shop Front Refurbishment Grant?

In 2012 Chorley’s Economic Development Strategy highlighted Chorley town centre as one of its key priorities. Chorley will continue to be a thriving market town by improving and developing the quality of the town centre offer and capitalising on its wealth of independent shops. In this way Chorley will complement, rather than compete with, neighbouring towns in attracting visitors from across the region. The Council understands that local businesses are key partners in achieving this goal.

Chorley Council’s Executive Cabinet approved investment to provide a package of improvement proposals for the town centre and other local centres, including the Shop Front Improvement Grant. This grant scheme provides financial support to shop owners and leaseholders to facilitate investment in improving the visual appearance of their shop fronts. The Council will also consider applications from owners of vacant retail properties who wish to make their properties more attractive for letting purposes.

This fund is managed by Chorley Council.

What is the financial support for?

The Shop Front Improvement Grant is for comprehensive capital works (rather than routine maintenance) to improve the visual appearance of a retail property. Works may include new windows (as part of an overall scheme), exterior treatments, lettering, fascias, signage, and lighting on the principle ground floor trading elevation of the property. Physical improvements to a shop entrance to improve disability access are also eligible for grant support. The grant may also pay towards the planning and building regulations application fees where relevant.

The lowest value quote(s) will usually be used to calculate the eligible project costs and the grant intervention, in order to achieve best value for the programme.

Am I eligible for support?

Please note: This is a discretionary grant and the product or service offered by your business and its proposed location will be carefully considered by the Council before a full Shop Front Improvement Grant application can be progressed. The Council will consider how a project will add to the Chorley retail offer, and assess any reputational risk to offering grant assistance. All enquiries will be considered on a case by case basis. For this reason you should always speak to Council Officers prior to completing a grant application.
The funds can support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) acting as independent retailers, who are EITHER moving into vacant premises located within the designated Chorley Town Centre boundary or within other local retail centres OR retailers who are already based in these areas. An SME is a company which employs fewer than 250 persons (full time equivalent), and has a turnover of less than 50 million Euros and/or has an annual balance sheet of less than 43 million Euros. No more than 25% of the company's capital or voting rights may be held by a parent company which is not itself an SME.

In order to comply with EU state aid regulations Chorley Council is unable to provide financial support to companies in the transport sector, or those involved in the production of agricultural equipment.

**Please note: An offer of grant assistance from this scheme must be in place before you commence or pay for any works that you require grant funding for. This grant scheme is not available retrospectively to fund work which has already been carried out and/or paid for.**

**Is this state aid?**

Yes. The Shop Front Improvement Grant uses public money and therefore this constitutes state aid as defined in the European Commission regulations. It will be given to SMEs under the EU de minimus rules. This means that an SME can receive up to 200,000 Euros of state aid over a rolling three year period. More information on this issue is available from [http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/europe/state-aid](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/europe/state-aid). You will be required to provide details of any state aid received during the last three years on the grant application form.

**Duration of scheme**

The scheme is open from May 2012. Funds will be allocated on a first come first served basis. We would recommend that you speak to Council Officers in advance of preparing an application to ensure funds are still available.

**How much can I apply for?**

The award of financial assistance is discretionary and all applications will be considered by a Grant Panel. Any grant award will usually be calculated on the lowest of any quotes provided.

Businesses may apply for up to 75% of the total eligible net project costs, up to a maximum grant of £10,000.

Applicants should ensure that no grant project work is commenced or paid for prior to an application being approved and a grant offer letter issued.

*All grants are paid on defrayed expenditure, i.e. the grant payment can only be claimed from the Council once the project has been completed and the contractors have been paid. Evidence of this will required.*
Are there other sources of match funding?

Yes. Potentially you may use any of the sources below as match funding:

- Banks or other financial institutions
- Lancashire County Council Rosebud (www.lancashire.gov.uk/rosebud)
- Business Solutions
- Bolton Business Ventures loan fund (www.bbvonline.net)
- Lancashire Community Finance (www.lancashirecommunityfinance.co.uk)

Are there any standard conditions to receiving the grant?

Yes - Grant assistance is *conditional* on receiving business advice and support (supplied free of charge) from Chorley Council to promote the sustainability of the business. Business Advisor contact details will be supplied at initial enquiry stage.

Yes - Grant assistance is *conditional* on receiving design advice (supplied free of charge) from Chorley Council to achieve good quality design. The Senior Planner (Conservation) contact details will be supplied at initial enquiry stage.

How do I apply?

In the first instance please contact the Council for an initial discussion.

Employment, Skills & Business Support
Civic Offices
Union Street
Chorley
PR7 1AL
01257 515300
edu@chorley.gov.uk

Once the project work has been identified, you will be asked to formally request a grant using the appropriate application form. In addition you will be asked to send:

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- If you are a new start business, a business plan and 3 year cash flow forecast are required.
- If you are an existing business, a copy of your most recent financial accounts and/or management accounts are required. Additional information may be requested at grant appraisal stage.
- Confirmation of a submitted application for building regulations or planning permission (if required).
- Landlord’s permission to do the project work (if applicable).
- Evidence of funding (e.g. Bank statement or letter from Bank) to deliver and pay for the project.
- Two written quotes for a project with a total net value less than £10k; 3 written quotes for a project with a total net value more than £10k.
What happens next?

After you have submitted your completed application form and all supporting documentation your application will be appraised and a decision made by the Grant Panel within four weeks. This timescale may change during periods where there is a high volume of applications.

The Council Officer who has been supporting you with your application will contact you with the decision of the Grant Panel and if your application has been approved will provide you with a formal letter offering grant assistance. This grant offer will be subject to a ‘5 Day Call In Period’ where the grant panel decision is open to scrutiny by councillors. Therefore, it is at your own financial risk if you commence work before the ‘Call In Period’ has ended. Any work carried out or paid for prior to the date of your grant offer letter will be deemed ineligible.

Payment of grant

The grant is paid on defrayed expenditure, ie grants will only be paid to a business when:

- All works have been completed to the satisfaction of Council Officers.
- The Council has inspected the original copy of the contractor’s invoice(s) and seen proof of applicant’s payment of the invoice(s).

Once the above is in place, the grant can be claimed and will be paid within 30 days.