

SPF Appendix – SPF Board report 19th February 2025

History

Newcastle-under-Lyme has received just over £4.8 million of core UKSPF budget, which has been allocated across the three investment priorities: Communities and Place (£2.3m), Supporting Local Business (£1.9m), and People and Skills (£0.4m). Since commencement of the programme there has been a slight amendment in that the priorities for People & Skills moved from year 3 only to Year 2 & 3 if money not allocated. The basis of the grant funding has not changed and at local level we have delivered on the outcomes and outputs requested and, in some areas, exceeded expectations as per previous board updates.

The first phase has seen the following investments through our original grant offer:

Project code	Projects Names	Total allocated Grant
Communities and Place		
SP01	CML Community Hubs	£ 6,000.00
SP02	Newcastle 850 Anniversary	£ 15,766.94
SP03	Nature and Wellbeing	£ 20,417.16
SP04	Canal Connectivity	£ 106,233.84
SP05	Clough Hall Park enhancements	£ 234,110.00
SP07	Outreach Mental Health Worker	£ 88,000.00
SP08	Nature Recovery in Urban spaces	£ 250,000.00
SP09	Epicentre for Circus - Philip Astley Project (PAP)	£ 99,997.00
SP10	Homelessness Hub	£ 1,225,510.00
SP22	Beat The Street	£ 20,047.50
SP24	New Vic Theatre - 850 Event	£ 10,000.00
SP25	Kidsgrove Workshop	£ 108,469.18
SP26	Community Connector	£ 67,000.00
SP27	Promotional Videos & Photos	£ 25,000.00
SP29	Honeybox	£ 55,000.06
		£ 2,331,551.68
Supporting local business		
SP11	Volunteering for all in Newcastle	£ 72,450.60
SP12	Discharge Officer	£ 88,000.00
SP13	BES Enterprise Coaching	£ 82,220.23
SP14	Kidsgrove Town Hall repurposing	£ 259,990.58
SP15	Security Marshalls	£ 32,615.75
SP16	Flourishing Keele (KU)	£ 466,320.00
SP17	Moving Ahead (KU)	£ 277,111.90

SP18	Advanced Digital Technologies innovation accelerator (SU)	£ 408,830.00
SP20	Chamber Growth Hub	£ 27,653.00
SP23	Brampton Wedding Venue	£ 43,561.40
SP30	Work innovation conference	£ 21,000.00
SP31	Newcastle Community Connects	£ 54,999.95
SP32	Feasted	£ 44,990.00
SP33	Newcastle Borough Business Connects	£ 8,920.00
SP35	Brampton Business Development	£ 10,500.00
		£ 1,899,163.41
People and skills		
SP21	NSCG Technical Innovation upskilling support	£ 159,153.00
SP28	EEE4 Disadvantaged Upskill Project	£ 28,000.00
SP34	NULBC Green Projects	£ 166,500.74
		£ 353,653.74
Project Management		
SPPM	NULBC Administration and costs	£ 193,755.00
	Subtotal	
	Contingency	£ 58,050.17
	Total UKSPF Grant	£ 4,836,174

*See appendix A for monitoring.

Going forward into 25/26 financial year:

The Borough Council has been allocated a total sum off £1,582,136 which is made up of capital £292,112 & Revenue £1,290,024 this means that the grant funding has seen an approximate reduction of 60% on the year 3 entitlement which the figure was based on. This means that the decision for the next interim year needs to take this into account when allocating grants.

Themes

The programme continues with the previously set priorities and but has streamlined the list of outcomes and outputs for UKSPF delivery in 2025-26.

- The **Communities and Place** investment priority focuses on supporting place and aiding voluntary and community groups.
- Under the Supporting **Local Businesses** investment priority, interventions have primarily focussed on innovation and startup advice for local businesses, as well as support for entrepreneurship activities and business startups.

- The **People and Skills** investment priority has to concentrate on reducing the skills gap in the area and helping individuals move towards the labour market.

The aim of this additional UKSPF ‘transition’ year is to provide a smooth transition from the existing UKSPF programme to a new, yet to be confirmed, future funding framework.



Proposed projects 2025/26.

Reasoning for approval.

Funding 2025/26 - MHCLG statement:

As announced at Autumn Budget on 30 October, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be extended for 2025-26 at a reduced level of £900 million. This equates to a 60% reduction on current year 3 grant allocations. The initial three-year UKSPF allocation has been challenging to manage with multiple uncertainties around annual allocations, treatment of underspend and involvement of multiple agencies. With a single year to allocate and spend the additional funding, there is a need to swiftly agree how the funding should be utilised and to put in place arrangement to allow effective fund management to continue.

To undertake an external call out for projects and then fairly and transparently assess those on a competitive basis takes considerable resource and time. It is considered impractical to repeat the kind of external call out for intervention proposals which occurred for the initial three-year programme, assess submissions on a competitive basis and then allocate funds and expect delivery, all within a twelve-month period. A more streamlined approach is necessary to mitigate risk of underspend.

Due to these circumstances, we would ask the board to accept that as part of the development of the initial UKSPF Investment Plan Stakeholders were engaged to capture ideas and suggestions of

where support could provide most impact. Interventions to be supported would be aligned to the Investment priorities agreed in the approved Investment Plan. New project ideas have been designed on needs throughout the initial funding and through learning of need with partners. It is also recommended that these move forward due to the limited timeframe for spend in the transition year.

The projects proposed below are recommended due to the current delivery outcomes being achieved and with the enhanced partnerships created through regular interactions and reviews. The ongoing projects listed are managed through current governance and review which includes monthly project leads meetings.

Throughout the 3 years our project forum group which has consisted of 35 project leads has shown great collaboration and shared knowledge which again is a driver to continue these relationships within the projects listed below.

Capital

1. Homeless Hub £292,112

Further development of the building is required to make it accessible for the customers.

Revenue

1. Volunteering for All in Newcastle - Proposed grant £16,000

The original project suffered with a volunteer lead being off sick so temporary cover has meant limited delivery. The new project is looking at utilising 2 new staff members and looking to attend several partnership meetings. The ambition is to drive volunteering placement and create work experiences and confidence. The post holder will show empathy and knowledgeable with access to a wide range of volunteering opportunities as well as showing an interest in their aspirations. This project will enable and facilitate recruitment, policy and placement.

2. Discharge Officer – proposed grant £45,343

Hospital discharge or prison release and often-present significant challenges due to accessibility or exclusions meaning quick solutions are not available. A dedicated officer was appointed in April 23 and given a 3 year contract so commitment required. The project has seen case load remain steady with consistent positive support and recognition.

3. Outreach Mental Health Worker: Proposed grant £45,343

This post has been operational since the 1st April 23 with an outcome of engaging with Individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of it, often have complex presentations, including serious mental illness, substance misuse, learning disabilities, adverse traumatic experiences, and they are often suspicious of formality and offers of support. The project continues to work with challenging clients and has some successes in terms of small steps to normality.

4. Business Enterprise Coaching in Newcastle: proposed grant £32,898

The Enterprise Coach project started in January 2023 with self-starters being encouraged to advance their “side hustle” service. The coach will look at self-employment career establishment and needs. The SFEDI accredited Enterprise Coach will work in conjunction with the newly established Start up Hub information points which are located at each library in the Borough. The information point will make available current information on all aspects of starting a business including information on other

general support in the area. This project is supporting the many residents in the deprived communities through their business plans helping them to start viable businesses.

5. Philip Astley Project: proposed grant £29,999

This project remains a presence on the high street but has struggled to utilise the business development plan and instead engaged in a marketing consultant which has included funding for equipment and activities. The forthcoming year will need to focus on growth and sustainability and would recommend it is a business development role now the marketing consultant has received over 12 months pump prime funding.

6. Newcastle College Technical Innovation: proposed grant £36,000

This project has not progressed as expected and struggled to meet full consultation with employers. Meaning the design and deliver a series of short, non-qualification technical training programmes focussed on innovation and new & emerging technologies only. Priority sectors going forward needs to look at advanced manufacturing, technical construction and digital along with retail and health & wellbeing.

7. SSLEP Growth Hub: £15,194

The Growth Hub now under Staffordshire County Council leadership acts as the core of a wider network of business support through its relationship with all other Staffordshire networks across public and private sector business support providers. This focal point role allows the Growth Hub to facilitate sharing of best practice and alignment of individual programmes and will also provide a means of gathering intelligence on future business support needs to influence future programme design, and bidding for future funding. Since the launch of the UKSPF the Growth Hub has undergone several discussions with regards its direction of support but with a year under new management then a recommendation to support the business help and growth would be welcomed.

8. Staffordshire University advanced digital technology & innovation £123,140

This project wishes to stimulate development of the adoption of the digital and advanced technologies in business. The university will support companies over the period of 12-weeks through dedicated innovation advisors, academics, innovation consultants from the university. The main focus is on diffusion of innovation, stimulating R&D and innovation and move towards digital and advanced technologies such as AI, VR, robotics, 3D print and overall Industry, including the manufacturing, digital, services, transport and logistics and others; alignment with MADE Smarter. The past 2 years has seen over 20 businesses develop their technology and workforce due to this project and will continue to deliver these services.

9. Moving Ahead Keele University: £81,618

The project's primary interventions are look at increasing investment in research and development at the local level. Investment to support the diffusion of innovation knowledge and activities. Support the commercialisation of ideas, encouraging collaboration and accelerating the path to market so that more ideas translate into industrial and commercial practices. Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks. The project has provided elements of the evidence-base essential to Intervention.

10. Flourishing Keele: £140,984

This project has enabled Keele students and graduates to work with businesses, not-for-profits and communities in Newcastle-under-Lyme, creating new jobs, encouraging graduates to stay in the area and delivering social and economic benefits through its projects. The project will contribute to the revitalisation of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre with much of this activity due in the new Digital

Society Centre in the town centre, existing premises to be converted with support from the Town Deal Fund.

The project delivers over these key areas:

- Digital Society and Economy
- Sustainability
- SME innovation
- Access to Justice
- Culture and Creativity
- Entrepreneurship

The project is very successful with continued development based on learning from delivery.

11. Brampton Business Development: £6,300

The Museum has seen previous investment with regards internal art exhibitions structures and space for community usage. The facility has had external decoration to support the preservation of the Borough's heritage and tourist venue. It has also had investment in equipment internally ensuring a central venue for community led arts and creative programmes. Equally, the venue has the potential to be used for business and other family events creating growth in business and employment. The project will be enhanced with further business development funding.

12. Community Connector: £19,800

The post holder has delivered from the Workshop in Newcastle Town and recently been delivering from Kildgrove Customer service Hub (recently refurbished through UKSPF). They act as a key employment and skills specialist within the community for residents. The current claimant rates are particularly high so the use of referrals to this service helps employability and digital skills teams, or other partners, to support them in moving forward. This role will ensure that participants are better skilled, more confident, ready for employment, and meet the needs of local businesses. The continuation of this post ensures utilisation of the Workshop as a venue and increases support for the employment and skills group.

13. HoneyBox: £27,500

This project has gone from strength to strength with many artists benefiting from the time and advice provided. It has developed relationships within the local creative industries and allowed trends to be tracked. This project has evolved as information and intelligence has been gathered. Recent developments have seen an outdoor session and the project has been taken out of the area so artists get to travel and promote NUL. The continued funding will enable a more detailed outlook on the music scene and the needs of the artists including the development of a platform for networking.

14. Promotional work: £15,000

The delivery of marketing and promotional videos has been really important, as the portfolio of work undertaken has managed to be captured and with limited internal mechanisms the external options allow for greater publicity and evaluation processes. They have managed to capture the work being undertaken and it has been progression through press releases and marketing materials which help to promote these events. This dedicated resource helps us to work with partners to enable positives messages.

15. Work innovation Festival: £20,000

This year we see the opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the economic opportunities within the Borough, we are also using the festival to promote the businesses we have supported and more

importantly express the needs for skills and job recruitment. Each year we will learn and evolve this project to ensure we achieve the overall outcomes.

16. Business Community Connects: £16,500

This project has seen over 24 business sessions which have had guest speakers talking about start-ups through to town deal regeneration and many more topics. The data that is captured enables us to register the small businesses who cannot afford more member led organisations and allows us to show support for those with limited people resource. The project helps to build up a local community network and hub for knowledge transfer and peer to peer support.

17. Cultural Offer: £85,000

This is a new proposal which involves the employment of a Cultural resource enhancing the activity around the Borough with special events and activities and create a mechanism for engagement within departmental teams internal and externally. The Business infrastructure will see the benefit from engagement and promotion to increased long term economic investment.

18. Beauhurst Database: £10,000

The database has been used to establish a business baseline and also to investigate registered business integrity when applying or showing an interest in grant funding. The database gives us multiple information datasets for use across the area including cross referencing business registrations.

19. Training Academy: £60,000

A **new** project which has been designed on the basis of Business engagement which has referenced the need for help with bespoke training and with the potential of developing a supported apprenticeships programme. This will enable growth and the upskilling of a workforce especially in the different sectors where recruitment has been harder.

20. Digital initiative and artificial intelligence: £50,000

A **new** project which will link with the full fibre roll out within the Town deal funding as we see the opportunity to grow the proposed community hub model by upskilling and digital cohesion a priority for the residents and employees in localities.

21. Health initiative: £50,000

A **new** project which is looking at working with J2 and the DWP as we bring in a programme which enhances physical activity for those registered as economical inactive and those on long term sickness within the local business industry. The project will engage with employers and DWP to design and recruit and retain programme of physical activity.

22. Homecoming: £15,000

The homecoming is a traditional event now led by the BID team delivering a thrilling day of outdoor circus taking place right in the Newcastle Town promoting the modern circus. The Homecoming was born from a desire to bring the circus back to Astley's home town with a day of outdoor performance by artists from the UK and around the world springing up throughout the town centre. From traditional and contemporary circus to dance, theatre and more, a joy-filled celebration of a local legend.

23. Natural Environment Project: £50,000

This **new** project wishes to work with the Brilliant Bamboo Project CiC ([Brilliant Bamboo](#)) this project is about developing a teaching and learning window for the use of Bamboo a very sustainable

building material which can be utilised in many ways. The key to this successful project is the working relationship with grounds maintenance and sustainable teams.

Summary:

The proposed revenue projects total is £1,058,900.99 with a revenue contingency of £231,123.01.

Recommendation that the board accepts the projects above and UKSPF lead is allowed to progress. The next phase being that project leads are asked to submit a projects continuation plan and the UKSPF lead is given permission to progress to grant stage if meets Government themes.