

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

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

Organisation Name	Friends of Dundonald Castle SCIO (SC031541)
Project Title	Dundonald Castle Regeneration Plan
Lead Contact	Kirsteen Croll
Position in Organisation	Chief Executive
Full Postal Address including Postcode	Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre, Winehouse Yett, Dundonald, Kilmarnock KA2 9HD
Project Start Date	April 2027
Project Completion Date	Dec 2027

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

Previous refs/call: None

e.g. RCGF-22-INSERT or
VDLIP-01-INSERT or N/A

1. Total Project Costs

	2027/28
Total RCGF Grant Requested	£623k
Total Match Funding (costs funded by other sources)	£58.7k
Overall Total Project Costs	£681.7k

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

	Pre 2025/26
Participatory Budget Investment Fund (capital building improvements)	£21,950
Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (feasibility studies etc)	£16,868
Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (Architects fees, capital improvements etc)	£19,841
Total	£58,659

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

1. Full project proposal summary

1.1 WHAT WILL THE PROJECT DELIVER

Friends of Dundonald Castle SCIO manage the 14th century castle which sits above the community of Dundonald in South Ayrshire (population 2600) in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. Our Visitor Centre sits adjacent to the Castle, it is the focal point for Castle access. It includes a retail shop, museum with interpretive displays, café and social space. We welcome over 30,000 visitors a year who contribute both directly and indirectly to our local economy. Our Centre is a focus for the village, encouraging day trips to the Castle and its associated woodland walks and trails, our local restaurants and shops. In summer 2026 the completion of a direct off road cycle route will connect the village and Castle to Troon (distance 4 miles, population app 19,000). This is anticipated to significantly increase local visitors. Through the advancement of education and promotion of the Castle and its rich heritage environment, we engage with the local community and welcome school trips from across Scotland. We are a significant local employer and provide social and friendship opportunities for our local community.

Since Covid, we have experienced continuous growth in visitor numbers and community focused events. Activities are currently constrained by the size of our premises. We have been progressively improving our facilities through a combination of external grants. The element associated with this grant application involves doubling our Visitor Centre footprint through an extension. The proposal has been designed, costed and has planning consent (ie RIBA Stage 4). Delivery will increase footfall, enable wider community activities focused on the Centre and open up opportunities for commercial activities such as increased café income, retail sales and weddings. Capital grant of £623k is sought for delivery of the enlarged and enhanced Visitor Centre in 2027/28.

In numbers the proposal is projected to:-

- Increase the building footprint from 112m² to 210m² (app),
- increase visitor numbers from 30,000 per year to over 40,000,
- increase employees from 18 to 24,
- increase events from 12-16 per annum to 16-20 per annum,
- increase weddings from 8 to 12 per annum,
- increase community focused attendance within the Centre from 2400 to over 3000 per annum,
- increase revenue turnover from £252k/annum to over £300k per annum.

1.2 PLACE BASED APPROACH

Dundonald falls into the 5th decile of deprivation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) with one location falling within the 4th decile. Geographic access however falls into the 3rd decile, with the consequent implications for accessing employment and social facilities.

The Centre contributes significantly to the economic and social health of the village. Dundonald has two convenience shops, a vet, doctors surgery, chemist, two restaurants and a hairdresser on the main street. There is also a Garden Centre adjacent to the village who support us through supplying plants for our dementia friendly gardening project. Our Centre encourages visitors, who in turn bring expenditure to the commercial activities in the village. It also importantly develops community activities and education through many supported initiatives including hosting clubs, groups and get togethers. Activities are inclusive and dementia friendly.

Our facility is unique in that we drive increased visitors to Dundonald Castle, the village and associated woodland walks and facilities as well as acting as a focal hub for community based activities within the village. We partner with the annual Dundonald Games, a major Ayrshire event, which takes place immediately adjacent to the Castle. We engage closely with the Community Council and local businesses. Our produce for the café/restaurant and stock for retail sales are locally sourced as far as possible. We have won many awards including the National Scottish Thistle Award 2024 'Celebrating Thriving Communities' and the South Ayrshire Partnership Award 2025. We are once again a TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award Winner 2026, placing the Castle in the top 10% of activities to do worldwide; an accolade we have achieved every year since 2015.

Our objectives align with the South Ayrshire's Strategic Economic Plan Vision 2030 through community based sustainable economic growth. Performance is measured through our business plan key performance indicators. Significantly the success of 'Friends of Dundonald Castle' encourages wider investment in the community from the private sector. As a growing place of destination for both visitors and residents, investment opportunities become more attractive. Our objectives include strengthening local business such that employment and opportunities increase.

We align with the South Ayrshire Council Plan priorities in respect of 'Spaces and Place', 'Live, Learn and Work' and 'Civic and Community Pride'. Our activities support many of the priorities within the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

Success will be measured by increased commercial turnover, increased employment, increased community activities and a strengthened local economy. In this respect the Charity is very much a partnership across local commercial and community activities. We have a formal level of service agreement with Historic Environment Scotland to operate Dundonald Castle and we have a close partnership with South Ayrshire Council from whom we acquired the Visitor Centre through community asset transfer. Significantly, the charity currently operates with a revenue surplus. The proposals will strengthen this position and increase commercial income, especially across retail and café activities. Benchmarking has been carried out to quantify the potential in this respect.

2. Project costs and deliverability

PROJECT COSTS AND ANY OTHER FUNDING

Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre has been progressively improved, guided by our business plan. Annually we achieve over £100k in direct revenue grants. In addition, over the last two years we have received £58.7k in capital grants. The specific element of our improvement strategy for which we seek Regional Capital Grant is for the delivery of our proposed building extension and associated external improvements.

A detailed costing of the proposed extension was completed in 2025 and has been factored forward to 2027/28 financial year as follow (all cost estimates are inclusive of VAT):-

- Building extension - £519k (including all professional costs),
- Existing external patio upgrade - £12.5k,
- Extended patio (to the west of the building) - £58k,
- Enhanced weather protection for external areas - £34k

Total project cost for which grant is sought - £623.5k

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

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