

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND
UPDATE – MARCH 2023**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and is part of the suite of funds available through the government's £2.6bn Levelling Up agenda. It succeeds the European Union funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England, which North Lincolnshire has previously benefitted from.
- 2.2 North Lincolnshire was asked to provide additional information as an addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan to secure an additional £789,520 through the REPF. This was submitted in November 2023 and is currently going through the assessment process. A response is expected imminently with a view to funds becoming available in April 2023.
- 2.3 The Fund is focused on specific challenges faced by rural areas:
- lower productivity rates
 - poorer connectivity
 - poorer access to key services
- 2.4 The Rural Fund provides capital funding to:
- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy.
 - support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy
- 2.5 It will contribute to the government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme by providing support for capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. This will help to

improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

- 2.7 The Rural Fund sits alongside existing Defra schemes, including:
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund
- 2.8 DEFRA are hosting a webinar in March 2023 to highlight what other schemes are available to rural areas and to identify where there is potential cross over/additional sources of support for rural areas. This will help promote additionality as well as prevent double funding of projects.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 – to note the update and approve the first call for projects.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 – is the only option. Commencing the call for projects will support the programme timelines and put us in a good position to get the funding agreed with projects early in 2023/24 to allow for full spend and outcomes to be achieved.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 There is no management and administration allowance for the REPF. This will need to be covered through the 4% management and administration fund through the UKSPF. The UKSPF Programme Manager and Support Officer will also be responsible for the REPF funds. The posts have been formally established and are currently being recruited to.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

- 6.1 The programme will ensure that any legal duties in relation to crime and disorder will be considered if relevant.
- 6.2 The programme will ensure that any funded project considers Equality and Diversity and that they will have a relevant plan in place to demonstrate their commitment and adherence to the Equalities Act 2010.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken as projects that are implemented through the programme funding will create a positive impact on businesses and the community.
- 7.2 There will be projects that positively affect businesses, individuals and communities through improving the economy, create and sustain jobs, improve health and wellbeing and provision of community facilities. Equality and diversity and assurance will be built into the project assessment and at the centre of the decision making process to ensure that the impact is clear and positive.
- 7.3 Calls for projects will be open to all and there will be a transparent and documented procurement process to secure projects that are approved through the programme.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 8.1 A round table consultation took place with rural stakeholders in November 2022 to identify and discuss the rural challenges in North Lincolnshire.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Cabinet support the programme and approve the initial call for projects.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – Nil