

# Central England Quakers – Building Fund

## Criteria for grants and loans to Meeting Houses

### **Background**

The Building Fund is a restricted fund of Central England Area Quaker Meeting which exists to provide financial support for repairs, maintenance and improvements to Meeting Houses.

The Fund is relatively small, and is not designed to fund major capital projects. The CEQ Reserves Policy recommends a minimum investment portfolio value of £480,000, which aims to yield sufficient income to support annual grants of up to £12,000 in total (in an average year).

This overall “budget” gives Meetings some idea of the limitations of grant funding from Area Meeting.

Loans are offered interest-free, and are normally repayable over 5 years in equal annual instalments, however the loan terms are flexible and negotiable.

Most awards are likely to be a mix of grant and loan – the mix will depend on the project cost and the Meeting’s ability to repay a loan (or raise funds from external sources over a period of time).

### **Applications**

Before making an application to the Building Fund for support, the Meeting should discuss the scope of work with Trustees Property Committee via the Principal Officer, Sarah Barker, who will help with the decision-making process and advise on the availability of grants and loans.

Reference should also be made to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Meeting and Trustees, section 3 (Property Management), and the Meeting should ensure compliance with the various obligations.

Before requesting support, reasonable efforts must be made by the Meeting to secure funding from other sources such as (prudent) use of the Meeting’s own reserves, applications to Trusts or grant-making bodies, and internal/external fundraising. The application should specify the total cost of the project, with a breakdown of how the project is to be funded (identifying the contributions from the Meeting’s own funds and any other sources) and should demonstrate, by reference to the Meeting’s current financial resources and internal reserves policy, that the work cannot proceed without Building Fund support.

It is helpful to Property Committee if the Meeting can clarify whether it is able to accept part of the funding as a loan, and if so to suggest a mix of grant and loan based on the Meeting’s ability to make annual repayments. Accepting part of the funding in the form of a loan will clearly help to preserve the Building Fund for other Meetings, but the Meeting should not give itself an unreasonable or unrealistic financial burden.

Applications should be made in writing to the Principal Office, and, other than in very urgent cases, will be considered by the committee at its next meeting. Note that the Committee is able to approve loans by email between Meetings, but grants can only be approved by the Committee “in session”. It is possible, for an urgent request, for a loan to be offered initially, between meetings, and then “converted” to a grant at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

Applications should describe the work to be undertaken, and the principal reasons, eg:-

- Urgent repairs, to protect the fabric of the property
- Remedial work identified in a quinquennial survey
- Work needed to meet existing or new legislation (eg fire, electrical, health & safety)
- Improvements, to upgrade facilities for either local Friends or hirers
- Work associated with energy saving or sustainability

If options have been explored, these should be identified, and reasons given for adopting the preferred approach.

Where the cost of work exceeds £4000 (excluding VAT) the price should be market tested, if possible, by competitive tender. This requirement may be waived if the chosen contractor has specialist skills, has specialist knowledge of the property, and is trusted by the Meeting to provide a professional service at a competitive price. Decisions to place an order with a contractor without seeking alternative quotations must be approved by the Principal Officer.

Offers of grants and loans will be confirmed in writing by the Principal Officer, and funds may be drawn when required – either in instalments or as a single sum. The first annual repayment of a loan will normally be required 12 months after the loan is drawn. Where a loan has been agreed, the Meeting should feel able to discuss any difficulties in making subsequent loan repayments with the Principal Officer, with a view to renegotiating either the annual repayment(s) or the repayment period.

### **“Greening” Meeting Houses**

Grants and loans from the Building Fund are available to support work associated with energy-saving or sustainability. Meetings considering such work are encouraged to take advice from Friends within the Area Meeting who have specialist knowledge and skills, and obtain their support.

Applications should, where relevant, describe the potential environmental benefits and/or cost savings.

The criteria for making grants and loans for “green projects” will be broadly similar to those set out above, though the Meeting will be expected to make a contribution to the cost, and to accept part of the funding as a loan, since it will benefit from the associated cost savings.