CITY CENTRE SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT
GRANT SCHEME
Guidance Notes

1. Background

1.1. Plymouth City Council has created a scheme to assist shop owners, tenants and landlords to improve the external appearance of their premises. The grants are match funded by the applicant themselves. The origin of this match is flexible but the applicant needs to confirm that it is in place before a grant will be made.

1.2. Plymouth’s city centre area is a key economic driver for the city. It attracts 5.5 million people each year generating spend in excess of £327,000,000 per annum. The character and identity of a place is heavily influenced by the quality and aesthetics of the buildings that exist within it. The shop fronts in the city centre and the buildings in which they reside are therefore an essential element in creating a safe, clean and attractive destination for shoppers and visitors alike. A well designed shop front which embraces its wider street scape will enhance the quality of experience felt by all.

1.3. The shop front improvement scheme aims to improve shop fronts and building facades in the centre of Plymouth as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town centre amongst locals and visitors.

1.4. The scheme is administered by Plymouth City Council with the support of the Economic Development department.

1.5. Funding for the scheme is being provided by Plymouth City Council.

1.6. These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme and how you can make a grant application.

1.7. If you would like to know more about the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme in Plymouth or have any queries regarding how to make an application please contact the team by emailing: shopfronts@plymouth.gov.uk

2. Who can apply?

2.1 The shop front improvement grant scheme is open to all freehold owners and lease-holders with at least 5 years on their lease and tenants of premises with commercial shop-frontage facing the street within Plymouth City Centre. Tenants must have the building owners’ prior approval before a grant will be made.

2.2 Commercial premises include:

- Shops – including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, launderettes, dry cleaners etc.
- Financial and professional services (e.g. accountants, estate agents, solicitors etc.)
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes and food takeaways
- Buildings that are being used to provide a community service.

2.3 Applications for improvement grants will be considered from the lease-holders, tenants and freehold owners of offices and residential property located above shops and businesses in the City Centre Business Improvement District area.
3. **What does the grant cover?**

3.1. Funding is available to cover the lower of 75% of the total expenditure on a project or £12,000. This means that you will still need to finance the remaining amount. ‘In-kind’ contributions such as DIY labouring/painting are welcome but will not contribute toward the match-funding.

3.2. Once the Fund is fully allocated or exhausted no further applications will be accepted.

3.3. Applicants are able to claim against the following costs:

- Planning pre-application advice
- Planning fees
- Photos, drawings, material samples or anything else required as part of the planning process
- Physical work necessary to deliver the improvement

3.4. The following work will be considered eligible for support:

- New shop fronts
- Repair and reinstatement of any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street
- Re-instatement of original architectural features e.g. ornamental masonry, stucco and other applied finishes or details, historically patterned woodwork, ornamental metalwork or other features of historic significance.
- Repainting of shop front in suitable colours
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and downpipes to match historic materials
- Repainting or re-rendering prominent elevations in suitable colours
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brickwork
- Re-pointing using traditional materials
- Pedestrian access improvements – to comply with the Equalities Act 2010
- External signage
- Lighting
- Internal security grilles and or security glazing (e.g. laminated or strengthened glass), that allow window shopping, where these are replacing external shutters

3.5. All work should comply with the guidelines outlined in the Local Development Framework - Development Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document; [www.plymouth.gov.uk/dgs_planning_document.pdf](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/dgs_planning_document.pdf)

3.6. All work is subject to the relevant permissions being secured (see section 5).

3.7. The scheme does not support:

- Works which have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made.
- Structural repairs including re-roofing
- Internal repairs and alterations
- External shutters and other security devices (e.g. CCTV)
- Window display equipment
- Recoverable VAT

3.8. The scheme will only provide grants to premises in the eligible area. Please note that grants are discretionary and subject to availability of funds. The inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

4. **Shop front design**

4.1. The scheme is not intended to create a uniform style to shop front design in Plymouth. Within the scheme we encourage diversity and distinctiveness in terms of designs, details and colours whilst retaining the principles of good design associated with the town centre and our own guidelines.

5. **Is Planning Permission required?**

5.1. Most alterations to shop-fronts within Plymouth would require permission under the Planning Acts, Advertisement regulations or both, and work carried out without the applicable consent may result in enforcement action or prosecution by Plymouth City Council.

5.2. **Planning permission** is required for works that involve a material change to the external appearance of a shop or building. Such works include alterations to the fascia, the windows or the doorway, changes to the materials used or the installation of blinds or security shutters.

5.3. Any alteration which affects the special historic, artistic, or architectural interest of a listed building (including character and appearance) will require **listed building consent**. Such works include alterations to architectural details, alterations to the interior, the installation of shop front security measures, replacement of windows and in some cases the repainting of a shop front in a different colour. A large number of the buildings within the Town Centre are listed.

5.4. Advertisement consent may be required depending upon the content and scale of certain types of signs in particular locations. Guidance can be offered by the planning case officer.

5.5. If you are unsure whether any permission is required, consult with the Local Planning Authority (Plymouth City Council) on: [www.plymouth.gov.uk/planning](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/planning)

5.6. It takes Plymouth City Council about two months to decide on a planning application, advertisement consent or other statutory consent. You will need to build this into your timetable for carrying out your project.

6. **The application process**

6.1. In order to consider your application we would require the following:

- A fully completed Expression of Interest form.
- A completed Application form including the full details of the work that you wish to carry out and any supporting evidence.
- Evidence of three quotes from independent contractors for the works and on any single item over £1,000.
- Proof of ownership/lease – if you do not own the property you will need to provide proof that you have permission from the owner to carry out the works. The building owner must countersign your application to show that they have given permission for the works to be carried out.

- Details of the permissions that will be needed to carry out the work and proof that the permissions have been granted. If you are submitting your grant application prior to receiving the permissions, please submit a copy of the decision as soon as you get them.

- A current photo of the shop front and any available visuals of what it will look like following the work.

- Cost estimates including any professional fees.

- If applicable, evidence that you cannot reclaim VAT.

- Provision to add the property number must be included as part of the design work.

7. How will the decision be made?

7.1. Once your Expression of Interest has been received by Plymouth City Council a panel of representatives from the Council and Plymouth City Centre Company Ltd will review it based on:

- Materials used
- Quality of finish
- Durability
- Condition of the existing Shop Front
- Timeframe

7.2. If successful at the EOI stage, you will be invited to submit a Full Application which will build on the information provided within the EOI.

7.2. Full Applications will be considered by a small panel of representatives from Plymouth City Council and the Plymouth City Centre Company Ltd.

7.3. The panel will meet approximately once a month and a decision will be made on your application at the next possible meeting, unless further information is required from you. All grant offers will be made in writing. If your project requires planning permission and your grant is approved we will write to you making an in-principle offer of funding, we will then issue a formal grant offer letter as soon as permission is granted. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in the grant offer letter.

7.4. All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning consent. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and any offer of a grant does not imply that planning consent will be granted.

7.5. You will be required to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of five years.

7.6. A 25% grant payment will be made when work commences, and the balance of the grant will be paid upon completion of the work on production of invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs, together with proof of payment.
8. **How to submit the EOI and Full Application**

- Return it to First Stop Shop, 71 New George Street in an envelope marked “Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme, c/o David Lea, Economic Development”
- Give it to a BID Street Host.
- Post it to David Lea, Economic Development, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, PL1 3BJ