

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department for Communities

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

*Published at 10.00am on Thursday 26 June 2025.*

**Mr Lyons (The Minister for Communities):** I am pleased today to announce my intention to launch in the autumn, a major new funding scheme – **the Northern Ireland Community Infrastructure Fund** – a community infrastructure grant that will be transformational to the voluntary and community sector.

I have asked my officials to bring forward a scheme, which subject to appropriate approvals will make around £4m available to support the refurbishment and improvement of community buildings and facilities across Northern Ireland.

Our community buildings deliver a profound impact to the people of Northern Ireland. These halls, centres, and hubs are more than bricks and mortar. They are vital assets - the beating heart of our cities, towns and villages. They host vital services, support social connection, and provide safe, welcoming spaces for people. They offer opportunities to interact, educate, organise and celebrate.

They are where the fabric of community is knitted tighter. As evidenced during the challenging times of the pandemic and more recently, during Storm Éowyn, they were the lifeblood of local communities enabling people to gather, grow and support one another.

Over the last year, while visiting community organisations across Northern Ireland, I have witnessed first-hand that many of their halls and centres are ageing, inefficient and in urgent need of repair.

Today I am announcing a pilot programme that will be open to voluntary and community groups to apply for funding to support these important assets. It will also recognise the important role of faith-based organisations in providing welcoming spaces for groups and the wider community.

This Fund will be open to different types of community facilities, including church halls, village halls, Orange halls, sports clubs and other community centres which provide a wide range of community activities.

This significant investment will allow voluntary and community groups to carry out essential works such as repairs, energy efficiency upgrades, disability access improvements and other minor capital works that ensure these facilities remain safe, functional, and fit for purpose.

The programme will launch with an initial call for applications in Autumn 2025, and I anticipate successful applicants being notified by March 2026 and work on the ground to begin in the 26/27 financial year. Over the coming months my officials will be further developing detailed guidance and eligibility criteria, which will be communicated to ensure a clear application process.

This fund represents a significant investment in our communities at a time when they are under pressure in terms of rising costs and demands for services. I know this funding will not meet every need, and that demand will undoubtedly outstrip what is available.

This is a meaningful first step, one that responds to real need and helps lay the groundwork for wider and continued investment in Northern Ireland's community infrastructure. I want this fund to be a catalyst, not just for refurbishment, but for regeneration.

Sustaining these assets for future use so communities to have a place to connect, participate and grow will deliver on my commitment to make a real and lasting change.