

# Local Economic Partnership

## Enterprise Partnership Fund

### Applicant Guidelines 2026-2027

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# Section 1: Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Programme Overview

The **Enterprise Partnership Fund** forms part of the Derry Strabane Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Action Plan 2025–2028. The Action Plan is funded by the Department for the Economy’s Regional Balance Fund and delivered by Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC).

The Action Plan supports the delivery of targeted interventions designed to address regional economic imbalance. It enables the Derry Strabane Local Economic Partnership to identify key barriers to growth and implement priority actions that enhance regional competitiveness and expand economic opportunity across the area.

Through this approach, the Action Plan seeks to support key interventions that will:

- Accelerate business growth
- Improve business competitiveness
- Create sustainable employment opportunities

Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) is now inviting applications to the **Enterprise Partnership Fund**.

This is a competitive funding programme aimed at supporting innovative and pilot enterprise development initiatives delivered in partnership with the local entrepreneurship ecosystem and the Local Economic Partnership (LEP).

## 1.2 Key Programme Details & Timelines

Grant Level:	Minimum Grant £5,000 – Maximum Grant £15,000 .
Grant Rate:	75% funded. 25% match funding required by applicant.
Opening Date:	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2026.
Closing Date:	Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> July at 12 noon.
Letter of Offer Issued:	September 2026.
Project Delivery:	Best endeavours should be made to ensure that all projects are completed within the current financial year (by 31 March 2027). However, consideration

	may be given to projects with a longer delivery timeframe where this is deemed reasonable by Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC).
Claim Deadline:	Details of payment arrangements, monitoring, verification, and evaluation requirements will be set out in the Letter of Offer for successful applicants.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Grant

The Partnership Fund aims to:

- Enable the delivery of high-quality, partnership-led enterprise development solutions that respond to local economic needs.
- Encourage innovation, experimentation and the piloting of new delivery models to test effective approaches to enterprise support.
- Leverage partner expertise, sector knowledge and additional resources to maximise impact, value for money and sustainability.
- Improve outcomes for entrepreneurs and businesses, supporting growth, resilience and alignment with key economic priorities.
- Enhance the profile of Derry City & Strabane as a dynamic and supportive hub for entrepreneurship and enterprise development.

### 1.4 Core Principle of Funding: Impact through Collaboration

The Enterprise Partnership Fund will support projects that demonstrate clear, measurable impact through effective collaboration, innovation and alignment with local economic priorities.

Projects should adopt an outcomes-focused approach and clearly demonstrate how activities will translate into meaningful results.

Funded projects will be expected to contribute towards measurable outcomes such as:

- The number of individuals and/or businesses engaged/ supported.
- Delivery and evaluation of innovative or pilot interventions, including evidence of learning and scalability.
- Level of partnership engagement, including collaboration with key ecosystem stakeholders and leveraging of additional resources.
- Contribution to priority areas such as inclusive economic growth.

- Enhanced visibility and positioning of Derry City & Strabane as a hub for enterprise and innovation.

All projects will be required to set out clear targets at application stage and report against agreed outputs and outcomes as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

## Section 2: Eligibility Criteria

### 2.1 Eligible Activity

Activity must be delivered on a **Not-for-Profit** basis; eligible activity can include:

- Innovative enterprise or pre-accelerator programmes or events.
- Sector-specific enterprise initiatives or events.
- New or emerging models of mentoring, peer learning or clustering.
- Experimental or pilot approaches that support productivity, decarbonisation, or inclusive growth.
- Proposals that introduce or test new, creative or innovative economic/enterprise development solutions.

**Important to note:** Proposals must demonstrate how learning will be captured to inform future provision & scalability.

### 2.2 Who Can Apply?

Applications are invited from experienced organisations operating within the enterprise, business support, innovation or economic development ecosystem. This includes:

- Enterprise support organisations
- Third sector and social economy organisations
- Education and innovation bodies
- Partnerships or consortia led by an eligible organisation

### 2.3 Other conditions relating to funding:

- ✓ Applicants must demonstrate a proven track record of delivering comparable enterprise or entrepreneurship programmes within the Derry and Strabane area.
- ✓ Projects must be delivered on a not-for-profit basis.

- ✓ Collaboration with other stakeholders in the ecosystem is encouraged but not mandatory.
- ✓ Every project application will require a lead partner who will be issued with the letter of offer and will be ultimately responsible for delivery, management and administration of the project in accordance with the terms and conditions that are outlined in the letter of offer.
- ✓ The lead partner organisation must have an address in the Derry Strabane Council area.

## 2.4 Financial Viability:

Regulations are in place to ensure that organisations supported under the programme are financially viable. At the point of application, all applicants are required to confirm that the organisation is not in difficulty as defined under the State Aid rules, the definition of which includes the following criteria:

- That more than half of its capital has not disappeared because of accumulated losses.
- That the organisation is not subject to collective insolvency proceedings, and that it does not fulfil the criteria under UK law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.
- That the organisation has not received rescue aid and has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee or has not received restructuring aid and is still subject to a restructuring plan.

All applicants are required to declare that the organisation is not in financial difficulty as defined by the above statements. DCSDC may carry out financial scrutiny of an applicant to ensure they meet these requirements.

## Section 3: What can be funded

### 3.1 Eligible Expenditure Categories

- Direct project costs: materials, equipment, and supplies.
- Direct event costs: venue hire, catering, AV, marketing and accessibility costs.
- Other specific costs: Specialist mentor/ keynote speakers/guest speakers.

Funding will not support:

- Events outside of the Derry City & Strabane District Council area.
- Business operating costs including salaries, overheads, rent and heating etc.
- Retrospective expenses: any expenses incurred before the letter of offer.
- Items / or services claimed that are not being used for the intended purpose.

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

## Section 4: Grant levels and match funding requirement

### 4.1 Grant Amount and Subvention Rate

- The minimum grant available is £5,000.
- The maximum grant available is £15,000.
- Applicants must provide at a minimum 25% of total grant requested as match funding.

Example 1 – Minimum Grant (£5,000)

- Minimum eligible project cost: £6,666.67
- Grant (75%): £5,000
- Applicant contribution (25%): £1666.67

Example 2 – Maximum Grant (£15,000)

- Minimum eligible project cost: £20,000
- Grant (75%): £15,000
- Applicant contribution (25%): £5,000

***VAT is not eligible as part of the grant.***

- If your organisation is VAT registered, the grant will be calculated on the net cost (excluding VAT).
- If your organisation is not VAT registered, the grant will be calculated on the gross cost (including VAT).

### 4.2 Match Funding Requirements

Applicants must clearly identify at application stage the activities that will contribute toward their 25% match funding requirement. Supporting evidence will be required for monitoring and verification purposes and must be submitted as part of the final claim following project completion.

Where there is a cost for participants to avail of the project, these costs must be clearly articulated at application stage on a cost per head basis. The applicant must demonstrate what these costs will be offset by in delivering the not-for-profit project.

## Section 5: Procurement Requirements

### 5.1 Demonstrating Value for Money

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that all project costs represent value for money.

To support this, applicants should gather and retain appropriate market evidence (e.g. supplier quotations, pricing research or comparable cost benchmarks). DCSDC reserve the right to seek evidence of this. This evidence should be retained as follows:

- Provided in digital format and clearly documented.
- Is recent, dated within 3 months of the application deadline.
- Enables a like-for-like comparison based on the same specification.
- Clearly identifies supplier name, address, VAT status, and contact details.
- Clearly states whether costs are inclusive or exclusive of VAT.
- Includes itemised costs, with delivery and installation shown where applicable.
- For applicable items screen captures that display the URL and date/time stamp are acceptable.
- Applicants must retain emails to and from suppliers for written quotations and make these available to DCSDC upon request.
- DCSDC may carry out checks on suppliers for verification purposes.

### 5.2 Selecting Suppliers

You should normally select the lowest cost quotation unless:

- You can provide clear justification for choosing a higher cost option.
- Justification relates to quality, service, warranty, project specific requirements or technical superiority.
- The difference is reasonable and represents value for money

### 5.3 Conflicts of Interest & Transparency

- Applicants must declare that no personal or financial relationship exists with any potential supplier detailed.
- You or your organisation cannot supply goods or services for a project you may receive funding for.
- If quotations are obtained from a family member (immediate or extended), the relationship must be disclosed in writing to [LEP@Derrystrabane.com](mailto:LEP@Derrystrabane.com) before procurement begins.

**Please note:**

If successful, value for money evidence, monitoring, verification, evaluation requirements and payment details will be set out in the Letter of Offer.

Council officers, DfE officers and programme auditors may contact suppliers of quotations and/or invoices to verify that the quotation/ invoice has been provided. Any quotation/ invoice that cannot be verified by the supplier will be passed to relevant fraud agencies for further investigation.

## Section 6: Application Process

### 6.1 Key Dates

Milestone	Details
Applications Open	Online application portal opens on 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2026.
Application Deadline	Application closes on 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2026 at 12 noon. No late applications will be accepted.
Eligibility & Assessment	Initial eligibility checks & independent panel scoring against assessment criteria.
Letters of Offer Issued	September 2026.

Milestone	Details
Project Delivery Period	<p>Best endeavours should be made to ensure that all projects are completed within the current financial year (by 31 March 2027). However, consideration may be given to projects with a longer delivery timeframe where this is deemed reasonable by Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC).</p> <p>Details of payment arrangements, monitoring, verification, and evaluation requirements will be set out in the Letter of Offer for successful applicants</p>
Claim Deadline	<p>Details of payment arrangements, monitoring, verification and evaluation requirements will be set out in the Letter of Offer for successful applicants</p>

## 6.2 Assessment & Scoring

Eligible applications will be assessed competitively against the criteria below, outlined in **Table 1**.

Applicants should ensure responses are clear, evidence-based and directly address each question.

**Table 1:**

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Project Description & Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the proposed enterprise development solution including the timeline and delivery model.</li> <li>Explain what makes the approach innovative and/or experimental.</li> <li>Explain how this differs from existing or mainstream provision.</li> </ul>	20%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how the project will be marketed and promoted to reach your target audience, including any channels, networks, or partner communications you will use.</li> <li>• What would happen if this project did not receive funding?</li> <li>• Is this a pilot of a scalable model and if successful, how could this be expanded/mainstreamed?</li> </ul>	
Target Audience & Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the target audience?</li> <li>• Does the project target/benefit under-represented groups? If yes, how?</li> <li>• What need or gap is this project responding to?</li> <li>• How does this align with current and emerging enterprise challenges?</li> <li>• How does the project align with the Department for the Economy's Regional Balance Fund priorities?</li> </ul>	20%
Previous Experience & Track Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous experience of delivering similar programmes</li> </ul>	20%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of successful delivery and outcomes within the Derry City Strabane District.</li> <li>• Relevant organisational or partner expertise</li> </ul>	
Partnership Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline delivery partners involved</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of each partner &amp; demonstrate capacity to deliver</li> <li>• Governance and management arrangements</li> <li>• What role can the Local Economic Partnership play in successful project delivery?</li> <li>• How does the partnership enhance quality, reach or impact?</li> </ul>	15%
Budget and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs are realistic, transparent, and achievable.</li> <li>• Level of match funding (min 25%)</li> <li>• Leveraging partner resources.</li> </ul>	10%
Outputs, Outcomes & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipated outputs and outcomes, e.g. target</li> </ul>	15%

	<p>numbers, anticipated outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How success will be measured in terms of milestones and outcomes?</li> <li>• How learning and insights will be captured and shared.</li> </ul>	
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The application will be assessed against the 6 criteria areas, with each criterion attracting a score between 0-5, as outlined in **Table 2**.

**Table 2:**

Score	Rating	Description
5	Excellent	Comprehensive, detailed and evidence-based response demonstrating exceptional understanding
4	Good	Clear, relevant response with good detail and supporting evidence
3	Acceptable	Adequate response showing reasonable understanding, but lacking some detail
2	Poor	Limited response with insufficient detail and/or weak evidence
1	Very Poor	Minimal response with serious concerns about deliverability
0	Unacceptable	No response, or a response that completely fails to address the question

Each question is weighted, and the score obtained will be multiplied by the weight to get an overall score. The total score will be determined by multiplying score provided (from 0 – 5) by the weighting as detailed in **Table 3** below. The maximum score is 100 and applications must score at least 65 marks to be considered for funding.

**Table 3:**

Criteria	(a) Score out of 5	(b) weighting	Overall Score (a x b)
Project Description & innovation		X 4	/20
Target Audience & Need		X 4	/ 20
Previous Experience & Track Record		X 4	/ 20
Partnership Approach		X 3	/ 15
Budget & Value for Money		X 2	/ 10
Outputs, Outcomes and Learnings		X 3	/ 15
Total			/ 100

Your application will be ranked according to the score obtained and available funding will be allocated to the highest-ranking applications. Applicants who fail to achieve a score of at least 65 marks will be advised that they have been unsuccessful.

There is no automatic right granted to applicants or to appeal the decision about a funding application. However, applicants can resubmit for further Calls, providing funding has not concluded.

## Section 7: Post Award Process

### 7.1 What happens if an application is successful

If your application is successful, Council will issue you with a Letter of Offer. This is a legal agreement with your organisation to deliver on the proposals outlined in your application form. Your Letter of Offer will include the following details:

- Confirmation of the grant award amount
- Terms and conditions of the grant funding
- Eligible costs approved
- Project completion deadline
- Details claim requirements

You must:

Read the Letter of Offer carefully

- Accept within 10 working days (electronic or wet signature)
- Not commence project before accepting Letter of Offer
- Comply with all terms and conditions

**Please note:** Any costs incurred before accepting your Letter of Offer are ineligible and will not be reimbursed.

## 7.2 Impact through Collaboration Workshop

Successful applicants will be invited to attend a collaborative planning session to explore opportunities for partnership working alignment of activities and the sharing of expertise. This session will support applicants to refine and strengthen their proposed delivery, identify potential synergies with other projects and maximise overall impact through a coordinated and collaborative approach.

## 7.3 Publicity Requirements

You must:

- Acknowledge Department for the Economy and DCSDC funding in all publicity
- Use logos provided by Council in line with their brand guidelines
- Include acknowledgement on website, social media, press releases
- Notify Council of any media coverage

Council may:

- Issue a press release about your grant
- Feature your project in promotional materials
- Visit your organisation for photographs/interviews
- Include your details in a published list of grant recipients

## 7.4 Compliance Requirements

- The applicant shall ensure all necessary licences and permissions for the project.
  - The applicant shall affect and maintain insurance necessary to cover their liabilities. This will include Public Liability (£5 million) and Employer's Liability Insurance (£10 million) & Professional Indemnity Insurance where applicable.
  - Applicants must have in place relevant organisational policies, including Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding as required.
- Applicants must ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations.

## Section 8: Terms and Conditions

### 8.1 General Conditions

By accepting a grant, you agree to:

1. Use the grant only for approved purposes
2. Complete the project by the specified deadline
3. Maintain accurate financial records
4. Retain all project documentation for 3 years
5. Allow access for inspection and audit
6. Acknowledge funding in publicity materials
7. Participate in monitoring and evaluation
8. Report any issues or changes promptly
9. Comply with all applicable laws and regulations
10. Maintain adequate insurance

### 8.2 State Aid rules & Subsidy Control

Subsidy Control and De Minimis State Aid are legal frameworks designed to prevent public money from distorting market competition.

Subsidy Control is the domestic framework that regulates how UK public authorities award financial support to businesses engaged in economic activity.

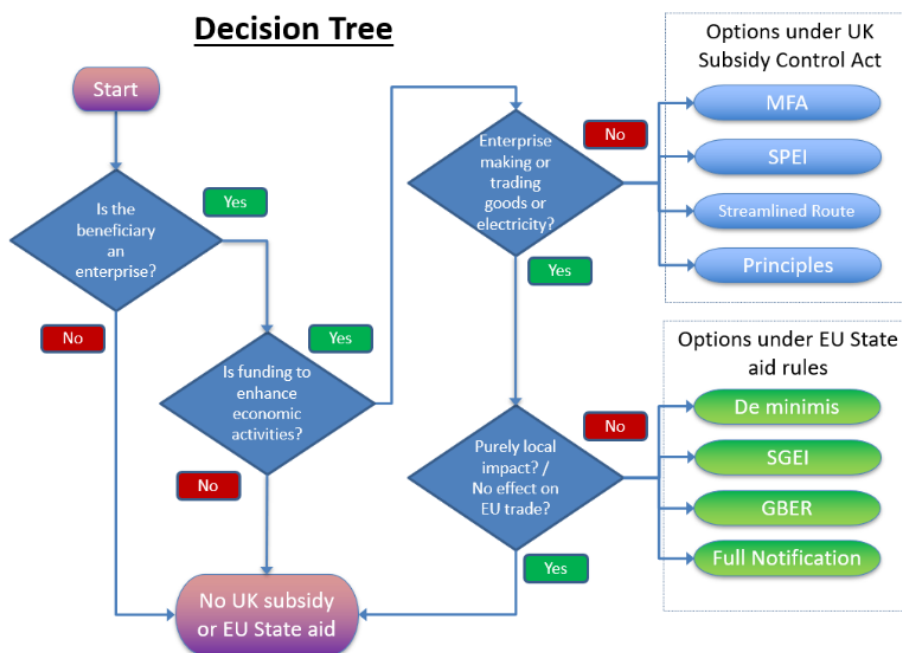
De Minimis Aid describes small amounts of financial support that are unlikely to distort the trade in goods between Northern Ireland and the European Union. If you have received de minimis aid from Government Departments, Intertrade Ireland or Local Councils over the last 3 years this might impact on your eligibility to receive this funding.

As from 1 January 2024, the maximum amount of de minimis aid that an undertaking can receive within any rolling 3-year period in the UK is €300,000.

DCSDC have determined that the LEP Enterprise Partnership Fund could amount to a subsidy, as defined in the UK Subsidy Control Act or the EU's State aid rules.

Please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to check whether the support you have received was classed as 'de minimis' aid. If in doubt, please check with whoever initially provided you with the support.

To determine what type of state aid you are potentially receiving, please refer to the flow chart attached:



For more information on state aid and the implications for your business, please visit the Department for the Economy's website: [UK Subsidy Control / State aid Decision Tree | Department for the Economy](#)

Applicants must:

- Declare all other public support received in last 3 fiscal years

- Not exceed de minimis threshold (€300,000 over 3 years if applicable)
- Inform Council immediately if you receive other public support
- Maintain records of all public support received

False declarations may result in:

- Grant recovery with interest
- Prosecution for fraud
- Exclusion from future funding
- Referral to relevant authorities

**Please note: All Applicants must complete and upload Template A – De Minimis Aid Declaration at application stage.**

### **8.3 Clawback and Recovery**

The Council may recover grant funding if:

- False or misleading information was provided
- Terms and conditions are breached
- Items purchased are sold within 3 years without permission
- Project not completed as approved
- Items not used for business purposes
- Fraud or irregularity is detected
- Other public funding received for same costs (double funding)

Recovery may include:

- Full grant amount plus interest
- Proportionate recovery based on breach
- Legal costs and administrative charges
- Exclusion from future funding opportunities

### **8.4 Record Retention**

You must retain for 3 years from date of final grant payment:

- Signed Letter of Offer
- All invoices and receipts
- Bank statements showing payments

- Quotations and procurement evidence
- Correspondence with suppliers
- Photographic evidence
- Insurance documents
- Monitoring reports submitted
- Any other project-related documentation

In the event your organisation ceases trading within 3 years:

- Documentation must be transferred to Council
- Notification must be provided within 28 days

### **8.5 Data Protection & Privacy**

Personal data you provide will be:

- Processed in accordance with UK GDPR
- Used for administering your application and grant
- Data will be shared with Grant Management Software Ltd for portal hosting, Department for Economy, auditors, or other funders as required
- Retained in accordance with Council's retention schedule
- Protected with appropriate security measures

Your data may be used for:

- Assessment and decision-making
- Payment processing
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Fraud prevention
- Programme reporting and statistics
- Research and policy development

Your organisational details may be:

- Published as a grant recipient (organisational name, amount, location)
- Used in case studies and promotional materials (with consent)
- Shared with partner organisations for support purposes

Full privacy notice available at: <https://www.derrystrabane.com/privacy-policy>

## 8.6 Freedom of Information

Information submitted may be disclosed under:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004

If you believe information is commercially sensitive:

- Clearly mark it as "confidential"
- Provide justification
- Note: Council is final arbiter of disclosure

## 8.7 Audit & Inspection Rights

The following bodies have right of access:

- DCSDC Council officers
- Department for the Economy officials
- Northern Ireland Audit Office
- Internal and external auditors
- Any other authorised government officials

They may:

- Inspect organisational premises
- Review financial records
- Interview organisational owners/staff
- Verify information provided
- Take photographs
- Request additional documentation

You must provide:

- Reasonable access during business hours
- Cooperation with requests
- Prompt responses to queries
- Any additional information required

## 8.8 Fraud Prevention

The Council will:

- Verify information through supplier checks
- Cross-reference with other databases
- Investigate suspected fraud
- Refer fraud cases to relevant authorities
- Pursue recovery and prosecution where appropriate

You must:

- Report suspected fraud immediately
- Provide accurate and truthful information
- Not engage in fraudulent activity
- Cooperate with fraud investigations

Fraud includes:

- False information on application
- Fictitious or inflated invoices
- Payments to related parties not disclosed
- Double funding from multiple sources
- Misuse of grant funds
- False claims of outcomes achieved

## **8.9 Limitations of Liability**

The Council:

- Provides the grant at its absolute discretion
- Does not guarantee business success
- Is not liable for business decisions made
- Cannot be held responsible for business failure
- May withdraw or suspend the grant at any time with justification
- Reserves the right to amend terms and conditions

No liability is accepted for:

- Business losses or damages
- Consequential losses arising from grant award/refusal
- Delays in assessment or payment
- Changes to programme scope or budget
- Supplier failures or disputes

## 8.10 Eligibility of Expenditure

Eligible costs must:

- Be directly related to the approved project
- Be incurred after Letter of Offer acceptance
- Be paid in full before claim submission
- Be evidenced with proper invoices and proof of payment
- Represent value for money
- Comply with procurement requirements
- Fall within approved intervention categories
- Be reasonable and necessary

Ineligible costs include:

- Expenditure incurred before Letter of Offer acceptance
- VAT (for VAT-registered businesses)
- Bank charges, interest, late payment fees
- Fines, penalties, legal costs
- Expenditure funded by other public grants
- Entertainment and hospitality
- Routine business operating costs
- Depreciation
- Contingency amounts
- Bad debts

## 8.11 Procurement Rules

You must:

- Select suppliers representing value for money
- Declare any conflicts of interest
- Provide rationale for supplier selection
- Obtain Council approval for supplier changes

Failure to comply may result in:

- Costs deemed ineligible
- Grant reduced or withdrawn
- Full recovery of grant if serious breach

## 8.12 Programme Changes

Council reserves the right to:

- Amend programme guidelines
- Reduce available budget
- Change timelines
- Introduce additional requirements
- Suspend or terminate the programme

Applicants will be notified of material changes.

## Contact Details

For further information please contact us by:

Email: [LEP@Derrystrabane.com](mailto:LEP@Derrystrabane.com)

Telephone: 028 71 253 253 and ask to be directed to a member of the LEP Team.



Derry Strabane  
**Local Economic  
Partnership**



# Local Economic Partnership Grants

Applications open on **Tues 9th June**  
and close at 12 noon on  
**Thurs 16th July 2026**

For more information visit:  
[www.derrystrabane.com/LEP](http://www.derrystrabane.com/LEP)