RURAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

2022-23

Frequently Asked Questions

CONTROL SHEET

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund was established by the Scottish Government and Fund is managed by VisitScotland on their behalf. To date £14.8m of grant funding has been awarded to 67 projects across rural Scotland since the start of the Fund in 2018. RTIF is designed to support collaborative projects that focused on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that are facing immediate and damaging pressures on their infrastructure or negative impacts on communities due to significant increases in visitor numbers.

This need has become more evident in many areas following the Covid-19 outbreak and the relaxation of the lockdown in summer 2020 and the continued visitor pressure resulting from the staycation factor in 2021.

In 2022/23 RTIF will enable a more strategic approach to visitor infrastructure development, supporting the objectives of Scotland Outlook 2030 and the new National Strategy for Economic Development. With this in mind, RTIF has funded the development of Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans in 11 rural areas to date and a further 13 are under development. These STID Plans will identify the priorities for future RTIF support over the next 3-5 years.

Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund in 2022/23 will prioritise the delivery of any early actions identified as part of the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans as well as project from other regions which can demonstrate that they will contribute to a more strategic network of facilities which will meet the needs of our visitors for years to come and drive Scotland’s rural areas to become world class destinations.

RTIF will continue to support collaborative projects that focus on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that have faced pressure on their infrastructure or negative impacts on communities due to significant increases in visitor numbers but will also look forward to address anticipated future pinch points as a result of growth initiatives such as route development, the return of the cruise sector and major events, film and TV production as well as the continued growth in the motorhome sector.

Successful applications must support the objectives of Scotland Outlook 2030 and the new National Strategy for Economic Development as well as demonstrate the following:

- **An Existing or anticipated Visitor Pressure Point** – As a result of previous or anticipated increases in visitor numbers, there is a visitor and or community pressure point which is likely to continue and needs to be addressed. The applicant should provide evidence of the increase in visitor numbers or anticipated impact of visitor number and/or evidence of the impact of visitors on the local area.

- **That a strategic need is met or gap is addressed by the actions proposed** - Priority will be given to early actions identified by the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans or other Strategic plans by Local Authorities, the National Parks, NatureScot or Forestry & Land Scotland Applicants should provide a strategic context for the project and evidence to support this.

- **Provision of a quality visitor experience** – Provision of high quality visitor facilities and infrastructure, leading to a positive impact on the local landscape and visitor economy is a key criteria for RTIF support. Applicants should demonstrate the commitment to place
principles and a quality design which can accommodate visitors with a wide variety of access needs and complies with and where possible exceeds the requirements of the Equality Act.

- **A Responsible Tourism approach** – Applicants are expected to take a responsible tourism approach to the planning, design and management of the infrastructure provision addressing the issues generated as a result of the COVID outbreak.

- **A carbon conscious approach** - Applicants should provide details on how their project will contribute to the reduction/mitigation of climate change and support the transition to a low carbon society i.e. using low carbon materials, energy efficiency, promotion of low carbon transport, renewable energy and waste management in construction and maintenance of the facilities. Applicants should demonstrate their commitment to carbon consciousness where a location Reuses, Repurposes and Considers Whole Life Costs, Retrofitting existing structures and considering the embodied carbon in place

- **Community capacity building** – creating more resilient communities more able to cope with peak tourism demands and the creation of new local business opportunities.

- **Effective partnerships and collaboration** – You must evidence engagement with local community groups, destination organisations and tourism businesses, demonstrating how partnership working can increase awareness, advocacy and the quality of the final project

- **Project viability and deliverability** – applicants must provide evidence of:
  - Proven experience of project management and financial administration
  - A clear timetable for permissions, procurement, site start date and expected time of completion
  - A clear delivery plan demonstrating value for money and measurable outputs and detailed costs and a budget forecast for the period of the project

2. **RTIF FUNDING CRITERIA**

- RTIF 2022/23 is for projects which will commence on site by 31st March 2023 and be completed by no later than 31st December 2023. All projects must be completed and final claims received by 31st January 2024.

- Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund awards are available from £75,000 up to £500,000 for larger or multi-site projects. However due to rising construction costs and inflation, flexibility may be shown in the case of projects which have demonstrated that they meet a strategic tourism infrastructure need.

- RTIF can provide Applicants with support up to 70% of approved project activity. There is the potential to award a **maximum** of 75% for projects with which have a strong strategic rationale or form part of the delivery of a priority identified within the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans.
• Applicants must provide a **minimum** of 25% match funding for the projects looking for the maximum 75% and 30% for other projects, although this can include In Kind Support in the form of labour or land value.

• A small amount of RTIF funding will be made available to applicants approved at EOI stage to support design and facilitate the planning process. This will be available up to maximum of £6,000 based on a maximum 70% intervention rate and must be spent and invoices submitted to VisitScotland prior to the submission of the Stage 2 application. This can only be used for architectural, structural design and landscaping design costs as well as any additional surveys etc necessary to enable a planning application to be submitted or to meet any existing planning conditions.

• **Applicants must have submitted a planning application by the time of the Stage 2 deadline and evidence must be provided to support this with the Stage 2 submission**

• RTIF is open to applications from the Local Authorities and the National Park Authorities. A collaborative approach must be demonstrated with a strong buy-in and project support from local communities and tourism groups.

• The fund will only be applicable to rural areas as defined by the Scottish Government’s official Urban/Rural classification 5 & 6 – “accessible and remote rural areas” excluding settlements above 3000 people unless specifically identified as a part of essential works within the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan

• The fund is for rural areas across Scotland (as defined above) but would exclude towns and larger villages within these locations. Primarily it is to support infrastructure requirements around (non-paid for) visitor or natural attractions, i.e. areas of outstanding scenic beauty, that have attracted increased visitor numbers and to stop deterioration of the natural and built environment, as well as benefitting local communities in the area.

• RTIF will support projects where there is an existing visitor pressure points **or there is an expectation of a future pressure point from visitor numbers due to COVID, growth initiatives such as route development, events or increases in sector specific activity**

• Projects which have a negative impact on the natural heritage, including species and habitats, geology, landscapes and water courses will not be supported. Advice should be sought early on from appropriate bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA.

• RTIF cannot support projects that have been refused planning permission

• RTIF cannot support any road improvement works that fall within the statutory remit of the Local Authorities or Transport Scotland

• RTIF cannot support projects if the relevant site, facilities or infrastructure that is to be developed or improved under the project are not owned by or leased to (under a long lease
of at least 20 years with no break option) the Applicant or one of the Applicant's public sector or community group partners in the project. In addition, the relevant site, facilities or infrastructure must not be subject to any lease, licence or right of occupation granted in favour of any private sector business.

- **RTIF cannot support projects which are led by the private sector, or which will selectively benefit any particular private sector business or groups of businesses. All Applicants must provide a state subsidy assessment at the time of submission.**

3. **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

1. **What type of activity CAN be supported by the RTIF?**

**ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RURAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITY</th>
<th>2022/23</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Activity which is eligible for support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parking</strong></td>
<td>New or upgraded Car Parking including new disabled parking and dedicated motorhome and coach parking. Projects should ensure that adequate provision has been allowed for distancing with regard to car parking spaces, entry and exit point and paths to and from car parks and attractions/villages etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paths</strong></td>
<td>Accessible Paths to and from car parking locations and viewpoints and attractions which support improved access and address pressure points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic laybys,</strong></td>
<td>Scenic viewpoints and roadside viewpoints</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Camping Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Camping facilities where wild camping has been identified as an issue within the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans and there is no commercial facility available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motorhome Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Overnight Motorhome Bays with or without electrical hook up points adequately spaced to meet regulations on distancing. Chemical waste disposal facilities, water supplies and black and grey waste disposal facilities for campers and motorhomes including water/sewage connections where a gap in provision has been identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toilet Provision</strong></td>
<td>New or upgrades to existing Toilets where this creates additional provision and promotes Equality of access, particularly where these meet the new requirements for health and hygiene in the wake of COVID-19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recycling Points</strong></td>
<td>Recycling Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road signage, waymarks and interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Directional road signage, waymarks and improved external interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sustainable Tourism Measures

Interventions that encourage sustainable tourism, including, electric vehicle charging points, cycle racks and support access by public transport including park and ride infrastructure.

Support for active travel hubs and paths will be considered where these will serve visitors as well as the local community.

 Provision of new electrical supply cabling can be included where a significant gap in provision has been identified.

Electronic Signage and information management systems to support more sustainable management of visitor pressure points and dispersal to other sites can be included in the eligible costs.

### Project Management

Project management up to a maximum of 10% of the total construction costs where these relate to strategic and collaborative projects and covering both in house and contracted project management during construction phase only.

### Land/Building purchase

Land purchase or in-kind land/building costs where these are accompanied by an external valuation.

### Design Costs

Design costs up to £6,000 to support the projects in obtaining planning permission. Can include costs for architects, structural engineers, QS, landscaping plans and costs as well as any environmental plans, bat and tree surveys, flood risk assessments and planning fees. Can include in house or contracted costs but not feasibility studies, business planning or project management costs. Any design costs over and above that claimed as part of the Design Grant can be included in the Stage 2 application costs.

### Irrecoverable VAT

The RTIF Award is not subject to VAT. The RTIF Award will NOT be increased, should any VAT liability arise for the applicant group. The RTIF Award is inclusive of VAT, if any, payable thereon and it is the responsibility of the applicant group to ensure that their treatment of VAT relative to the Award is correct. Irrecoverable VAT can be claimed on receipt of confirmation from the appropriate authority.

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2. **What type of activity CAN NOT be supported under the RTIF?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RURAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND INELIGIBLE ACTIVITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of activity CAN NOT be supported under the RTIF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/23</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity ineligible for support through Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund award includes: -</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Development</th>
<th>NB. The fund is guided by UK subsidy control legislation and will not support the commercial provision of facilities or support applications which are for the benefit of an individual or specific group of private sector businesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitor attractions</td>
<td>Funding new visitor attractions, heritage centres or paid visitor attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community facilities</td>
<td>Community facilities such as village halls, community hubs, playparks or bespoke community parking or provision of facilities for the sole purpose of generating income etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>Any works which fall under the classification of roads infrastructure including provision of passing places</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadband infrastructure</td>
<td>The development or creation of Broadband infrastructure such as cabling, wireless systems etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance or repair works</td>
<td>Routine maintenance or repair of cycling and walking infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Production of marketing and promotional materials, such as leaflets, web sites or social media activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Costs</td>
<td>Ongoing revenue costs associated with the project including rental/lease costs for buildings/land or future maintenance costs including cleaning are not eligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead Costs</td>
<td>Admin, finance or property overhead costs either during or post the project delivery or as part of project management costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing costs</td>
<td>Staffing or project management costs following completion of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Routes</td>
<td>New cycle routes or long-distance paths or routes – the exception to this, as outlined previously, is where the creation of linking paths as part of a wider development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feasibility Studies</td>
<td>Any feasibility studies, business planning or pilot project development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Development</td>
<td>Any costs either internal or external which relate to the development or preparation of the RTIF application itself including consultancy costs, research activities, study tours etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path Development</td>
<td>General maintenance of existing or development of new long distance footpaths</td>
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The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund team work closely with other public sector agencies to ensure alignment of Grant award scheme opportunities. Your Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund Manager can discuss this with you and signpost as appropriate.

3. **What if my project has a mix of eligible and non-eligible activity?**

If your project contains non eligible items or the building proposed has more than one function which may not be eligible for RTIF funding, then this does not prevent you from making an application. Applicants must clearly identify the eligible and non-eligible activity within the
application and the costs associated with the eligible and non-eligible activity. In the case of a building or site which has more than one function, part of which is not eligible for RTIF then all the costs associated with the building or site must be split between the eligible and non-eligible activities. This will include, fees, land values or purchase costs as well as the actual construction works.

4. How much RTIF funding is available for Round 5 projects?

There is approximately £2m available in funding for Round 5. A small amount of funding has been allocated on approval of the EOIs to support design and planning requirements. This funding will be drawn from the general Round 5 allocation.

5. Is Round 5 the only application round in 2022?

Current plans are that this will be the only RTIF call in 2022/23 but this will be kept under review.

6. Is there any limit to the number of applications that can be submitted by the same organisation?

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted to RTIF by any organisation. However, the Fund may prioritise projects which fit within a strategic approach rather than stand-alone projects.

The Panel will try to seek a geographical spread of funding throughout the Scottish rural areas and may introduce this as part of the criteria giving priority in the assessment process to areas which have not received any prior funding.

7. What is the project cost required to meet the minimum level of grant support?

The minimum project cost for RTIF support is £107,143 if the Intervention Rate requested is 70%. If you are applying for 75% RTIF grant, then the minimum project cost must be £100,000.

8. Do I need Planning permission before I can apply to the RTIF?

Applicant must provide evidence that a planning application(s) has been submitted to the planning authorities through receipts and acknowledgements by at the time of the Stage 2 application deadline. If a project requires HES consent, then this application must have been submitted by the time of the Stage 2 deadline. No grant award will be made until planning permission and all other necessary consents including but not exclusively Building warrants, Marine Licenses, SEPA and Scottish water approvals have been received and confirmation forwarded to the RTIF team.

9. What kind of evidence do I need to supply to demonstrate visitor pressures at my project site?

It is essential that you supply evidence of need for your project. Survey results from the community and or visitors which demonstrates a poor quality visitor and community experience.
would be ideal. Evidence of increased visitor numbers to a site using pedestrian or traffic counters would be helpful. Reports on, and any photographic evidence of an increase in visitors’ numbers or the deterioration of the environment as a result of increased visitor numbers is very useful. Comments on social media and Trip Advisor are also acceptable forms of evidence.

Please ensure that your evidence is *directly applicable* to the site in question and is not of a generic nature covering a whole Local Authority area for example.

In the case of anticipated demand, you must supply evidence to support your argument for intervention in this instance. This could be from existing information studies, experience from other areas which have experienced similar circumstances i.e., film and tv locations.

Letters of support from community groups or individuals are not regarded as evidence of a visitor pressure point but are essential to show evidence of community support and some evidence of community involvement, endorsement and support must be provided.

10. **What evidence is required to demonstrate that a project is strategic in nature?**

Priority will be given to projects which have been identified as early actions with the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans however other projects will be considered where the applicant can demonstrate that these have been identified as part of a Strategic development framework by the Local Authorities, National Park Plans, F&L Scotland plans and NatureScot.

11. **Are projects in Towns and villages in rural areas eligible for funding?**

The Scottish Government have defined the eligible areas according to the Scottish Government’s official Urban/Rural classification Groups 5 &6 – that is “accessible and remote rural areas” excluding settlements above 3000 people. The postcode of the project must be located within areas and this might well exclude projects in small towns within rural areas. If you are unsure of the classification of your project postcode then please get in touch with the RTIF team who will be able to clarify this for you.

12. **Why can’t Community Groups and other National Agencies and Charities apply for funding?**

Scottish Government have established the criteria for the Fund and stipulated that only the Local Authorities and the National Park Authorities can apply for funding. However, Community Groups and other agencies can collaborate with their Local Authority or in partnership with one of the public agencies if they have an eligible project which meets the criteria and fits within the strategic rationale for the wider project. You should clearly identify on the application form which organisation will be delivering the project and how the project delivery will be monitored and managed by the relevant Authority.

In addition, the applicant must demonstrate a collaborative approach with a strong buy-in and project support from local communities and tourism groups. This will form part of the assessment process.

Private sector or individual businesses cannot apply to the RTIF either independently or through the Local Authority or other public sector agencies, and projects which are designed to selectively benefit or support particular private sector businesses or groups of businesses are not eligible.
13. **What funding sources can be used to match the RTIF Grant?**

As we are acutely aware of the restrictions on potential sources of match funding with the end of EU and Leader Funding in rural areas, RTIF has increased the potential maximum Intervention rate to 75% for projects which have a strong strategic rationale. Therefore, applicants must provide a minimum of 25% match funding for their project through other match funding sources. For other types of projects, the minimum match funding will be 30% of the total project costs.

Match Funding can come from public sector, community groups, or the private sector. Match Funding need not be all direct financial input and could take the form of in-kind support, such as land provided for the development which has been valued by an independent/external source. You must submit a copy of the external valuation of the land or building with your application.

Appropriate project development and management costs provided by the Applicant could also be considered as in-kind support and are eligible costs where these are based on *actual* salary costs paid or the National Living Wage and a record is kept of the number of days spent on the project.

General Local Authority or public sector agency administration, finance and property overhead costs are not eligible costs and cannot be claimed as match funding in kind or as expenditure. Only costs directly related to the delivery of the project are eligible. Project Management Costs will be restricted to a maximum of 10% of the total Construction costs and can only cover the construction phase of the project. You must justify the need for the maximum 10% in project management fees in your application.

Future revenue costs cannot be used at part of the match funding as revenue costs are not eligible project costs.

14. **Is the 75% Intervention rate open to all projects?**

The 75% intervention will not be automatically applied to projects. This is for projects which can demonstrate a strong strategic rationale and you must address this specifically in your application with evidence that supports the rationale. Applicants must demonstrate why a project looking for 75% funding is critical to the network of facilities in their area and meets a strategic infrastructure gap.

Awards at this level will be at the discretion of the Assessment Panel.

If you intend to apply for the 75% maximum intervention rate, then please contact your RTIF Manager for further advice.

15. **How does the Design Award Grant work?**

Local Authorities can apply as part of the EOI application for funding of up to a maximum of £6,000 to support **strategic and collaborative projects in progressing with design and to support the planning process** for their project prior to the submission of the Stage 2 application. If you already have planning permission for your site then grant can be claimed for more detailed work required to meet the RTIF Design criteria or to help with additional work required to meet any planning conditions.
The Design grant is based on a maximum 70% intervention rate with the match coming from the Local Authority or partners. The requests for support will be assessed in conjunction with Architecture & Design Scotland and those approved will have the grant paid following the Stage 1 notification subject to conditions of use. The purpose is to ensure that the proposed interventions are appropriate, consistent and of good quality across a strategic project where there might be several locations involved either in route development or across a single location.

**Applicants are strongly advised to undertake the Design Grant option as detailed designs and landscape plans are required at the time of the Stage 2 submission**

The costs incurred must be supported by Invoices and bank statements. These must be supplied before the Stage 2 deadline or the stage 2 applications will not be considered.

The grant cannot be applied to retrospective works already completed prior to the notification of EOI approval and any costs paid under this grant will not be eligible for under the Stage 2 application.

If your project is unsuccessful or the Stage 2 application, is not submitted by the deadline or is ultimately unsuccessful in being awarded RTIF grant, VisitScotland will not reclaim the Design Grant funding as long as the invoices and bank statement have been supplied as per the terms of the Design Grant agreement.

Applicants with a Design Grant must have supplied copies of the invoices and proof of payment to VisitScotland by the published deadline for submission to the Assessment panel or the application will not be considered.

Design Grant can be applied for as part of the EOI submission at any point prior to the submission of the Stage 2 application to any of the Assessment Panel deadlines.

16. **Do I have to supply plans and designs for my project by the Stage 2 deadline?**

Good design principles, including the consideration of “Place” development is a major part of the RTIF ethos and you must supply designs and plans relating to your project at the time of the Stage 2 submission along with a landscaping plan. Locations plans are also useful. This is a key criteria for RTIF and your application should demonstrate how you have incorporated good design principles into your project.

17. **There is a lot of emphasis on Responsible Tourism. What does this mean?**

The Scottish Government and VisitScotland are committed to reducing emissions, working with communities and focusing marketing efforts to encourage responsible tourism, in line with Scottish Government’s targets to become net-zero by 2045, and the strategic ambition to achieve responsible growth.
This includes a long-term commitment to increased promotion of public transport and active travel, developing community engagement and visitor management; work which has been ongoing particularly following the COVID-19 lockdown but will be a major focus for years to come.

**Responsible Tourism:**

- minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts.
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry.
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes.
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues.
- provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged.
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

The RTIF Assessment Panel will consider how a project application demonstrates a responsible tourism approach, through engagement with the local community, minimising resource use and waste, enabling low impact visits, supporting good visitor behaviours etc.

**18. What kind of information should I supply to demonstrate a commitment to low carbon infrastructure and long-term sustainability?**

Scottish Government has a strong commitment to addressing climate change and successful RTIF projects must be able to demonstrate that they have considered how their project will contribute to the reduction in climate change and help to move Scotland towards a low carbon future.

Applicants should consider how to maximise the use of existing facilities for new purposes or refurbishment and provide a well-supported case for requirement of new build facilities.

Applicants should consider what type of materials are appropriate and the energy efficiencies which could be achieved.

Applicants should demonstrate that their project has adequately considered future infrastructure requirements such as greater public transport access, more use of electric vehicles and bikes although RTIF cannot support the actual provision of these vehicles only the infrastructure which supports these.

A good source for further information on this can be found at Architecture & Design Scotland who have produced the report *Designing for a Changing Climate: Carbon Conscious Places*.

You can access this report through the following link:


**19. What level of emphasis is placed on Accessibility and Access for all?**
Accessibility is one the key criteria for RTIF support and while the purpose of RTIF is not to provide accessible facilities specifically, your application should address in detail how your project will improve accessibility. Statement about complying with legislation will not be sufficient for RTIF assessment purposes. You must demonstrate what active measures you are taking to improve and add value to accessible features of your project.

Obviously, we recognise that there are some circumstances where increasing accessibility might be limited such as mountain paths but these are regarded as an exception, and projects will be scored based on how far the project exceeds minimum standards required by legislation.

20. What should my project do to address new practices as a result of COVID-19?

Ensuring that visitors and the local community feel safe within the environment of the proposed facilities is vital going forward and all projects should prepare their projects on the basis of the most recent Scottish Government advice for the industry paying particular attention to guidance on hygiene for toilets, Applicants should specifically detail how the project design reflects the guidance and outlining the maintenance and cleaning arrangements for the site post completion.

Applicants should ensure that the works proposed meet physical distance requirements both during and post construction.

21. Can I make a charge for the facilities/infrastructure?

You can make a small charge for facilities such as toilets or waste disposal facilities or infrastructure such as parking, EV charging to cover the costs for cleaning, maintenance and waste disposal but you cannot use the facilities supported by the RTIF as an income source to generate funds for the community or another project. The RTIF cannot not support commercial activities. You should make clear your proposed charges at the time of the application and provide an income and expenditure forecast.

22. Can volunteer time be used as Match Funding for the RTIF?

Volunteer time can be used as match funding for the RTIF however timesheets must be kept for each volunteer, recording the number of hours on the project and these must all be charged at the agreed rate. This is currently set at £9.90 per hour.

23. Are legal fees and statutory planning fees eligible costs under the RTIF?

Legal fees associated with the project and statutory planning fees are eligible costs with the exception of any costs claimed under the Design Award however this is at the applicant’s own risk and the applicant must assume the cost of this if the application is unsuccessful.
24. Can pre-project fees be included as eligible costs?

Pre-contract fess such as design fees or QS fees are eligible however this is at the applicant’s own risk and the applicant must assume the cost of this if the application is unsuccessful. In kind project management costs cannot be claimed prior to the start of the project but can be claimed during the project delivery phase and you should be clear that these costs match you actual proposed construction period. Costs claimed under the Design Award cannot be claimed as part of the Stage 2 application. The cost of feasibility studies is not eligible.

25. What if the land or building that I want to use is leased rather than owned?

You can undertake work on a site that you do not own but lease, but where land is provided for a fixed period then this must be guaranteed for no less than 20 years from the completion of the works to ensure that public access is maintained for the life of the project. No break clauses within the 20-year period are permitted within lease agreements. You also cannot use annual lease costs as match funding or include them in the costs as these are revenue costs which are not eligible.

26. Is VAT included in the RTIF Grant award?

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund Award is not subject to VAT and any Award made is inclusive of VAT if any, payable thereon. Under no circumstances will the Award be increased, should any VAT liability arise for the applicant and any third party partners. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their treatment of VAT relative to the Award is correct.

27. Do the subsidy control rules apply to the RTIF?

The fund is guided by UK subsidy control rules, and as a rule cannot support the commercial provision of facilities. The grant cannot be awarded to individual businesses or private companies. It is the responsibility of the applicant to determine if there are any subsidy control implications and provide an acceptable review of this at the request of the RTIF Manager or the Assessment Panel. The latest Scottish Government guidance on the subsidy control rules can be sourced at https://www.gov.scot/publications/state-aid-guidance/

28. What is the Application Process for submissions to the RTIF?

Applications to the RTIF area being conducted under a 2-stage process. The Stage 1 Expressions of Interest assessment is based on the information submitted on the EOI application form. This will enable eligibility checks to be undertaken and an assessment made about the extent to which the application meets the RTIF objectives. The invitation to proceed to Stage 2 and submit a full application, or the awarding of a design grant, is not a guarantee that your project will be approved by the Assessment panel.

The RTIF manager will work with Authorities with approved EOIs to develop Stage 2 applications, but these will not be submitted to the RTIF Assessment Panel until the application is deemed by VisitScotland to be at an advanced stage of development. Presentation of the application to the Assessment Panel is also not a guarantee that your project will be approved by the Assessment panel.
29. Do I need to submit and Expression of interest Application or can I just submit a full application?

All applicants must submit an EOI and have this approved before progressing to the next stage of the application process.

The EOI form has been designed to provide sufficient information to enable the RTIF team to make an assessment on the extent to which the project meets the criteria and provide feedback on your project so that you do not incur costs etc. unnecessarily. The RTIF team is there to assist you with any queries pre-application and you should contact the team at RTIF@visitscotland.com to discuss your project.

30. What information should be submitted with a Stage 2 application?

With a Stage 2 application, you must submit the following documents:

1. Proof that Planning applications if required have been submitted to the relevant authority
2. Designs and plans for your project
3. Landscape plans if appropriate
4. Details of costs provided either by a QS or through quotes for work provided by qualified contractors.
5. External land valuations if part of the project
6. Project Delivery Plan and timetable

If these are not available by the deadline for receipt of the Stage 2 applications for the relevant Assessment Panel then the application will be held over until the following Panel Meeting.

In additional, you should submit all confirmations of match funding where possible. Although this will not prevent your application progressing to the assessment panel, confirmation of match funding will enhance your likelihood of success and any grant offer will be conditional on the provision of match funding confirmation.

31. How many Assessment Panels will there be in 2022

It is anticipated that there will be 1 Assessment Panel meeting in 2022. Applications must be submitted by 1st September 2022 accompanied with all the documentation listed at Section 30.

32. Who can sign an EOI or Stage 2 application?

All EOIs and Stage 2 applications must be signed by a person authorised by their organisations to do so. Electronic signatures are acceptable under present conditions when accompanied by an email from the relevant signatory confirming that they have the authority to do so on behalf of their Local Authority.
33. Who will be on the Assessment panel for the RTIF?

VisitScotland administers the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government. An independent Assessment Panel scores the Stage 2 applications in detail according to the agreed criteria and approves the final selection of projects. The panel consists of representatives of Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, COSLA, NatureScot, Architecture and Design Scotland as well as VisitScotland.

34. What criteria will be used in the Assessment process?

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund is designed to support sustainable, well planned, inspiring and collaborative infrastructure projects in rural areas that are experiencing or may experience pressures as a result of increased visitor numbers. Applications must show a strong emphasis on quality and sustainable development practices and a fit with a local tourism plan or regional tourism strategy, have good community support and be deliverable within the Round 5 timescale.

Successful applications must demonstrate the following:

- **An Existing or anticipated Visitor Pressure Point** – As a result of previous increases in visitor numbers, there is a visitor and or community pressure point which is likely to continue and needs to be addressed. This includes anticipated visitor pressure point arising from changes in the market. The applicant should provide evidence of the increase in visitor numbers or anticipated impact of visitor number and/or evidence of the impact of visitors on the local area. The applicant should provide a strategic context for the project and evidence to support this.

- **That a strategic need is met or gap is addressed by the actions proposed** - Priority will be given to early actions identified by the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans or other Strategic plans by Local Authorities, the National Parks, NatureScot or Forestry & Land Scotland Applicants should provide a strategic context for the project and evidence to support this.

- **Provision of a quality visitor experience** – through the provision of high quality visitor facilities and infrastructure, leading to a positive impact on the local landscape and visitor economy. Applicants should demonstrate the commitment to place principles and a quality design which can accommodate visitors with a wide variety of access needs and complies with and where possible exceeds the requirements of the Equality Act.

- **A Responsible Tourism approach** – applicants are expected to take a responsible tourism approach to the planning, design and management of the infrastructure provision addressing the issues generated as a result of the COVID outbreak.

- **A carbon conscious approach** - Applicants should provide details on how their project will contribute to the reduction/mitigation of climate change and support the transition to a low carbon society i.e. through the use of low carbon materials, energy efficiency, promotion of low carbon transport, renewable energy and waste management in construction and maintenance of the facilities. Applicants should demonstrate their commitment to carbon consciousness where a location Reuses, Repurposes and Considers Whole Life Costs Retrofitting existing structures and considering the embodied carbon in place.
- **Community capacity building** – creating more resilient communities more able to cope with peak tourism demands and the creation of new local business opportunities.

- **Effective partnerships and collaboration** – You must evidence engagement with local community groups, destination organisations and tourism businesses, demonstrating how partnership working can increase awareness, advocacy and the quality of the final project.

- **Project viability and deliverability** – applicants must provide evidence of:
  - Proven experience of project management and financial administration
  - A clear timetable for permissions, procurement, site start date and expected time of completion
  - A clear delivery plan demonstrating value for money and measurable outputs
  - Detailed costs and a budget forecast for the period of the project

*Priority may be given to applications which can demonstrate:*

1. *That the project is part of a strategic development plan for a location or sector*
2. *That they are sustainable, innovative, integrated projects which resolve both an immediate visitor pressure point but take account of wider area pressures*
3. *Alignment with the priority areas identified by the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans*
4. *Projects which have a higher level of match funding.*

**35. What are the key dates for Round 5 of RTIF?**

The programme for Round 5 of the RTIF is outlined below

**RTIF ROUND 5 TIMETABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2022/23</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Announcement of RTIF 2022/23</td>
<td>Monday 9th May 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/23 Expressions of Interest and Design Grant applications open from</td>
<td>Thursday 26th May - Thursday 21st July 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date for receipt of applications to Assessment Panel</td>
<td>Thursday 1st September 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Panel Meeting</td>
<td>Thursday 6th October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants advised of outcome</td>
<td>Friday 14th October 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of 2022/23 projects</td>
<td>31st December 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Final Claim</td>
<td>31st January 2024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. Can I start my project while I am waiting to hear the outcome of the Assessment panel?

No grants will be awarded retrospectively. Applicants must ensure no on-site activity commences prior to the RTIF Grant Agreement being signed. This does not include pre-contract costs such as survey or design work etc.

37. How will the grant award be paid?

60% of the RTIF grant award will be paid on the completion of the contract agreement process with the Applicant. A further 30% of the grant award will be paid on certification that the project has spent 50% of the agreed eligible project costs and the submission of an Interim Claim form. The final 10% will be paid on completion of the project and receipt of the Final Claim Monitoring and Evaluation report.

Payments can only be made to the project applicant which will be the Local Authority or National Park Authority who will then be responsible for onward payments to delivery partners.

38. What happens if the project overspends?

The RTIF cannot make up the difference in costs should you overspend on the project costs. Any award made is a maximum amount and cannot be increased later. You must ensure that you have a reasonable level of contingencies within your budget to allow for unforeseen problems during the project.

39. What happens if my project underspends?

The RTIF will not pay you more than the agreed Intervention rate in your Grant Agreement. If your projects underspends, then you will only be entitled to your actual expenditure costs x the agreed intervention rate. This may mean that you might have to repay any grant already paid.

40. How long do Applicants have to claim the grant award?

The 5th round of the RTIF runs until 30th November 2023 and all submission of all final claims must be made by 31st December 2023 or no later than the agreed longstop date.

41. What evidence is needed to demonstrate project benefits/outcomes?

Ideally, follow-up survey work should be undertaken of both community and visitors to determine improved visitor and community satisfaction. This will be particularly useful if you were able to provide a pre project survey which would enable comparison between the before and after picture. Photographic evidence of the project site before and on completion of the project or reports demonstrating a reduced impact on the environment would be desirable. The impact on local businesses in terms of improved business performance Inc. any new business start-ups should be supplied if appropriate.
42. How will my project be monitored by VisitScotland?

All projects will receive a monitoring visit on, at least, one payment point throughout the period of the contract. All supporting documentation, including pre project design, project costs and procurement must be retained and made available to the RTIF team at the time of the visit.