

South Ayrshire Council

REGENERATION CAPITAL GRANT FUND (RCGF)

Submitting Your Expression of Interest (EOI)

The deadline for completed application forms is **5pm on Thursday 23rd July 2026**.

To complete the following EOI form you must meet the following eligibility criteria:

Eligible Projects

You **must** be able to demonstrate that your project:

- meets the fund aims/objectives (page 2 of guidance), including alignment to a shared vision/plan for the relevant local place
- has been costed with an advanced funding package in place
- can spend or commit any funding by end March 2028

You project must be at RIBA stage 4. Do not include projects that are still at feasibility stage.

Organisation Name	Girvan's Story Regeneration Project (South Ayrshire Council)
Project Title	McKechie Institute Refurbishment and Extension
Lead Contact	Zanne Domoney-Lyttle
Position in Organisation	Lead Project Officer
Full Postal Address including Postcode	County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr KA7 1DR
Project Start Date	May 2027
Project Completion Date	March 2028

Has this project been submitted to previous call of RCGF or the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme (VDLIP)?

Previous refs/call: N/A

1. Total Project Costs

	2027/28
Total RCGF Grant Requested	£600,000
Total Match Funding (costs funded by other sources)	£836,624
Overall Total Project Costs	£1,436,624

2. Match Funding - Please detail any sources of funding other than RCGF

	2027/28
South Ayrshire Council - secured	£220,291
Historic Environment Scotland - secured	£162,333
National Lottery Heritage Fund - secured	£454,000
Total	£836,624

(The Total amount should be the same as the Total Match Funding amount in Table 1 above)

Project Proposal Summary

1. Full project proposal summary

1.1 WHAT WILL THE PROJECT DELIVER

This project will deliver the comprehensive refurbishment, extension and enhancement of the McKechnie Institute as a fully accessible and sustainable cultural hub in Girvan town centre. The McKechnie is a Category B listed building within a Conservation Area and a priority within the wider Girvan's Story regeneration programme, with funding secured from Historic Environment Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Proposed works include: conservation-led repairs to the building fabric (roof, stonework, repointing, reinstatement of architectural features); upgraded internal spaces for exhibitions, displays and events; improved interpretation and displays; energy efficiency measures including insulation, secondary glazing and low-carbon heating; and the transformation of the rear garden into a flexible outdoor space. The project will create a fit-for-purpose cultural and community facility, increasing use and enhancing visitor experience while securing the long-term future of this key heritage asset and supporting ambitions for UK Museums Accreditation, alongside new opportunities for funding, employment and training.

1.2 PLACE BASED APPROACH

The proposal aligns with place-based regeneration principles by celebrating Girvan's identity and establishing the McKechnie as a central cultural anchor in the town centre. It will host intergenerational heritage activity, strengthening community connections and fostering civic pride and engagement, particularly among young people.

As a core element of the wider Girvan's Story Regeneration Project, it supports local and national regeneration priorities, including town centre revitalisation, 20-minute neighbourhoods, and culture-led economic development, while complementing other investments including the Bandstand Project, Quay Zone redevelopment, Palace Park refurbishment, and community takeover of The South Parish Church, creating a coordinated visitor offer that supports longer dwell times and increased town centre spend. Furthermore, The project links to the Scottish Government's Regeneration Strategy, Place Principle, Culture Strategy, Fair Work and Pay Strategy, and towards SAC's local economic development strategy.

The refurbished building will operate as a mixed-use venue for exhibitions, heritage interpretation, events, workshops and space hire for community and private use. Income will be generated through venue hire, programming and partnership activity, supported by continued cultural funding streams. Increased visitor numbers are projected to support higher local spend and additional revenue opportunities. The project will also support ambitions for UK Museums Accreditation and deliver economic and social benefits, including increased footfall, job creation, and expanded training and volunteering opportunities.

The project has secured funding from Historic Environment Scotland, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and South Ayrshire Council, demonstrating strong public and third sector

support. It builds on previous investment, including accessibility improvements (installation of a lift), and aligns with wider local regeneration priorities which aim to protect and preserve built heritage, increase footfall and spend on our streets, and encourage community pride.

Delivery is supported by a strong partnership between South Ayrshire Council (leaseholder and operator), Trustees of the McKechnie Library (title deed holders), Friends of the McKechnie (community organisation), and the Partnership Board for Girvan's Story which consists of representatives from local community organisations. Wider community stakeholders and members have already engaged through consultation, and further consultations will progress as the project develops and is delivered. This approach to partnership working ensures both deliverability and long-term sustainability with strong community buy-in and responds to local priorities of ambition of preserving and improving a cultural asset identified as a priority through Girvan's Charette Report (2012) and local Place Plan (2021), as well as the Conservation Area Appraisal and subsequent Management Plan (2024).

The project will form a key part of Girvan's Story five-year programme of traditional skills training and heritage activities. The planned conservation-led repairs will create a range of training, volunteering and employability opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Building on the success of the stonemasonry taster session delivered in the garden space last year, and informed by the traditional skills audit (2024), the project responds directly to the identified need for locally accessible traditional skills training. The project will support the principle of fairness and reduce barriers to participation by delivering these opportunities in partnership with local organisations including Girvan Youth Trust, Girvan Academy and the Glendoune Community Association. Accessibility improvements could also address the fairness and equality aspect, ensuring the building serves the whole community.

The refurbishment of the McKechnie incorporates energy efficiency improvements to reduce carbon emissions and operational costs, in the shape of a retrofit plan. The retrofit plan highlights short- medium- and long-term objectives including repairs to the fabric of the building, new insulation throughout the building, window repairs, installation of secondary glazing, installation of ASHP and electric panel heaters, and installation of cavity fill behind existing internal linings. The project also reuses and adapts an existing building supporting low-carbon regeneration principles. Improved use of outdoor space to sustainable wellbeing outcomes is also linked to the overall contribution to Scotland's net-zero carbon emissions target by 2045.

The project is currently at RIBA Stage 3, with Stage 4 due by November 2026 and construction programmed to begin in late Spring 2027. Development funding is secured to achieve RIBA 4, and capital funding is secured with an experienced delivery team in place, meaning the project is fully deliverable within the proposed timeframe.

1.3 WHY THE PROJECT SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN

Girvan has a sizeable population of c.6300, but it is 22 miles to the nearest large centre of population (Ayr). Girvan suffers from many issues associated with being in a rural location,

reflected in the SIMD (2020) statistics for the data zone for Girvan (S01012419 – Carrick South). The geographic access to amenities/facilities/services is ranked at 1/2, the most deprived decile. The town also suffers from higher-than-average levels of unemployment, less diverse job opportunities and a larger-than-average retired population. Access to amenities and services is poor, and there is a lack of cultural and social spaces for the community. Additionally, The McKechnie Institute has experience declining visitor numbers and ongoing accessibility challenges, making refurbishment essential to ensure its continued relevance and viability. Our aim is to ensure that this project benefits local residents, community groups and visitors, with strong support demonstrated through engagement and consultation, by improving accessibility, providing affordable cultural and community facilities, supporting wellbeing, and creating opportunities for skills development, volunteering and employment. By revitalising this key town-centre asset, the project will strengthen community cohesion, reduce social isolation and contribute to a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable Girvan, directly supporting RCGF objectives.

2. Project costs and deliverability

PROJECT COSTS AND ANY OTHER FUNDING

The total cost of this project is £1,436,624, as per Stage 2 reports (April 2025).

Amount secured: £220,291 (South Ayrshire Council); £162,333 (Historic Environment Scotland); £454,000 (National Lottery Heritage Fund).

These funds are restricted to project development (SAC), heritage elements (HES), and capital costs (NLHF).

We are seeking £600,000 towards the overall costs which would contribute towards the extension to the rear of the building which improves accessibility, and new interpretation and exhibition elements within the building.

Once complete please save as a pdf document and upload to the Your Area Your Voice Your Choice portal.

Email a note of your contact number and email address to grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk