

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee on Monday 29 April 2024

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Monitoring Update

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth

Classification	This report is Public
Report By	Natalie Etches - Head of Business Growth Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Limited

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To provide members with an update on the projects being delivered by the Economic Development Team with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 The UK Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund on 13 April 2022, and it has provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment through to March 2025.
- 1.2 Bolsover District Council received an allocation of £1,963,993 over a two-and half-year period covering October 2022 - March 2025, of which £789,212 was allocated to five projects which are being delivered by the Economic Development Team.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 Below is a breakdown of the allocation of funding for each project followed by an update of activity and expenditure which has taken place in the 12-month delivery period up to 31 March 2024.

Allocation of budget for each project being delivered by the Economic Development Team with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Tourism and Culture	£18,000	£25,000	£35,000	£78,000
Business Growth Grants Scheme	£0	£100,036	£128,176	£228,212
Net Zero Hyper Local Innovation programme	£60,000	£80,000	£160,000	£300,000
Small Business Support Scheme	£0	£45,000	£50,000	£95,000
Visitor Economy Business Support	£18,000	£35,000	£35,000	£88,000
TOTAL				£789,212

2.2 **Tourism and Culture** - The initial intention for the year’s allocation of funding was for a new website and promotional campaigns. It was agreed that prior to establishing a website and campaigns that there was a need to build the foundations and change the deficit language that is used when referring to the district. A new positive place narrative is needed to unlock the growth potential of the area as a great place to visit, live, do business and be educated. The need to change the narrative is necessary prior to developing a new website and delivering successful and impactful marketing campaigns.

Thinkingplace were appointed to work with the Tourism Officer and partners to develop a new positive place narrative, forming the basis of a new place led programme and brand. The new narrative, brand and visuals will then formulate the basis of a new website and marketing campaigns funded through the 2024/25 allocation. The commission has included:

- 40 1:1 interviews with key stakeholders
- Workshop with Dragonfly/BDC SLT Leader and Deputy Leader
- Workshop with Tourism Businesses
- Engagement through the Youth Council
- Workshop with the Parish Liaison Forum
- Online Survey – residents, stakeholders and businesses

The storyboard for the new narrative will be focussed on:

Bolsover; confidently embracing its wider experience:

- *we’ve made it our business to reach out*
- *experience our great value, living location*
- *your visitor experience, all packaged up*

£27,120 has been allocated with the following outputs achieved:

- Number of people receiving non-financial support – 50 through the engagement process.
- 6 events/workshops held with 149 people reached through the engagement to date.

The project outcomes relating to web searches, increased visitor numbers and increased footfall will be monitored in 2024-25 following the launch of the brand and place programme once a website has been established and marketing campaigns delivered.

2.3 Business Growth Grants Scheme - This project offers two grants: The first is available to existing businesses to encourage business improvement and growth opportunities resulting in job creation and retention – The Growth Grant.

Businesses are able to access specialist consultancy and/or training, help to adopt digital solutions, carbon reduction solutions and product development. In addition, the grant can contribute towards the purchase of capital equipment including plant and machinery. The growth grant is up to a maximum of £10,000 and has an 80% grant intervention rate.

The second grant – The Start-Up Grant – is a small start-up grant of £500 at a 100% intervention rate. Applicants can either be pre-start or a new business (up to 18 months old) and will work with a business adviser on a 1:1 basis to assist with completion of the application and business plan, as well as on-going support and access to workshops, networking events and courses to support business growth and sustainability longer-term.

The Grants have been widely advertised in the Economic Development In-Business magazine, Bolsover TV, Bolsover District Council website, at monthly networking events and via partner organisations.

The project was launched in February 2023 and has proved extremely popular. Up to the end of March 2024 there has been:

- 40 Grants awarded (25 Start-up and 15 Growth)
- A total of £153,447.91 awarded with £74,988 spent (of the 228,212 allocated to the project)
- 191 enquiries
- 107 expressions of interest requested
- 80 businesses invited to full application
- Six applications waiting for appraisal

Due to the demand for the grants from the business community, £153,447.91 was allocated in year one, with only £74,764.09 remaining. The Economic Development Team have secured additional funding of £75,000 from the UKSPF Rural Fund. The Rural Fund element will only be available to businesses who are located in eligible rural areas of the district (i.e. district wide apart from Bolsover or Shirebrook Towns). This additional funding will continue to support the investment in growing businesses across the district with the economic funding available to the Council.

2.4 Net Zero Hyper Local Innovation Programme

As part of the authority's commitment to contribute to the Net Zero target, Bolsover District businesses will be supported to access training and funding to develop their understanding and skills relating to Net Zero. This intervention will include:

1. The completion of a feasibility study for a future green skills centre in the District based on the needs of business and informed by this programme of business engagement. In addition, this programme will create networking opportunities with in-person events scheduled across each year alongside providing the infrastructure for a business-to-business network across social media channels and web-based resources.
2. A series of hyper local Net Zero workshops to deliver a programme of interventions that will assist Bolsover-based businesses and VCSE organisations to take on green skills, provide green jobs and transition to Net Zero over the longer term to increase their competitiveness, productivity and profitability and to enable them to provide and create better paid jobs. This programme will include Net Zero boot camps to improve the carbon literacy of businesses that have not yet started their transition to Net Zero and provide access to consultancy support to take the necessary steps to identifying their carbon footprint and implement a Carbon Reduction Plan. This programme will also include a series of seminars led by local Universities to help businesses cut through the complexity of multiple offers and facilitate better access to additional support and funding. This intervention is designed to accelerate the progress of those businesses that have started their transition to Net Zero but need some support and direction for their next steps.

Green Skills Feasibility Report

The final Green Skills feasibility report has been presented to the project management team and should be available for wider dissemination after Easter.

The bid for a Retrofit Skills Accelerator, in partnership with RLB, Nottingham Trent University, University of Derby, Notts County Council, Derbyshire County Council, Vision West Notts, Chesterfield College, & D2N2 LEP, was successful.

The Proposal is for development of a green skills retrofit hub for the region based within the district, following on from the research carried out by RLB as part of the Green Skills feasibility report.

Hyper-Local NZIP

The full Nottingham Trent University (NTU) project delivery team is now in place. The final recruitment took place with the Carbon Management Consultant starting in March 24. As most of the NTU team have been employed on previous Net Zero/sustainability projects, they have been able to quickly establish the project administration and start signing up participants to the project. NTU have also created a website and marketing material to start publicising the programme.

NTU attended the Business in Bolsover networking event on 28th Feb and had a speaking slot to promote the NZIP to businesses in attendance. The project manager also attended the Bolsover Skills Partnership on 19th March and presented to the group. Marketing for the programme has begun, including a press release issued through NTU which has been picked up by East Midlands Connect and Business Link

A summary of engagement so far –

- 12 companies engaged with, of these –
- 2 have already completed the Carbon Management Audit
- 1 more is interested in an audit
- 3 fully signed up to the programme, all three are signed up to the first Carbon Management workshop on 24th April
- 3 more expressed strong interest to sign up to the workshop

Regular Business in Bolsover networking events continue to be delivered, attracting local businesses, which include a speaker or feature on Net Zero topics to build momentum for the Hyper-Local NZIP.

NTU are also looking to proactively attract participants by attending local meetings and networking events, as well as leaflet drops and calls direct to business. They are keen to see what works on a local level for marketing and engagement activity.

Several NZIP event and workshops are being planned up to March 2025 (in addition to the Business in Bolsover planned events) are further events to be added, guest speakers have been identified and invited to relevant events.

2.5 Hyper Local Business Support - This project through hyper local on the ground business support advisers, assists local residents and SME businesses within Bolsover District to access business support. This support extends to pre-start, newly established as well as existing businesses.

Clowne Enterprise, an established local business support organisation has been commissioned to deliver this project providing assistance to access mentoring and financial support to help launch a new business, to develop a new product, become investor ready, or improve productivity through innovation and technology implementation.

The project has been running since May 2023 and continues to be successful with the numbers of participants growing steadily:

- 86 businesses have been supported (90% of the target for the two-year programme) and
- 50 potential entrepreneurs have sought help from the programme (104% of the target for the two-year programme). That includes individuals and businesses who have received 1:1 coaching support, who have attended training/workshops, or participated in informal networking events.

The team are careful to ensure there is no double counting of intervention with businesses, therefore these figures do not include additional participants who have accessed the Growth Grants, the Business Detox events and other activities such as the Businesswomen's events.

In the last quarter of 2023/24, Clowne Enterprise ran a "Start your business in a day" workshop. This was a full day event, attended by 15 people, which took participants through a hands-on process of looking at the steps involved in launching and growing a successful business. This brought in a new cohort of participants who have subsequently accessed other services.

Performance is either on or well ahead of target. Specifically, the percentage performance of the programme after one year, against the targets for the full two years is:

- Businesses supported - 86 (90%)
- Potential entrepreneurs supported - 50 (104%)
- Jobs created - 20 (167%)
- New businesses -17 (142%)
- New products or services introduced by clients -12 (200%)
- New markets accessed by clients - 8 (47%)

2.6 **Visitor Economy Business Support** - A support programme for businesses, prioritising the Visitor Economy sector, to grow key areas including; Digital, Zero Carbon and sector specific business skills. Businesses are being offered a programme of support, embracing innovative ways of working and business adaptations through Filter Free Business, delivering support although take up from tourism businesses has been minimal.

A programme of workshops part funded through the Visitor Economy Business Support project has been running both on-line and in person at a cost of £40,593.

It is intended that that the business support programme for the 2024/25 will be focussed on the creative and visitor economy sectors. Workshops focussing on supporting businesses with their own and place wide narrative will be developed to add value to the Tourism and Culture UKSPF funded project.

448 businesses have benefited through non-financial business support through this project supporting 84 separate business support workshops.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The Local Growth Scrutiny has been provided with this report which sets out details of the schemes funded by UK Shared Prosperity which have been identified to be delivered by the Economic Development Team. The intention of the report is to update Local Growth Scrutiny of progress on delivery to date, for Members to review the content of the update to ensure appropriate progress is being made to deliver the projects successfully within the timescale provided.

4. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 The alternative is not to provide detailed updates of the progress on delivery of the projects but this may risk loss of focus on achieving the outputs and outcomes required.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That Members review the content of the progress report and make recommendations to Executive, where required, on additional action that may be needed for successful delivery.

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details: There are no additional finance implications arising from this report, all expenditure will be funded from the grant award

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details: There are no legal implication arising from this report

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment:

Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment.

Details: Three of the five projects have specific aims and objectives around access to carbon reduction solutions for businesses, which in turn will enhance the environment. Grants are available to enable businesses to become more carbon efficient, there are plans to assist businesses with the development of sustainable and Net Zero strategies and also advice to tourism businesses on how to become more green and sustainable.

Staffing: Yes No

Details: There is no staffing implication, delivery is contained within existing structures

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	<p>No</p>

District Wards Significantly Affected	(please state which wards or state All if all wards are affected) District wide
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Details: None

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.
<p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Partners to support enterprise, innovation, jobs and skills • Promoting the District and working with Partners to increase tourism <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting businesses to reduce their carbon footprint

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title

Background Papers
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>