

# Public Building Retrofit fund - Frequently Asked Questions

Please see below a list of questions that may help you understand more about the Public Building Retrofit fund. Please email any further questions to [PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

## Eligibility

### What organisations are eligible for the Public Building Retrofit fund?

Applicants must be within scope of the Greater Manchester Integrated Settlement (IS). Eligible organisations will also be those that are defined as 'public authorities' by the Procurement Act 2023 on the date the application is submitted.

Generally, this includes:

- Emergency services
- Local authorities, including town and parish councils
- Schools within the state education system, including maintained schools, academies, multi-academy trusts and free schools
- Further education providers
- Nursery schools maintained by a local authority
- Community and mental health NHS trusts and foundation trusts (i.e. all non-acute trusts).

Please refer to section 4.1 of the guidance for more information on organisations within the GMCA that are not eligible, exclusions, and evidence required.

### Why is this fund being run separately to Phase 4 of the national Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme?

Funding for the PBRf is drawn from the Greater Manchester integrated funding settlement, which came into effect Tuesday 1 April 2025. This trailblazing devolution deal brings £630m of existing annual funding into one place allowing us to deliver place-based solutions and help our people and places thrive.

This has enabled the GMCA to make some key changes in the PBRf to transition from the national Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, supporting local priorities and optimising the opportunity for delivery as part of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

### If an organisation eligible for the PBRf has previously benefitted from the PSDS, will they still be able to apply for the PBRf?

Yes. We encourage clients to apply who are now eligible for the PBRf and have previously applied for or used the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme or LCSF delivered by Salix.

However, it is important to note that double funding checks will be carried out. You cannot apply to the PBRf for measures and works that have already been funded via the PSDS.

### **Are GPs eligible for funding?**

GPs are not eligible unless they are contracting authorities of an eligible body (including NHS trusts) that either own or have a long-term lease agreement with responsibility for maintenance of the buildings not including NHS property services as these are semi-private.

### **Are Higher Education institutions eligible to apply for the PBRf?**

Higher Education institutions are not eligible to apply for the PBRf.

## **The Application Process**

### **What is the purpose of application windows and gateways, and why are they being introduced?**

Eligible applicants will have the opportunity to bid into three application windows. The first application window will open in Summer 2025, with dates for the subsequent application windows to be confirmed in due course by the GMCA. Details will be published on the Greater Manchester Green City Region website.

Within each application window, there is a two-stage gateway process, allowing project funding to be ringfenced earlier in the allocation process, reducing applicant risk and enabling the development of design prior to award of grant funds.

Gateway 1 will assess strategic prioritisation of applications based on scoring and technical assurance. If successful, a conditional grant offer letter ringfencing funding will be shared with applicants, providing them with early confidence in the resources that can be used to develop the project.

Gateway 2 will follow design developments and consist of a full technical assessment and a review that all conditions at gateway 1 have been met. If successful, this gateway confirms the funding through an updated grant offer letter with associated delivery conditions.

Please refer to Section 2 in the guidance for full detail of the application process.

### **What is the scoring methodology that the GMCA will be using to assess applications and allocate funding to projects?**

The application will first need to demonstrate that it meets all the eligibility criteria outlined in section 2.1.1 in the guidance. There are five criteria that will be scored using a pass/fail system.

Following the eligibility check, a Gateway 1 technical review will be undertaken by Salix to assess the project's technical feasibility alongside checking the costs are comprehensive, reasonable and justified. This will not be scored, but will provide a risk rating (Red, Amber, Green) for the project which will inform any conditions that may be applied to projects which proceed to Gateway 2.

An assessment will also be undertaken based on information in the application form. The assessment will score the applicant's response based on combined strategic and programme objectives relating to four main criteria.

These main criteria, and category weightings are as follows:

- Project Impact (40%)
- Project Readiness (25%)
- Strategic Importance (20%)
- Existing Building Performance (15%)

Please refer to section 2.1.1 of the guidance for further breakdown of these criteria and how each of them will be scored.

Applications will then be ranked based on the highest cumulative score from the assessment. Applicants invited to Gateway 2 will be identified through working down the ranking order fulfilling each grant request until the funding for that financial year has been exhausted. Funds will be ringfenced and successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed to Gateway 2.

**Can changes be made after the application has been submitted while the SharePoint application platform remains open?**

Applicants will be able to make changes to their application up to the closing date of GW1. Once closed, no further changes can be made.

**I have prepared an application for Phase 4 of the national Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, but did not receive funding for this. Can I submit the same documentation for the PBRf?**

No, applicants must apply for funding using the provided PBRf application form (which differs from that used in the PSDS). There are key differences between the schemes outlined in section 1.2 of the guidance that should be considered when completing the PBRf application form.

**Does the time of application matter once the portal has opened?**

The PBRf is not operating a first come first served system, and so the time of application does not matter given it is within the stated gateway window timeframes.

**Will feedback be provided to unsuccessful applications to help them apply for future application windows?**

In all cases feedback will be aimed to be provided to applicants with unsuccessful applications.

**Can applicants send their applications to the PBRf inbox?**

No, all applications must be submitted using the SharePoint application platform. To receive a link to the platform, it is essential that the applicant registers on the GMCA website, at least one week in advance of Gateway 1 opening.

All accompanying mandatory and optional evidence must also be submitted through the SharePoint Application platform.

If applicants are experiencing issues with this, please email us as soon as possible at [PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

**Where can I find my Unique Property Reference Number?**

If you do not have the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) for your buildings readily available, please use the following link: UPRN search, address & postcode finder – FindMyAddress ([Search - FindMyAddress](#)).

### **Where can I find my gas Meter Point Reference Number?**

You can find your building's MPRN on your gas or dual fuel bill. This is usually marked 'Meter Point Reference Number' and is between six and 10 digits long. An example of an MPRN is: 1875258102.

Alternatively, the Meter Point Administration Service's online tool [Find My Supplier](#) can be used to find your building's MPRN.

### **Can third parties apply on behalf of public sector organisations?**

No, applications must be submitted by the public organisation itself.

### **What happens if my application carbon cost changes during assessment?**

We expect the submitted information to be right first time and significant amendments risk not being accepted.

However, if there are unavoidable changes to the grant carbon cost throughout assessment due to acceptable adjustments, as listed in the scheme guidance, please raise this with the GMCA as the application may be at risk.

Applicants should therefore ensure that all information that may impact the grant carbon cost of the application is accurate and realistic.

### **What grant value should I apply for to be competitive?**

Applicants can refer to Step 4.2 of the application form for a visualisation of the project's Carbon Cost Curve. Here, a grant value can be selected. The lower the carbon cost, the better value for money the project will be, and the higher in the ranking it will be placed. Therefore, by selecting a lower grant value on the project's cost curve, this will increase the competitiveness of the application.

### **Do you have a list of good consultants we can use?**

No, it is the GMCA's responsibility to remain supplier neutral and therefore cannot publish a list of recommended consultants.

### **Do the big projects get preference? We are a small organisation and don't have the resources or time to put together a detailed application, and have limited time and expertise.**

We encourage all types of applicants to apply for the PBRf, as the complexity of the projects can vary across the public sector.

The Gateway process and assessment criteria have been developed to account for smaller projects and to mitigate time and resource required for applications.

The GMCA intend to develop a Design Works funding scheme to support organisations that require more support to develop their designs. Details of this scheme will be announced later in the year.

### **Is there a limit to the value of grant that can be applied for?**

There is no limit to the size of grant value that a public sector organisation can apply for, though the maximum application carbon cost for the PBRf is £510/tCO<sub>2</sub>e over the lifetime of the project for grant funded measures.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for funding which reflects the size of a project and what is needed to deliver the project. Please refer the guidance for further details.

### **If I am only proposing one measure as part of a PBRf application and the carbon cost exceeds £510/tCO<sub>2</sub>e LT, can I claim any grant funding from the PBRf?**

If you are only proposing one measure, the carbon cost curve will present as a flat line in step 4.2 of the application form. If the grant carbon cost exceeds the £510/tCO<sub>2</sub>e LT threshold, you will not be eligible for any grant funding since the carbon cost will remain the same regardless of the grant value you wish to claim.

If you are only proposing one measure and the carbon cost exceeds £510/tCO<sub>2</sub>e LT, you are encouraged to consider introducing other carbon cost effective measures, such as building fabric improvements, or buildings to achieve a compliant project and access some grant funding.

## **Criteria**

### **Does the fossil fuel heating system need to be end of life?**

PBRf will accept projects that focus only on building decarbonisation improvements, such as an insulation only project. There is no requirement of the fund to remove a fossil fuel heating plant and replace it with a low carbon alternative to access funding. Should an applicant wish to replace their fossil fuel heating system with a Low Carbon Heating system, the system will not be required to be end of life. The fossil fuel system is not needed to be decommissioned immediately, to support transition. However, a decommissioning plan within a 2-year period should also be established and shared with the GMCA.

### **What is heat network zoning?**

The Energy Act 2023 contains powers to implement heat network zoning. Heat network zoning will designate areas where heat networks are expected to provide the lowest cost, low carbon heating. The Greater Manchester heat network zoning map can be found here: [Heat network zoning map: Greater Manchester](#)

### **Will I be required to connect to a heat network under the PBRf?**

Heat Network zoning legislation will, in the coming year, identify locations where heat networks are highly likely to be the lowest cost low carbon heating solution. To align with this, PBRf guidance and criteria places additional emphasis on the importance of considering heat networks within the range of low carbon options for your building. However, there will be no requirement under the PBRf to connect to a heat network. For full details on heat networks, please refer to section 3.1 of the guidance notes.

If you require further information regarding a specific heat network scheme or zone in Greater Manchester, please contact [PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk) for the attention of the heat network team.

## Can we remove end-of-life calorifiers that provide DHW, fed from natural gas boilers, to meet the criteria and retain the boilers for resilience?

If there is a dedicated gas boiler which feeds a calorifier for DHW, there is no requirement for the boiler to be end-of-life and removed as part of your project. Where the calorifier operates as a heat interface in buildings proposing to disconnect from a heat network, the calorifier can be defined as the heating plant for the purposes of PBRf and replaced with a low carbon alternative.

## How is the carbon cost calculated?

The carbon cost calculator contained in the application form will automatically determine what measures are funded by the PBRf grant, and what is therefore funded by the applicant's own contribution to the project. The carbon cost calculation for PBRf (£/tCO<sub>2</sub>e LT) is as follows:

Grant carbon cost (£/tCO <sub>2</sub> e LT) =	$\frac{\text{Grant value requested (£)}}{\text{Direct carbon saved by grant funded measures over the lifetime (tCO}_2\text{e LT)}}$
--	---

The application form will automatically rank measures based on their carbon cost and generate a carbon cost curve, specific to the measures inputted.

## General

### What are the key differences between the PBRf and PSDS 4?

Public Building Retrofit fund key differences to PSDS 4 include:

- No end-of-life boiler requirement
- No removal of fossil fuel heating plant requirement
- Different sectoral protections per window (no sector soft caps as per the national PSDS model)
- No minimum recipient contribution

Please refer to section 1.2 of the guidance for further detail.

### How much funding is available?

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) will make up to £28,151,100 of capital funding available from 2025/26 to 2027/28 for the Public Building Retrofit fund (PBRf). The anticipated distribution of funds across the three financial years is:

£1,600,000 in FY 2025/26

£13,200,000 in FY 2026/27

£13,200,000 in FY 2027/28

The GMCA reserves the right to adjust the amount of grant funding allocated in each financial year, depending on the quantity or quality of applications received. Any unallocated funding

from a financial year or funding retained due to abandoned projects will be rolled over and added to the next financial year's funds.

### **Does the PBRf provide funding for solar panels or LED lighting?**

Grant funding may be requested for measures that do not deliver direct carbon savings but reduce electricity usage or offset grid consumption, such as LED lighting and solar panels. However, applicants should note that this will increase the grant carbon cost of their application making it less competitive, as it would increase the grant cost without increasing direct carbon savings.

Applicants can use the carbon cost calculator in the application form to identify the most carbon cost-effective measures and buildings to determine how they might improve their grant carbon cost and make their application more competitive.

### **Will a list of successful PBRf applications be made public?**

Following the awarding of funding, a list of successful PBRf applications will be referenced on the GMCA website in due course.

### **If I am successful in winning funding, can I promote it in the local and national media as well as through our own channels?**

We encourage organisations to actively engage with the media and showcase their projects and the funding awarded under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Please send draft releases to us in advance of any promotional activities at [PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:PBRf@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk) and we will get back to you promptly.

Draft releases must be shared in advance and any media embargo must be respected.

### **Does the PBRf grant counts towards the NHS Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL)?**

The PBRf grant will not count towards the CDEL however any internally funded elements (paid by the Trust) will.

NHS England has asked recipients to reach out to [NHSI.CapitalCashQueries@nhs.net](mailto:NHSI.CapitalCashQueries@nhs.net) if further confirmation is required.

### **For the PBRf, since the grant is calculated using only direct carbon savings measures only, will these invoices specifically be required when requesting grant payment?**

Grant recipients will be able to claim payments during delivery and following completion of their project(s). The full schedule of payments will be outlined in the project's MMR. The grant can be requested until the grant end date as per the GOL. The grant will be paid through instalments which will require forecasting within the MMR in advance of all claim submissions.

Before any claim for payment can be processed, GMCA must receive a completed payment request accompanied by supporting documentation that evidences the amount being claimed. This will include a payment request document that must be signed by the AO.

## **Funding Profiles**

### **Can my project request funding the first and third financial year?**

Applicants will need to decide the profile of grant spend required across each financial year to deliver the project. Following the application submission, applicants will be able to amend their requested profiles through dialogue and agreement with the GMCA. All grant funded works (irrespective of the application window) should be completed no later than 31 March 2028.

**If a project has no grant spend allocated for the first year, can consultancy costs be incurred during this year and claimed retrospectively in the second year?**

Spend should be claimed against the grant evidenced within the respective year it is spent, so costs incurred in February 2025 should not be claimed from a FY 2025/26 grant allocation. However, the GMCA are aware that programmes can be subject to change so encourage concerns to be discussed at the earliest opportunity.

**Will the GMCA be advising on Subsidy Control?**

The GMCA is unable to advise on the Subsidy Control position of public sector organisations applying to the fund, however we recommend reviewing section 4.1.3 of the PBRf guidance, as well as the Statutory Guidance for the UK Subsidy Control Regime (2025).