

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 18 March 2025

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Monitoring Update

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth

Classification	This report is Public
Report By	Caroline Daghsh Senior Economic Development Officer 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 **up to 31 December 2024 (Quarter 3 of 2024/25)**.
- 2.2. 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 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

- 2.3. A report presented to the Strategic Commissioning Board on 7 March 2025 confirmed an allocation of a further £803,023 of UKSPF via EMCCA for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The breakdown of the funding is £451,199 revenue and £351,824 capital.

Tourism and Culture

- 2.4. The new positive place narrative and visual identity continue to be used to support a new place led approach: raising awareness and improving perceptions of Bolsover, improving belief in and pride of place, identifying opportunities for collaboration, improving the impact of marketing, and attracting inward investment to improve the place offer.
- 2.5. The priorities of the programme identified through the consultation are:
- 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.*
- 2.6. A new private sector led Bolsover Place Board has also been established to provide direction, insight and guidance as we deliver a new place programme based on the above priorities.
- 2.7. The programme is led by the Tourism and Place Manager and includes place champion events inviting businesses to collaborate and hear about what is happening in the place. In December 2024 a Bolsover Place Champions event took place at Hardwick Hall, engaging with 36 business place champions.
- 2.8. Although no spend took place in Q3 the remaining UKSPF allocation has been used to commission Eleven Design to deliver soft engagement projects focussed on local residents to get them engaged with thinking about what the district means to them and their pride of place, prior to engagement that will follow associated with the £15m Regeneration Fund projects. The two commissions are outlined below:
- 2.9. **Dear Bolsover...**Letter packs and a postbox inviting people to send in notes, wishes or drawings about the town (inspired by A Letter to Sheffield). The project aims to: encourage people to reflect on their town and what it means to them, gather genuine insight on what people already like / would like to see and to inform future direction. The project outcome includes: an exhibition of letters and a printed publication.
- 2.10. **Bolsover through the Lens** - Working with Bolsover Camera Club on a series of (monthly / quarterly) themed photo walks. The project aims include: encourage people to look at Bolsover in a new light and engage with it through creative exploration, show appreciation for Bolsover's beauty and the details that make it unique, give people a reason for repeat visits, as themes change monthly. The project outcomes include: Camera Club members lead the walks and offer photography tips for all levels (themes: Hidden Bolsover, Nature and Green Spaces, Industrial Heritage, etc.), share the month's

theme on socials / posters so others can join in at any point, exhibition in central venue / public space, plus online, create trails / scavenger hunts from the photos, challenging visitors to discover and photograph the same locations.

- 2.11. Both projects will support the project outcomes and outputs through delivering local events, reaching out to new people, increasing footfall, increasing visitor numbers and increase web searches. Outputs for this period relate to 36 businesses supported through a Bolsover Place Champion event and a total of 11,586 impressions on Bolsover-UK social media and web sessions.

Business Growth Grants Scheme

- 2.12. 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**.
- 2.13. Businesses can 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.
- 2.14. **The second – 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.
- 2.15. Promotion of the Scheme stopped in early September 2024 when the total applications received equalled the amount of funding available. The scheme closed to applications on 30 September 2024 and additional enquirers were added to a waiting list should funding become available due to any underspend on projects that had already been awarded a grant but had not been claimed.
- 2.16. The project was launched in February 2023 and up to the end of December 2024 there has been:
- 261 enquiries in total up to the scheme closing for applications
 - Six applications approved in Quarter 3 (one Start-Up and five Growth) totalling £44,707.73 – **resulting in the full £228,212 being allocated**
 - £30,978.32 of grants given in Quarter 3.
- 2.17. Performance up to December 2024 against the targets for entire length of the Scheme (up to March 2025) are detailed below:

OUTPUTS

- Number of businesses receiving grants - 58 (98%)

OUTCOMES

- Increased amount of investment - £87,125.56 (134%)
- Businesses introducing a new product to the firm - 6 (60%)
- Businesses engaged in knowledge transfer – 2 (29%)
- Premises with improved digital connectivity – 2 (33%)
- Businesses adopting new technologies or processes – 8 (53%)
- Businesses adopting new or improved products or services – 10 (67%)

2.18. Additional outcomes will be achieved when projects develop in the final quarter. There are eight projects that have been awarded funding but not yet claimed any of their grant, with an additional five projects that have claimed part of their grant.

2.19. In Quarter 3 we were continuing to see the benefits of the way in which the two grant schemes (Start-Up and Growth) are complemented by the Hyper Local Business Support Programme funded through UKSPF, being delivered by Clowne Enterprise, as well as the Business in Bolsover Detox Breakfast meetings, also funded by UKSPF, which are held monthly at various locations within the district. These are always fully booked. The grants have been promoted at these meetings and as a result, several attendees have accessed a Start-Up or Growth grant, receiving the full complement of support available to further ensure their sustainability.

2.20. Six applications were approved in this Quarter:

- Photobooth Manufacturer – Start-Up Grant to contribute toward an E-Commerce Website
- Engineering company – Growth Grant to contribute towards a 3D laser scanner
- Media company – Growth Grant to contribute towards video equipment
- Printing company – Growth Grant to contribute towards the cost of specialised marketing consultant
- Sign Maker – Growth Grant to contribute towards a flatbed machine
- Supermarket – Growth Grant to contribute towards the installation of solar panels

2.21. Due to the demand for the grants from the business community, the Economic Development Team secured additional funding of £75,000 from the **UKSPF Rural Fund**. This funding became available for businesses to apply from April 2024. The Rural Fund element is only available to businesses who are located in eligible rural areas of the district (i.e. district wide apart from Bolsover or Shirebrook).

2.22. This quarter's activity includes:

- 4 applications approved awarding £38,930.51 of grant
- £23,452.05 claimed this quarter making the total grant claimed of £32,994.44

2.23. In the short space of time that the scheme has been available (April 2024) it has proved extremely popular. A total of eight applications have now been approved:

- Children's soft play – Internal building work to create a baby room and the purchase of sensory equipment
- Eco-friendly boarding manufacturer – Product development
- Hot tub manufacturer – Machinery and tools
- Business Support organisation – Creation of a CRM system
- Performing Arts company – Soundproofing and purchase of equipment
- Media and Marketing company – Podcast and video equipment and soundproofing
- Property Lettings – Installation of solar panels
- Care service provider – Installation of solar panels

Net Zero Hyper Local Innovation Programme (NZIP)

2.24. Nottingham Trent University are our delivery partner, delivering the NZIP programme across the district. The programme provides a package of free support for businesses with their carbon management. The package includes a combination of networking events, bespoke on-site audits, specialist consultancy and carbon management workshops to help businesses reduce their carbon output and save costs, becoming more sustainable as a result.

2.25. Workshop and on-site audit visit activity has increased greatly quarter on quarter since the programme was launched in January 2024 and the team have built good working relationships with SME's in the district, resulting in SME's staying engaged longer and taking advantage of more than one strand, increasing the impact of the programme.

2.26. NTU have been proactive in attending local meetings and networking events to engage businesses, but also by old fashioned leaflet drops, door knocking and calls direct to business. NTU also engaged business champions, who were fast adopters of the programme and have been instrumental in engaging other businesses in the programme, through word of mouth, providing case study material, hosting events, being speakers at networking events, and so forth.

2.27. Approximately 486 businesses (target 250 - 194%) have attended a networking event to date, where there was an NZIP related speaker or presentation to raise awareness of the programme. From this engagement, 189 businesses have shown interest and/or enquired about the programme to date.

Of those 189:

- 96 businesses have signed an enrolment form
- 28 businesses have benefitted from an on-site retrofitting audit (26 reports completed, 2 in progress)
- 75 businesses have attended a Carbon Management workshop (target 80 - 94%). A further 6 businesses are registered for the March workshop so far.

- 62 of the businesses attending a Carbon Management workshop to date have completed a Decarbonisation Plan for their business (target 80 – 78%)
 - 61 of the businesses who have completed a Decarbonisation Plan have claimed their £300 bursary (target 80 – 76%)
 - 34 of the businesses have had more than one strand of support (e.g. attended a workshop and had a site visit).
- 2.28. Regular Business in Bolsover networking events will continue to be delivered throughout March, attracting local businesses, which include a speaker or feature on Net Zero topics. NTU have also delivered 2 new bite-sized 3hr virtual sustainability workshops in this quarter, increasing the ways in which businesses can engage and benefit from the programme.
- 2.29. Summary of networking events delivered in the quarter so far –
- January – 1 virtual workshop, with 6 attendees; 1 business networking event with 28 attendees.
 - February – 1 virtual workshop, with 11 attendees; 1 NZIP celebration networking event at Creswell Craggs with 28 attendees.
- 2.30. NZIP networking events and workshops are being planned up to end March 2025 (in addition to the Business in Bolsover planned events) to continue to deliver outputs right up until the end of the programme.
- 2.31. In addition to the below case studies that have been produced -
- <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/business-and-employers/case-studies/bolsover-net-zero-lauri-smith>
- <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/business-and-employers/case-studies/bolsover-net-zero-michelle-slater>
- 2.32. NTU have also produced high shareable video case studies, demonstrating the impact of the programme. These have been shared on socials and Linked In and get good engagement.
- 2.33. **Output targets** for the programme are on track to be achieved or exceeded.
- 2.34. **Outcome targets** are yet to be recorded due to it being too early to track the outcome of new carbon management plans/strategies in the businesses. There is also the issue of the cost of businesses introducing to the firm new low carbon technologies being prohibitive. A grants programme would be welcomed in order to remove this barrier for businesses who want to retrofit and adopt/develop new technologies to reduce their carbon output/increase business sustainability.

Outcome targets –

- Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes – 40 / 0%
- Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity – 40 / 0%
- Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services – 5 / 0%

- 2.35. The focus for the rest of the quarter is to fill the workshops planned in March and to focus on supporting businesses to complete/submit their Carbon Reduction plans and claim their bursaries, to increase outcomes claimed in the final quarter. The quarter will also see delivery of the programme's Final Evaluation report, along with a virtual exhibition of the impact of the project, featuring the businesses who have taken part, case studies etc.
- 2.36. Total spend on the project so far is £188,030, with all budget committed through purchase orders/contracts.

Hyper Local Business Support

- 2.37. 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.
- 2.38. 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.
- 2.39. The project has been running since May 2023 and continues to be successful with the numbers of participants growing steadily. To the end of December 2024:
- 124 businesses have been supported (129% of the target for the full two-year programme). That figure includes existing businesses who have accessed 1:1 coaching support, businesses that have been formed with the support of the programme, and businesses who have attended one or more of the events (workshops/network lunches etc).
 - 90 potential entrepreneurs have received help from the programme (188% of the target for the full 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 figures do not include additional participants who have accessed the Growth Grants, the Business Detox events and other activities such as the Business Women's events.
- 2.40. Performance is either on or well ahead of target. Specifically, the percentage performance of the programme after 21 months, against the targets for the full two years is:
- Performance against the outputs is well ahead of target.
- Businesses supported (129%)
 - Potential entrepreneurs supported (188%)

Most outcomes are either on target, or ahead of target for the full two-year programme:

- Jobs created (475%)
- New businesses (300%)
- New products or services (500%)
- New markets (106%)

Performance against three of the outcome targets remains low:

- Jobs safeguarded (17%)
- Businesses adopting new technologies (27%)
- Businesses with improved productivity (19%)

The “jobs safeguarded” outcome is highly dependent upon businesses accessing support at a time when they are struggling and where jobs are thus under threat. This is difficult to influence.

- 2.41. The other two indicators are also driven by the needs of clients when they request support. Most existing businesses are looking for help in growing which may result in them delivering new products or services and engaging in new markets. They may not necessarily be seeking to introduce new technologies or to address internal productivity.

Visitor Economy Business Support

- 2.42. Filter Free Business Support has delivered 17 workshops in Q3 with a total of 336 attendees. Workshops include Using AI in your small business to monthly informal catch-up sessions. Platform Thirty1 has delivered 3 Woman’s Creative Network sessions with 41 attendees covering creative coaching, Show and Tell, and Creative Pop-Up shop focussed events.

- 2.43. The fund also sponsored Junction Arts’ Bright Winter Nights event that took place as part of the Lantern Parade Festival weekend with the Winter Nights ticketed event attracting 1,300 attendees.

- 2.44. A total of £23,969 was spend in Q3.

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 report is an update to members on delivery of the UKSPF scheme.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That Members note the content of the progress report.

Approved by Councillor Tom Munro Portfolio Holder for Growth

<u>IMPLICATIONS:</u>	
<u>Finance and Risk:</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details: On behalf of the Section 151 Officer	
<u>Legal (including Data Protection):</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details: On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council	
<u>Environment:</u> 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 greener and more sustainable.	
<u>Staffing:</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details: There is no staffing implication, delivery is contained within existing structures	
On behalf of the Head of Paid Service	

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

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title