

Record of Officer Decision

Decision title:	Decision to launch the £200,000 Community Infrastructure Grant Scheme as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This activity complements outcomes in UKSPF Intervention E11.
Date of decision:	April 2024
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. The decision delegates all operational decisions to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment.</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, except wards in Hereford City and Colwall.
Consultation:	<p>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.</p> <p>Through the Community Infrastructure Grant Scheme, the Council will make it easier for community and voluntary groups to access funding for infrastructure projects that will make a difference to their local neighbourhoods.</p>
Decision made:	Approval of £200,000 for the Community Infrastructure Grant Scheme (as per the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Addendum, for capital grants. Grant funding will be 80% of total project costs, up to £24,999, whichever is the lesser.
Background	<p>Herefordshire Council recognises the important and valuable contribution that the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) sector makes to the lives of residents across the county. The Community Infrastructure Grant Fund aims to build on this to deliver the aims and objectives of the Rural England Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>Objectives of the Grant Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen our social fabric and foster a sense of local pride and belonging • Build pride in place and increase life chances in our local communities • Build resilient and safe neighbourhoods • Creation and improvements to local rural green spaces • Provide improved facilities which reduce the need for people to travel to access recreational facilities <p>Priorities of the Grant Fund</p> <p>Projects must contribute to the Community and Place theme set out in Herefordshire’s UKSPF Investment Plan and REPF Addendum, therefore, projects must be able to show how they will contribute to some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be community-based

- Improve their community
- Improve people's satisfaction with where they live
- Increase the number of people engaging with community activity in their neighbourhood
- Help improve the health and wellbeing of people living in their community
- Help improve the quality of life of people affected by the cost of living crisis

How much is available?

Applications may be for capital funding only. The grant will cover 80% of eligible project costs, up to £24,999, whichever is the lesser.

The minimum grant award is £10,000 (other than in exceptional circumstances, where there is a strong justification to consider smaller grants)

Eligibility

This Grant Fund is open to community and third sector organisations that deliver locally, within Herefordshire, and engage local people in the design and development of services to meet their needs. These can be new or established services in one of the following categories:

- Voluntary and community organisations
- Constituted groups or clubs
- Registered charities
- Charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs)
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Community interest companies (CIC's)
- 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)
- Town and parish councils
- Community benefit societies
- Constituted sport and recreation organisations, (including Community Amateur Sports Clubs)
- Constituted Village Hall and Community Centre management committees (not covered by other DEFRA grant schemes)
- Religious organisations – as long as the project or activity benefits the wider community and does not include religious content.

All applications will need to be able to demonstrate their organisational status and have a bank account in the same name.

What can the grant be used for?

You can apply for a grant to fund any activity, service or equipment (capital only) that will increase VCSE capacity to improve the lives of residents and communities. This could include:

- Improvements to premises to improve access for local voluntary groups such as youth charities, carers groups or refugee support group
- Accessibility improvements (ramps, disabled toilets)
- Energy efficiency improvements (Insulation, replacement windows, doors etc. to improve energy efficiency of buildings, solar panels, heat pumps)
- Building fabric upgrades (insulations, energy efficient lighting, draught-proofing)

- Establish or enhance green spaces within communities that will encourage exercise, recreation and wellbeing
- Improved facilities for arts and cultural activities (improved seating, stages, sound and lighting provision)
- Welcome and work, for example café development or creating or improving meeting and workspace
- Development of suitable space and equipment for community shops.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive; we welcome applications for infrastructure projects that deliver tangible improvements to local Herefordshire communities where people live, visit, study and work.

Highlight any associated risks / finance / legal / equality considerations:

Finance

Original REPF Capital Allocation - £1,7509,669

	2023/2024	2024/2025	Total
REPF	£850,000,	£855,609	£1,705,669
Rural Enterprise Fund allocation of REPF	£502,834.50	£502,834.50	£1,005,669
Visitor Economy	125,000	125,000	250,000
Active travel	125,000	125,000	250,000
Capacity Building	100,000	100,000	200,000

Revised REPF Capital Allocation - £1,7509,669

	2023/2024	2024/2025	Total
REPF	£852,834.50	£855,609	£1,705,669
Rural Enterprise Fund allocation of REPF	£502,834.50	£627,835	£1,130,669.5
Visitor Economy	£125,000	£250,000	£375,000
Active travel	0	0	0
VSCE Capacity Building	100,000	100,000	200,000

The allocation for the Community Infrastructure Grant (Capacity Building) is £200,000.

On 29th February, a Project Change Request was approved to transfer the REPF allocation of £250,000 (£125,000 in 2023/24 and £125,000 in 2024/25) from the Active Travel Enhancement (CAP1674) budget line to the Small Scale Investment in Micro and Small Enterprises (marketed as Rural Enterprise Fund) (CAP1672) and Development and Promotion of the Visitor Economy (to be marketed as Rural Tourism Grant Scheme) (CAP1673) budget lines, to be allocated in line with demand.

Legal

The REPF Rural Addendum grant terms (including grant award/output/outcome definitions) will be written into all Grant Funding Agreements.

	<p>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/DEFRA.</p> <p>All supported organisations will need to comply with Subsidy Control measures.</p> <p><u>Procurement</u> This scheme will operate as a delegated grant scheme where organisations obtain quotes for the items that they wish to purchase.</p> <p>The guidance states a minimum process of : £0-£2,499 direct award £2500 – £24,999 3 quotes Over £25,000 formal tender process.</p> <p><u>Equality</u> Grants will be offered to successful applicants based solely on their compliance with the publicised scheme criteria and needs identified in the UKSPF Investment Plan/Rural Addendum, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Where possible, all documentation, including application forms and associated documentation will be made available in different formats, as requested.</p> <p><u>Risks</u> Reputational Risk: There is a reputational risk if the council chooses not to deliver this activity as communities would miss out on this much needed funding that is not currently available via any other funding programmes.</p> <p>Capital Funding Budget is not fully allocated: Application call deadlines will be published on the Council’s dedicated SPF/ REPF webpage and promoted by the Council’s Economic Development Team, and through other marketing campaigns.</p> <p>Not meeting the required outputs: 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>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Currently, there is no other funding for this activity and if the council does not utilise REPF for this project, or for other activities within measure E70 before March 2025, the money will be lost to the county.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None.</p>

Signed:

Date:

Ross Cook, Director for Economy and Environment