

REPORT OF **Head of Communities and Place**

To: **Full Council**

Subject: **Shared Prosperity Fund submission for Torridge**

Date: **18th July, 2022**

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

- To obtain Member approval for the high-level intervention themes to be used within the Torridge District Council Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan to be submitted to the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities by August 1st, 2022.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the Government published its broad social and economic [Levelling Up White Paper](#) earlier this year, the [prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) has now been published. In total the funding will provide **£2.6bn** - funding of **£400m** for 2022-23, **£700m** for 2023-24 and **£1.5bn** in 2024-25.

The primary goal of the UKSPF (the successor to European structural funds) is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, categorising investment priorities under three investment themes: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills. The people and skills theme will only be activated in 2024-25 and will include the loss of large European funding streams (ERDF / ESF). These themes account for projects currently delivering a total of many million pounds across the district, including from Petroc, DWP and Devon County Council.

The prospectus states these themes should help realise seven of the twelve 'missions' set out in the Levelling Up White Paper - from improving life expectancy to increasing pay, employment and productivity. No match funding is required and existing projects can be funded. In year 3 there will be a larger allowance given that European funding streams will have disappeared by that point.

Projects or interventions to be funded through the UKSPF are also intended to deliver on the four primary Levelling Up objectives, to:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector
- Spread opportunities and improve public services
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging
- Empower local leaders and communities

Every place in the UK has been allocated a share of the UKSPF for a three year period. The financial allocation is confirmed as £1,000,000 for Torridge.

2. REPORT

Overview

An [interventions list](#) for England was published alongside the prospectus and it is these interventions which need to be included within the district's investment plan ready for submission by August 1st. This investment plan is a high-level document which outlines the challenges faced and provides an indication of the anticipated intervention themes but does not detail any projects which will be introduced to deliver those interventions.

Overview of regional challenges

- Deprivation in Torrridge
 - Bideford East, Bideford North, Broadheath, Holsworthy and Northam all rank in the lowest IMD quartile for deprivation (2019).
 - Bideford East, Bideford North, Bideford South, Holsworthy and Northam all rank in the lowest IMD quartile for Income.
 - Bideford East, Bideford North, Holsworthy and Northam all rank in the lowest IMD quartile for Employment.
 - Bideford East, Bideford North and Northam all rank in the lowest IMD quartile for health deprivation and disability
 - Bideford East, Bideford North, Bideford South, Clinton, Holsworthy, Northam and Torrington all rank in the lowest IMD quartile for Education, Skills and Training.

- Poor quality of local employment
 - 41% of jobs pay under the Living Wage¹.
 - 8th lowest median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees at £485.70 (median nationally = £611)². Cornwall has a median of £502.30, North Devon District is £527.00.
 - 21.7% qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above³ (national average of 27.4%)
 - The predominance of agriculture and hospitality / tourism ensures that Torrridge also has one of the least productive economies in the UK, with GDP / head only 75% that of Cornwall at £17,493⁴
 - The second lowest adult social mobility rate in England⁵
 - 40% of working residents commute outside of the district⁶
 - Bideford town centre is the most economically vulnerable town centre in Devon⁷

¹ Social Mobility in the South West, Professor Lee Elliot Major, April 2022

² Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics, October 2021

³ NOMIS web analysis of 2011 UK Census data

⁴ Local Economic Growth update, June 2021, University of Exeter. This report indicated a GDP per head of £17,493, down 6.4% 2017-19 (Cornwall £23, 285, neighbouring North Devon £26,765, England £33,809)

⁵ Social Mobility Index, Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission, 2016 (last available data)

⁶ HEDNA, 2016 (Annex 23)

⁷ Urban renewal in Devon's Coastal and Market Towns, Devon County Council, October 2021

- No Further Education or Higher Education institution in the district, and only one post-16 formal education provider (Bideford College), with significant transport and access constraints.
- 100 SME economy with low levels of R&D investment and limited sector clustering
- Poor working infrastructure with limited scope for networking, mentoring or securing local investment eg through a local angel investor network.
- Limited opportunities for young people to see or experience examples of high-quality businesses within the district due to the frequently hidden or isolated nature of many businesses, impacting on aspiration and youth brain drain.

Process followed with Northern Devon Futures and key stakeholders

To ensure that both of the northern Devon councils are able to access the associated funds, a Local Partnership Group was required under the conditions of the Shared Prosperity Fund guidance to guide the development of Investment Plans, in advance of submission by August 1st. This Partnership Board role has been performed by the Northern Devon Futures Board which contains key stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as health, the Police, the voluntary sector and the Biosphere Foundation.

The group undertook a series of preliminary meetings and consultations in order to agree a suitable process and to develop consensus on which interventions/projects best reflect local need and opportunity and should be prioritised. Sub-groups from the public and private sectors were convened to focus on:

- Economy, Innovation and Skills
- Community and Place
- Children and young people
- Health and wellbeing
- Climate emergency

Open invitation was provided to key stakeholders to propose potential interventions which were then appraised and considered by the Northern Devon Futures Board.

Quick-Look results of consultation of Northern Devon Futures' preferred Interventions

Communities and Place	
NDF Board	E1, E2, E7, E13
NDC/TDC	E1, E4/E6, E7, E8
Partners (includes NDF Action Groups)	E3, E6, E7, E9, E11, E13

Supporting Local Business	
NDF Board	E16, E17, E22, E23
NDC/TDC	E16, E17, E18, E19, E20, E21, E23, E27, E29, E31
Partners (includes NDF Action Groups)	E16, E21, E24, E29, E30

People and Skills	
NDF Board	E33, E36, E37, E39
NDC/TDC	E35
Partners (includes NDF Action Groups)	E33, E35, E37, E38, E41

Note: The above shows the highest 'hit rate' for each intervention under the three themes with proposed projects or activities from partners or our own Council priorities. The NDF Board results are based on the online poll carried out with the Board members in June 2022 and included are the top 4 chosen interventions.

Approach to Supporting Local Business Delivery

In terms of the Supporting Local Business theme, there are a couple of business support options for Members to consider. Devon County Council have pulled together a proposition for all Devon Districts to consider under this theme, which would include marketing and engagement; up to 12 hours of support for up to 100 businesses; Agri-tech events and Start-up support. The proposed cost of this support (including DCC staff and overheads) is proposed at £220,029 per District Council. Any direct grant support to businesses would be in addition to this cost.

Locally here in Northern Devon, we have North Devon+ (local authority owned company by North Devon Council and Torridge District Council) who have extensive experience in providing a wide business support programme across the Northern Devon area and therefore there is no need for Torridge or North Devon to procure services at such additional cost from DCC.

Proposed intervention themes

Communities and Place interventions	Proposed for inclusion?
E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people.	Yes
E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects.	
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments.	
E4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.	
E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'.	Yes
E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.	Yes
E7: Support for active travel enhancements in the local area.	Yes
E8: Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.	Yes
E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.	
E10: Funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues; to bring people together.	
E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.	
E12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.	
E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.	Yes
E14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.	Yes
E15: Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.	

Supporting Local Businesses interventions	Proposed for inclusion?
E16: Investment in open markets / improvement to town centre infrastructure.	Yes
E17: Development and promotion of the visitor economy etc.	Yes
E18: Supporting Made Smarter Adoption inc expert advice, grants and leadership training.	Yes
E19: Supporting investment in R&D at a local level, inc commercialisation of ideas.	Yes
E20: R&D grants to support innovative new product development.	Yes
E21: Development and support of appropriate innovation infrastructure.	Yes
E22: Investment in enterprise infrastructure and employment / innovation site development projects.	
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting business growth, inc through networks.	Yes
E24: Investment into new and existing training hubs / accelerators / incubators.	
E25: Grants to bid for international business events and conferences.	
E26: Support to grow the social economy.	
E27: Funding to develop angel investor networks.	Yes
E28: Export grants to build international trade.	
E29: Support decarbonisation opportunities whilst growing the local economy.	Yes
E30: Business support measures.	Yes
E31: Funding to support feasibility studies.	Yes
E32: Investment in resilience infrastructure and nature based solutions.	

People and skills interventions	Proposed for inclusion?
E33: Employment support for economically inactive people.	Yes
E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills.	
E35: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.	
E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills.	
E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses.	
E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2.	
E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.	Yes
E40: Retraining support for those in high carbon sectors.	
E41: Funding to support local digital skills.	

A further report will be submitted for Full Council consideration when more detail is available following the development of a full action plan, including delivery partners and objectives. This will only be possible after the DHLUC appraisal and approval of the high-level investment plan.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None at this point

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

This project delivers upon a significant range of local and national strategies:

- **The North Devon and Torridge Local Plan, 2018 - 2031** stipulates:
 - “Within northern Devon, high-value jobs in business, education and research, those supporting a low carbon economy and other key growth sectors will be encouraged in sustainable locations”.
- The **Torridge District Council Strategic Plan, 2020-23** (Annex 18), which states as the first objective an ambition to “promote aspiration and growth to create a vibrant culture and thriving economy with quality jobs”
- The **Northern Devon- A Road to recovery** prospectus (May, 2021) contains 4 core strands which are all enhanced through the proposals- Innovation and Ideas, Skills and aspirations, Business environment and Connected Communities.
- **Northern Devon Social Equality Plan** (March 2022) through delivering interventions to create stronger life opportunities for all
- The **Team Devon Covid-19 Economy and Recovery Prospectus** seeks support for businesses, for the people and workforce who drive our economy forward and for towns and rural communities- again, all delivered through a focus on skills and higher quality, sustainable employment.
- **The HotSW LEP Build Back Better Plan** also has a focus on skill development for “People and Ideas”, supporting training and development of a more vibrant “Business Environment”.
- The **Heart of the South West LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030** by (a) “creating conditions for growth”, “(b) maximising productivity & employment” and “(c) capitalising on our distinctive assets”.
- Crucially these proposals seek to further the ambitions and local profile of the **Torridge District Climate Emergency declaration** (2019), with the drive to further the Net Zero ambition locally, regionally and internationally at the heart of the ambition.
- The **One Northern Devon, 10 Year Quality of Life Strategy – 2020-2030**, New Devon CCG, delivering the vision that “aspirations are achieved through equal access to the best education & employment”.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

No personal data is being collated / collected.

Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation- 5.7.22

The focus on strengthening conditions for local economic growth will in turn support our communities to take strides forward. With opportunities ahead such as the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre and Floating Offshore Wind it is essential that our local businesses are ready to capitalise. I am pleased that Torridge officers have been at the heart of the investment plan development process, working alongside key stakeholders to demonstrate that local authorities and local partnerships are best positioned to take decisions for their local areas.

Council Leader Views

Date of Consultation- 5.7.22

The development of the Shared Prosperity Fund high-level investment plan has demonstrated the importance of collaboration in achieving that prosperity for the region. Although we are collectively disappointed in the scale of allocation to Torridge, especially given the need for investment and the level of shovel-ready plans developed through the Community Renewal Fund in particular, the Northern Devon Futures Board share a determination to ensure that the funds are well invested to maximise local impact.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan is of a high-level nature at this stage. The identified intervention themes will need further development into a fully costed action plan with delivery partners following approval from the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) in the autumn.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

- Approve the intervention themes proposed by the Northern Devon Futures Board, serving as the required Local Partnership Group for inclusion in the Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan for Torridge District Council to be submitted before 1st August, 2022.
- ND+ are identified as the preferred delivery partner for local Business Support Delivery.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Date of Consultation – 30.6.22 Officers Consulted – Chief Executive, Head of Communities and Place, Head of Legal and Governance, S151 Officer
Contact Officer:	Economic Development Officer