

## Record of Officer Decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	<b>Approval of £250,000 for the Active Travel Grant Scheme as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	<b>26 October 2023</b>
<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Corporate Director of Economy and Environment</b>
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<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. <b><i>The decision delegates all operational decisions to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment.</i></b></p> <p>Decision - To Accept and Spend Any Approved UK Shared Prosperity Plan and Rural Prosperity Funds Approved by Government - Herefordshire Council  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9216">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9216</a></p>
<b>Wards:</b>	All wards, except wards in Hereford City and Colwall
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>The UKSPF Investment Plan and the 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.</p> <p>Karen Stanton, Corporate Grant Lead.</p>
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p><b>Approval of funding of £250,000 (£125,000 2023/24 and £125,000 in 2024/25) from the REPF for implementation of the Active Travel Grant Scheme.</b></p> <p>This will provide capital funding of up to 75% of the total project cost of active travel projects.</p> <p><b>Background</b>  25% match funding is required. The minimum grant will be £2,500 and maximum grant will be £24,500. Successful applicants will be able to apply only once in each financial year.</p> <p>The scheme will support the following types of projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend, improve or create new footpaths or cycle ways;</li> <li>Enhance the tourism offer;</li> <li>Enhance active travel options for local people;</li> <li>Improve, create or extend routes that increase access to employment, public services or education;</li> <li>Improve, create or extend routes that enable visitors and residents to experience the area's natural environment.</li> </ul> <p>Routes should assist in helping residents and visitors to enjoy our natural environment, realise the health benefits of an active lifestyle, access jobs or</p>

	services and/or contribute to our low carbon objectives.
<p><b>Reasons for decision:</b></p>	<p>As a result of this additional funding for rural areas within Herefordshire, a grant scheme for Active Travel projects has been devised with a capital budget of £250,000 for 2023-24 and 2024-25.</p> <p><b>A RoOD is required to approve the budget allocation and implementation of the scheme.</b></p> <p>Capital grants will be utilised to enhance trails and cycle ways, enhancing the tourism offer and active travel options for local people. Grants may also be used to build on best practice community transport schemes, assisting local communities to access public services, training/education and employment.</p> <p><b>Who can apply?</b></p> <p>Applicants should be based in the rural areas in Herefordshire (i.e. outside Hereford city).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charities, voluntary, community and not-for-profit groups;</li> <li>• Voluntary and community organisations;</li> <li>• Constituted groups or clubs;</li> <li>• Registered charities;</li> <li>• Charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs);</li> <li>• Not-for-profit organisations;</li> <li>• Community interest companies (CICs);</li> <li>• State and independent schools (as long as your project benefits and involves the community and does not deliver activities that are part of the standard curriculum);</li> <li>• Town and Parish Councils;</li> <li>• Community benefit societies;</li> <li>• Community amateur sports clubs.</li> </ul> <p><b>What activities are supported?</b></p> <p>Capital grants seek to support the following projects:</p> <p>Extend, improve or create new footpaths or cycle ways;  Enhancing the tourism offer;  Enhancing active travel options for local people;  Improve, create or extend routes that increase access to employment, public services or education;  Improve, create or extend routes that enable visitors and residents to experience the area's natural environment.</p> <p><b>Target groups</b></p> <p>There are no specific target groups related to the call. However, applications should clearly identify the communities that will benefit from the proposed interventions. The Council is committed to inclusivity and applications should consider how the activity can extend the ability of all members of the community to live a more active lifestyle.</p>

**Outputs and Outcomes**

Successful projects must be able to demonstrate and evidence how they will be achieving the following outputs and outcomes:

**Indicative outputs**

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Amount of new or improved cycle ways or paths

Increased use of cycle ways or paths

Number of facilities supported or created

Improved perception of facilities or amenities

Amount of green or blue space created or improved

**Eligible Costs:**

Capital items;  
Building works – cycle and foot paths;  
Individual items that cost £500 or more (exceptions may be considered).

Items and their end use must be retained until March 2025 or 12 months post final grant payment, whichever is the longest period.

The grant has to be match funded by the applicant. This is the difference between grant being sought and the remaining cost of the project. The source of the match funding cannot be from other public funds.

All projects - must be able to demonstrate value for money and additionality and consider the project's impact on our natural environment.

**Key Requirements**

Projects must be able to demonstrate a clear link between the proposed project and estimated increases in usage;  
Applications should demonstrate appropriate mechanisms for measuring increases in usage;  
Projects that can demonstrate they are contributing match funding or that REPF will unlock other future funding will be prioritised;  
UKSPF will not support 'business as usual' including routine maintenance activities. Applications should demonstrate clear added value;  
In line with Government requirements UKSPF monies must be fully expended and projects delivered by 31 March 2025. The Council does not have the facility to support projects that go beyond this deadline;  
Applications to deliver a programme of activities are eligible however applicants must demonstrate they are able to manage in line with UKSPF requirements; including cash flow, reporting and subsidy control.

	<p><b>Who will administer the funds and who will assess the applications?</b></p> <p>The scheme will be administered by the Delegated Grants Team. An assessment panel of at least three panel members will review applications. Due diligence checks and compliance with Subsidy Control Regime, Fraud and Data Protection, Equality and Diversity and Environmental considerations will be conducted and completed as part of the appraisal process.</p> <p>If approved a grant contract will be issued and signed by the Service Director.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance /legal/ equality considerations:</b></p>	<p><b><u>Finance</u></b></p> <p>REPF Capital Allocation £250,00  Budget for 2023-24 = £125,000  Budget for 2024-25 = £125,000</p> <p><b><u>Legal</u></b></p> <p>UKSPF Rural addendum grant terms (including grant award/output/outcome definitions) will be written into the grant funding agreement to all approved grant recipients. 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 beneficiaries 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 grant application forms comply with these measures and provide a compliant audit trail. It is proposed that Minimum Financial Assistance procedures will be adopted for this scheme subject to advice from the Legal section.</p> <p><b><u>Procurement</u></b></p> <p>The guidance states minimum process of :  £0-£2,499 direct award  £2,500 – £24,999 three quotes  Over £25,000 formal tender process</p> <p>It is recommended that we follow procedures already approved under REPF Business Enterprise Fund - RoOD to show consistency of approach:</p> <p>Individual Capital Items  Items below £25,000 - two quotes  Items £25,000 + - three quotes</p> <p>This grant scheme will however, also fund building projects and recommends the following process:</p> <p>Building works contract below £25,000 – two quotes  Building works contract £25,000 or above – formal tender process</p> <p>This will ensure that the approach adopted is proportional and transparent, whilst ensuring value for money is obtained for public funding. The beneficiaries 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</p>

	<p>will be provided in rare occurrences where only one supplier can be found. The above process was also adopted for ERDF grant schemes.</p> <p><b><u>Equality :</u></b></p> <p>Grants will be offered to eligible Herefordshire beneficiaries 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.</p> <p>It will be ensured that all documentation, including application information, can be made available in a number of languages and formats, if requested.</p> <p><b><u>Risks</u></b></p> <p><b>Reputational Risk:</b> 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 the 2050 Economic Plan.</p> <p><b>Capital Funding Budget is not fully allocated:</b> 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><b>Not meeting the required outputs:</b> The council has committed to providing community grants 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 reallocated to ensure outputs can be achieved by another organisation.</p> <p><b>External Factors:</b> Economic downturn/resurgence of pandemic lockdown conditions would impact on the council’s ability to deliver the grant schemes contractual requirements. In this scenario we would seek approval from DLUHC to extend the delivery timescale.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p>Currently, there is no other funding for active travel measures and if the council does not utilise REPF for this project, the money will be unavailable to the county. No other organisation has been identified that could implement the scheme.</p>
<p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></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