

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 28 APRIL 2026

PROGRESS REPORT ON BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR GROWTH

Classification	This report is Public
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PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To update the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee on the business support programmes delivered through UKSPF funding for the period April 2025 – March 2026.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2022 the UK Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment through to March 2025. Through the UKSPF allocation 2022 – 2025 Bolsover District Council received **£1,963,993**.
- 1.2 In April 2025 it was announced that UKSPF funding would be extended, and an additional allocation of **£803,023** for the 12-month period April 2025 – March 2026 was received by Bolsover District Council.
- 1.3 There were three investment priorities that the UKSPF funding aimed to address:

Investment Priority	Summary of objectives
Community and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging. • To build resilient and safe neighbourhoods.
Supporting Local Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion by supporting local businesses. • Promoting networking and collaboration and stimulating innovation and growth. • Targeted support to help businesses grow - e.g. innovation, productivity, energy efficiency, low carbon and exporting.
People and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting core skills and support adults to progress in work. • Supporting disadvantaged people to access the skills they need. • Funding local skills needs and supplementing local adult skills provision. • Reducing levels of economic inactivity and supporting those furthest from the labour market.

- 1.4 Over the past three years (March 2023 - March 2026) the Business Growth Team have been delivering successful grant schemes through UKSPF funding and have also commissioned projects to meet the objectives of the above priorities, including three business support programmes:
- Hyper Local Business Support – delivered by Clowne Enterprise
 - Business Detox and Female Business Owners Monthly Training and Networking Events - delivered by Filter Free Business
 - Creative Women’s Network - delivered by PlatformThirty1
 - And the Net-Zero Innovation programme
- 1.5 All four of these programmes have been extremely successful and have met or exceeded the majority of their outputs and outcomes. However, despite the announcement that UKSPF allocation expenditure could be extended until the end of September 2026, no further grant funding has been allocated and therefore the business support programmes in place are all set to end on the 31st March 2026. The NZIP programme (due to a delay in project commencement) does have some underspend, which has allowed delivery to extend through to September 2026, along with its capital grant fund, ensuring grants can be devolved to businesses with more time to deliver interventions.

2. Progress report

- 2.1 All four of these programmes have been extremely successful, and have met or exceeded the majority of their outputs and outcomes:

Hyper Local Business Support

- 2.5 Over the past three years this programme has delivered free bespoke 1-2-1 business support and mentoring to pre-start, start-up and existing Bolsover businesses enabling them to undertake a wide variety of exercises including:
- Creating business plans
 - Producing profit & loss and cash flow forecasts
 - Creating an income and expenditure spreadsheet
 - Putting together an appropriate and realistic pricing policy
 - Applying for the appropriate insurances and required certifications
 - Successfully accessing UKSPF funded grants
 - Successfully accessing other grant programmes
 - Attendance at free workshops including:
 - Building a Brand
 - Cyber Security
 - Email marketing
 - Digital Foundations for Growth
 - Automation Made Simple
 - Growing your Business through Recruitment
 - The use of Artificial Intelligence in growing a business
 - SEO and getting a business found online
 - Dealing with tax returns
 - A full day workshop covering different dimensions of growing a business successfully

2.6 Feedback from businesses on this programme include:

“There is still a long way to go in developing and growing all of my different services. The help that I get, especially through the one-to-one coaching sessions, is invaluable in keeping me on track. Paul helps me to put my thoughts and ideas into order, and translate them into plans that will work. In particular he is able to help me write promotional materials that convey my ideas to potential customers in a clear and inviting way – focusing on the benefits to them. By working together with him I am able to organise and prioritise the actions that I need to keep moving forwards”.

“I’ve worked in this industry for many years so I know what needs to be done, but taking on the responsibility for growing and developing my own business like this has been a new challenge. Working with Clowne Enterprise and the Business in Bolsover programme has provided me with additional knowledge, with confidence and with the reassurance that I have needed to stay on top of that challenge”.

“Great support, in person, online, emails. Always been able to accommodate me. A fountain of knowledge and people to network for me. Not just about business advice but self-belief, confidence. Jo pushed me, when I needed to be pushed. Very approachable, confidential”.

Website for reference: www.clowne-enterprise.org.uk

2.7 Outputs and Outcomes from April 2023 - March 2025:

Hyper Local Business Support							
OUTPUTS	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
		Apr 23- Sep 23	Oct 23 -Mar 24	Apr 24 - Sep 24	Oct 24 - Mar 25		
		Number of businesses receiving non-financial support (numerical value)	96	42	44		
Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready (numerical value)	48	21	29	27	24	101	210%

Hyper Local Business Support							
OUTCOMES	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
		Apr 23- Sep 23	Oct 23 -Mar 24	Apr 24 - Sep 24	Oct 24 - Mar 25		
		Jobs created (numerical value)	12	8	12		

Jobs safeguarded (numerical value)	48	1	3	2	2	8	17%
Number of new businesses created (numerical value)	12	7	10	9	14	40	333%
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm (numerical value)	6	6	6	8	12	32	533%
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes (numerical value)	15	0	0	3	3	6	40%
Number of businesses with improved productivity (numerical value)	48	1	3	5	3	12	25%
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)	17	3	5	8	7	23	135%

2.8 Outputs and Outcomes from April 2025 – March 2026

Hyper Local Business Support	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business							
Outputs	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered	Forecast 1/1/26 - 31/3/26
		Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 26 - Mar 26			
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	24	31	10	2	4	47	196%	4
No. of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	12	18	6	1	5	30	250%	2

Hyper Local Business Support	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business							
Outcomes	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered	Forecast 1/1/26 - 31/3/26
		Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 25 - Mar 25			
Jobs created as a result of support	12	4	5	3	2	14	117%	2
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support	2	0	1	0	1	2	100%	0
No. of new enterprises created as a result of support	6	3	6	2	4	15	250%	1
No. of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	3	1	3	1	1	6	200%	1

No. of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	2	0	1	1	1	3	150%	0
No. of enterprises engaged in new markets	8	0	4	0	6	10	125%	2
No. of enterprises with improved productivity	4	2	1	0	2	5	125%	1

Business Detox and Female Business Owners Monthly Training and Networking Events

- 2.9 These two events offer free support to businesses across the Bolsover district. Filter Free Business Ltd administer the scheduling and management of the events, together with on-line and social media promotional support. They have created and continue to update content on the Business in Bolsover website: www.businessinbolsover.com
- 2.10 Both events held on a monthly basis are constantly oversubscribed and in the past three years have contributed to the founding, success and growth of many small businesses based in the Bolsover District.
- 2.11 Members of the Business Growth Team attend the monthly events and have witnessed business owners becoming more confident and comfortable following their continued attendance due to the informal friendly and supportive atmosphere.
- 2.12 The businesses are able to take advantage of support **that is unique to Bolsover District**. Numerous attendees have been successful in accessing UKSPF funded grants delivered by the Business Growth Team in years 1 & 2 of the UKSPF funding, with others accessing energy audits and Net Zero Growth Grants funded by UKSPF which the Business Growth Team continue to deliver. A presentation by Derbyshire County Council on apprenticeships resulted in one business recruiting five apprentices for their business.
- 2.13 Businesses are encouraged to inter-trade, which has proved popular and successful. The organiser has however prevented attendees from accessing this element of the provision; to prevent the meetings becoming a marketplace only. Attendees are also encouraged, but not pressured, into presenting at an event. It gives them the opportunity to explain about their business and the services and/or products on offer. This has seen business owners gaining confidence, delivering a presentation which they never thought they would be able to do and also securing orders/work from other attendees.
- 2.14 The meetings have also provided an opportunity for other business support providers and grant programme managers (such as the Vision Derbyshire start up business grants) to access a ready audience, which they struggle to find in other local authority areas.
- 2.15 Comments from businesses include:
“The event host had a wealth of knowledge and I left the event feeling very clear about the subject”.

“I never really knew what social media algorithms were, or how they worked but I came away with a better understanding of them”.

“The networking events opened doors I didn’t even know existed - I’ve secured clients directly because of contacts I made here”.

“It’s not just been about business growth; it’s also about my personal confidence as a teacher and business owner”.

2.16 Below is an insight of how popular the two events have been - outputs from April 2025 – March 2026

Business in Bolsover	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support							
	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered	Forecast
Outputs		Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 25 – Mar 26			1/1/26 - 31/3/26
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	40	132	101	104	104	441	1103%	100
Number of local events or activities supported	10	6	4	5	6	21	210%	6

Creative Women’s Network

2.17 Platform Thirty1 were commissioned to deliver support to creative businesses from the arts, culture and visitor economy sectors. The monthly network meets the first Wednesday of every month at Pleasley Vale Mills. Events are extremely popular and oversubscribed. Presentations have included:

- Social media presence
- Utilising local assets with creativity
- Forming connections
- Techniques to visually enhance your business

2.18 As with the Business Detox and Female Owners Networking and Training Events, attendees are able to inter-trade and offer support and advice to each other. Comments from attendees include:

“The network has helped me gain confidence in my abilities. It has taught me practical lessons in photography, writing and relaxation in regard to work. It has provided me with business opportunities through networking and events. I love being around women who are also creative”.

“I originally attended the event with a view to making connections with other local creatives. Originally this was in order to find freelance and collaboration

opportunities, as well as ways to sell my art. Now it is more for the support from the group. It can be very lonely as an artist and finding freelance work is very difficult and selling art even harder, so this network group is vital for maintaining momentum”.

“This is a great group of people with a variety of skillsets in the creative industries. It’s been enjoyable to feel part of something rather than a lone artist. The other women have been very supportive on a personal level. I have also made contacts that will lead to future work”.

2.19 Below is an insight of how popular the event has been - outputs from April 2025 – March 2026

Creative Women's Network	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support							
Outputs	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered	Forecast 1/1/26 - 31/3/26
		Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 26- Mar 26			
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	40	35	34	43	37	149	373%	30
No. of local events or activities supported	10	3	3	3	3	12	120%	3

Bolsover Net Zero Innovation Programme (NZIP)

2.20 The NZIP programme supports small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Bolsover district to reduce their carbon emissions, adopt green technologies, and progress towards Net Zero targets.

2.21 Over the two-years delivery to date, the programme has achieved exceptional results in a district historically characterised by very low engagement in carbon-reduction initiatives. Prior to the NZIP, Bolsover businesses faced significant Net Zero barriers: limited awareness of carbon risks, minimal data collection, and little to no experience of carbon-foot printing or target-setting.

2.22 Only 16% of businesses had procedures for calculating their carbon footprint and just 2% had set carbon-reduction targets before the programme. Against this backdrop the programme’s achievements are remarkable and provide a compelling case for investment to scale this proven model across the region, which is being discussed with EMCCA’s Director for Economic Development.

2.23 The programme has delivered a level of engagement that is unprecedented in the Bolsover district. To date

- 153 businesses have received direct support from the programme, with 32 businesses returning for upskilling in year two.
- More than 120 businesses have completed carbon management training.

- Over 50 energy site audits have been carried out.
- 2.24 This level of activity shows strong demand among SMEs for practical guidance on sustainability and climate action. Crucially, the NZIP has reached businesses that have never previously engaged with universities or sustainability programmes. The year-one evaluation shows that 83% of participating businesses had “never worked with the university before”. This demonstrates that the programme has successfully overcome long-standing barriers to engagement and built trust with a diverse SME base. So much so, that 32 of these businesses wanted to re-engage in year two.
- 2.25 The diverse range of sectors participating in the NZIP – manufacturing, engineering, retail, IT, hospitality, and creative industries – shows that the model is both inclusive and adaptable.
- 2.26 The NZIP’s three-strand delivery model has proven to be highly effective:

Carbon Management Workshops and 121 Support

- 2.27 Businesses gained practical tools to measure emissions, understand Net Zero terminology, and develop Decarbonisation Plans. Post-support evaluation shows dramatic improvement. Businesses measuring carbon emissions increased from 18% to 78%; businesses with carbon-reduction targets increased from 2% to 40%.
- 2.28 Participants consistently reported that the training demystified carbon management. Importantly, 71% of participating businesses have either implemented or committed to implementing carbon reduction measures following their engagement in the programme. As one business put it, “This training has given me the tools and knowledge I needed to finally get going.”

Premises Retrofit Audits

- 2.29 More than 50 businesses have received detailed retrofit site assessments, identifying nearly 400 tCO₂e of potential annual savings. Additionally, many businesses are expected to reduce emissions by 20-30% per site once recommended improvements are implemented. 57% of businesses said they would not have undertaken this work without the NZIP. As a result of the support and audits:
- 46% of businesses introduced new low-carbon technologies or practices.
 - 33% reported financial savings, often through reduced energy consumption or improved efficiency.

Networking and Knowledge Exchange

- 2.30 More than 500 businesses attended networking events to learn about the support available. From this, a series of Net Zero events were delivered connecting SMEs with industry leaders and peers, facilitating collaboration and shared learning within the businesses. In the evaluation, businesses said they valued the open, practical discussions with one noting that the programme “fostered meaningful learning and collaboration.”

National Award Recognition

2.31 The Bolsover Net Zero Innovation programme was also recognised nationally by the EDIE Awards, the UK's largest sustainability awards scheme. The NZIP won Training Initiative of the Year 2025.

Net Zero Growth Grants

- 2.32 In year-two, the NZIP was complimented by the Net Zero Growth Grant (NZGG) scheme, delivered by Bolsover District Council and funded by the East Midlands Combined County Authority through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 2.33 The NZGG scheme provides grant funding for businesses to support decarbonisation projects leading to job creation and retention. The total funding available through the scheme is £301,824 and is due to end in September 2026.
- 2.34 Grants of between £1,000 and £25,000 can be applied for to purchase equipment and technology that will help businesses to become more energy efficient and save costs, and fund projects that lead to the development of new net zero products and services.
- 2.35 To date, 10 businesses have been awarded grants totalling £180,053.49 with the businesses contributing £151,167.22 in match funding. There are a further 5 applications in the pipeline which will take the total grants allocated to £302,877.41, with match funding of £195,633.45 from the businesses if all the applications progress and are approved.
- 2.36 The outcomes that will be delivered by the projects funded through the NZGG scheme to date include: job creation, jobs safeguarded, new products and services introduced to market, new technologies or processes adopted, and improved productivity.
- 2.37 70% of the successful applicants would not have applied for the NZGG scheme without the support of the NZIP.
- 2.38 The retrofitting audits were a crucial component, helping businesses to establish the need and understand the benefit of carbon reduction projects.
- 2.39 Due to the pipeline potentially committing the funding, the NZGG scheme is now operating a waitlist of businesses who have completed an Expression of Interest and wish to apply if additional funding becomes available in the future.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The report is an update for members of the scrutiny committee

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 None

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To note the progress report

Approved by Councillor Tom Munro, Portfolio Holder for Growth

IMPLICATIONS:

<u>Finance and Risk</u> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Details: On behalf of the Section 151 Officer	
<u>Legal (including Data Protection)</u> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Details: In carrying out scrutiny reviews the Council is exercising its scrutiny powers as laid out in Part 1A, s9F(2) of the Local Government Act 2000. On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council	
<u>Staffing</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Details: None from this report. On behalf of the Head of Paid Service	
<u>Equality and Diversity, and Consultation</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Details: None from this report.	
<u>Environment</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment. Details: None from this report.	

DECISION INFORMATION:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies:	
Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an Executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more wards in the District or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Revenue (a) Results in the Council making Revenue Savings of £75,000 or more or (b) Results in the Council incurring Revenue Expenditure of £75,000 or more.	(a) <input type="checkbox"/> (b) <input type="checkbox"/>

<p>Capital (a) Results in the Council making Capital Income of £150,000 or more or (b) Results in the Council incurring Capital Expenditure of £150,000 or more.</p> <p>District Wards Significantly Affected: <i>(to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District)</i> Please state below which wards are affected or tick All if all wards are affected:</p>	<p>(a) <input type="checkbox"/> (b) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>All <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i></p> <p>If No, is the call-in period to be waived in respect of the decision(s) proposed within this report? <i>(decisions may only be classified as exempt from call-in with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer)</i></p> <p>Consultation carried out: <i>(this is any consultation carried out prior to the report being presented for approval)</i></p> <p> Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<p>Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, Environment, Housing</p>
<p>All</p>

DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

Appendix No	Title

<p>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></p>
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