

Record of Officer Decision

Decision title:	Approve the implementation and funding of £250,000 (£125,000 in 2023-24 and £125,000 in 2024-25) of/for the Visitor Economy Grant Scheme supported by the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).
Date of decision:	26 October 2023
Decision maker:	Corporate Director of Economy and Environment
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The cabinet took a decision on the 15th December 2022 to accept and spend the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) allocated to Herefordshire (£6.6m) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (£1.7m) in accordance with the Investment Plan approved by government. <i>The decision delegates all operational decisions to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment.</i></p> <p>Decision - To Accept and Spend Any Approved UK Shared Prosperity Plan and Rural Prosperity Funds Approved by Government - Herefordshire Council https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9216</p>
Wards:	All wards in Herefordshire except Hereford City and Colwall.
Consultation:	The UKSPF Investment Plan and REPF Addendum included extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders across a diverse range of groups, organisations and sectors including Herefordshire Sustainable Growth Strategy Board, NFU, CLA and Herefordshire Rural Hub.
Decision made:	<p>To approve the implementation and funding of £250,000 (£125,000 in 2023-24 and £125,000 in 2024-25) for the REPF Visitor Economy Grant Scheme which will provide capital grants aimed at supporting the tourism sector to remain an effective and successful contributor to the Herefordshire economy.</p> <p>The scheme will provide capital grants to support new business growth opportunities in the Herefordshire tourism sector and encourage/support new job creation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of local visitor trails and infrastructure to support this such as information boards, visitor centres, etc. Development of local tourist attractions. Improving and developing local visitor experiences. <p>Grants of between £2,500 - £15,000 will be available. 30% match funding will be required.</p> <p>Minimum item value of £250. Exceptions may be considered.</p> <p>Applicants must be start-up or existing businesses.</p> <p>Note this intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E17 – “Development and promotion of the visitor economy”</p>

<p>Reasons for decision:</p>	<p>The decision to approve the implementation and capital funding of £250,000 (£125,000 in 2023-24 and £125,000 in 2024-25) for the Visitor Economy Grant Scheme through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is an operational decision which has been delegated to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment. See above.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks / finance / legal / equality considerations:</p>	<p><u>Finance</u> The total REPF Capital Allocation for the grant scheme is £250,000 with allocations of £125,000 in 2023/24 and £125,000 in 2024-25.</p> <p><u>Legal</u> UKSPF Rural addendum grant terms (including grant award/ output/outcome definitions) will be written into the grant funding agreement to all approved businesses. Successful applicants will be required to deliver these conditions by the specified time frame and before March 2025 to ensure appropriate evidence can be provided to DLUHC.</p> <p>All supported businesses will need to comply with subsidy control measures, this will be contained within the grant funding agreement. Advice will be sought from the Legal Department and Delegated Grants Team to ensure the suite of grant application forms to be issued complies with these measures and provides a compliant audit trail. It is proposed that Minimum Financial Assistance procedures will be adopted for this scheme subject to advice from Legal.</p> <p><u>Procurement</u> This scheme will operate as a delegated grant scheme where businesses obtain quotes for the items that they wish to purchase. There is limited guidance within the Shared Prosperity Funding with regard to the procurement process that Herefordshire Council must adopt.</p> <p>In light of this, it is recommended that procedures already approved under the SPF Business Enterprise Fund RoOD to show consistency of approach:</p> <p>Individual Capital Items Items below £25,000 - 2 quotes Items £25,000 + - 3 quotes</p> <p>This grant scheme will however, also fund building projects and the following process is recommended:</p> <p>Building works contract below £25,000 – 2 quotes Building works contract £25,000 or above – formal tender process</p> <p>This will ensure that the approach that is adopted is proportional and transparent, whilst ensuring value for money is obtained for public funding allocated to businesses. The businesses will need to provide a rationale/ reasoned justification with regard to the chosen quote, if the cheapest supplier is not selected. A single supplier declaration form will be provided in</p>

	<p>rare occurrences where only one supplier can be found. The above process was also adopted for ERDF grant schemes</p> <p><u>Equality</u></p> <p>Grants will be offered to Herefordshire businesses based solely on their compliance with the publicised scheme criteria and needs identified in the SPF Investment Plan regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Will ensure that all documentation, including application information, can be made available in a number of languages and formats, if requested.</p> <p><u>Risks</u></p> <p>Reputational Risk - There is a reputational risk if the council chooses not to deliver this activity. This grant scheme is contained within UKSPF Investment Programme Rural Addendum, to meet the needs of local communities and help to deliver 2050 Economic Plan.</p> <p>Capital Funding Budget is not fully allocated - The scheme will be managed by the Economic Development team who have experience of delivering a range of externally funded business support programmes.</p> <p>Application call deadlines will be published on the Council’s dedicated SPF/ REPF webpage and promoted by the Council’s Economic Development team. New call deadlines will be issued if funding remains unallocated at the end of the first call. It is anticipated this will occur every 6 weeks until all funding is allocated.</p> <p>Not meeting the required outputs - The council has committed to providing grants to support the visitor economy as part of the Investment Plan and is required to meet outputs and outcomes as a result of this support. This will be written into the grant contracts. Should the successful applicants not satisfy the output requirements or other contractual requirements, the grant funding agreement will contain a clawback clause which can be activated to enable funding to be repaid and then reallocated to ensure outputs can be achieved by another organisation.</p> <p>External Factors: Economic downturn/ resurgence of pandemic lockdown conditions. This would impact on the council’s ability to deliver the grant scheme contractual requirements. In this case an extension to delivery from DLUHC would be requested.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Currently, there is no other capital funding for the promotion and development of the Visitor Economy in the county.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None.</p>

I am an officer delegated to make the decision

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ross Cook". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "C".

Signed:

Print Name: Ross Cook

Job Title: Corporate Director Economy and Environment