



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

10th July 2024

**Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration
Simon Brennan**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: Crynant, Onllwyn and Seven Sisters, Sandfields East, Bryn and Cwmavon, Gwynfi and Croeserw.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Approval of Projects

Purpose of the Report:

In the interests of openness and transparency, this report seeks Cabinet's approval to award grant funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), via the Community Facilities Improvement Fund, to four projects that have either direct or indirect involvement with an elected member, or an elected member has an interest in the organisation, as detailed below.

The projects are:

- 1) Croeserw AFC - Changing Room improvements and electrical upgrades

- 2) Aberavon Greenstars RFC - Solar panel installation
- 3) Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre - Flooring and heating system upgrade
- 4) Friends of Seven Sisters - Walking and cycle track improvements

Executive Summary:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda. The fund provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition.

Background:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

The UKSPF regional Investment Plan was approved by Cabinet on the 28th July 2022 and the UKSPF Implementation Plan was approved by Cabinet on the 19th October 2022.

The five Council led strategic 'anchor' projects were approved by Cabinet on the 19th January 2023.

Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds:

The Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds were launched from April 2023 as a rolling programme with a schedule of grants panel dates. The relevant Project Manager / Officer manages the application process, assessment, moderation and grant award process.

The five UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds are:

- Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Events Fund
- Valleys & Villages Prosperity Fund
- Sustainable Communities Growth Fund
- Third Sector Growth Fund (managed by Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services)
- Business Investment & Start Up Grants

In April 2024, in response to an increasing need identified within the voluntary sector, a new grant fund was launched called the Community Facilities Improvement Fund. The fund was targeted at community and voluntary organisations that lease Council owned buildings and other facilities, including playing fields, pavilions etc. to carry out essential repairs and upgrade works. A targeted open call was launched on 2nd April, where organisations were invited to submit applications before the closing date of 7th June 2024.

Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds – approval process

Each Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Fund has an assessment, moderation, and approval process.

All applications are assessed and prioritised in line with the following Fund criteria:

- Ability to meet one or more of the fund priorities
- Can demonstrate a clearly identified and articulated need
- Will deliver against a wide range of outputs and outcomes
- Can deliver within the timeframe (all projects must be completed by 31st December 2024 at the latest)
- Value for money
- All applications will be considered by a Funding Panel

Cabinet agreed at its 28th June 2023 meeting that following grant funding panel assessment and recommendation for approval the following delegated authority approval thresholds were agreed:

Grants of **up to £50,000** can be approved by the Anchor Lead (at accountable manager level).

Grants **between £50,001 and £100,000** to be approved by the relevant Head of Service.

Grants **between £100,001 and £250,000** to be approved by the relevant Head of Service, UKSPF Senior Responsible Owner, Chief Finance Officer, Leader and relevant Cabinet Member.

However, to ensure transparency and probity of decision making, all projects which have Member involvement will seek approval from Cabinet prior to formal approval.

Third Party Grant Funds – recommendations for approval:

Project 1: Croeserw Athletic Football Club's application for changing room improvements and electrical upgrades was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

Approved in principle, subject to formal Cabinet approval. No special conditions attached.

Panel Approved £5,051.60

Cllr. Scott Jones holds an interest in this project as a Trustee of Croeserw AFC.

It is recommended that the proposed improvements and upgrades at Croeserw AFC is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

The proposal includes knocking down a wall dividing two small changing rooms, to create one large changing room for the home team, making good and reinstating heaters. The changing room is a vital hub for players and coaching staff pre- and post-match, and being able to use the same room will improve morale and create an atmosphere off field that will continue to the football pitch, positively benefitting the youth and senior teams that use the facilities. A segregated small space will also be created for first aiders to provide treatment to players. In addition, repairs will be made to the electrics, replacing faulty circuits boards and ensuring that safety standards are met.

UK SPF Output	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1

UKSPF Grant request: £5051.50

Project 2: Aberavon Greenstars RFC's application for solar panels was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

Approved in principle, subject to formal Cabinet approval. No special conditions attached.

Panel Approved: £25,000

Cllr. Matthew Crowley holds an interest in this project as a Director of Aberavon Greenstars RFC.

It is recommended that the application for solar panels from Aberavon Greenstars RFC is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

The project includes the installation of solar panels to the clubhouse, in effort to reduce energy bills and make the club more financially sustainable, as well as reducing carbon emissions. Confirmation has been received that planning permission is not required for this project and all works will be carried out by a specialist company.

UK SPF Output & Outcomes	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (m2)	130
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (%increase)	100

UKSPF Grant request: £25,000

Project 3: Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre’s application for floor refurbishment and heating system upgrade was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

Approved in principle, subject to formal Cabinet approval. No special conditions attached.

Panel Approved £8,313

Cllr. David Whitelock holds an interest in this project as husband of the applicant, Mrs Christine Whitelock, of Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre.

It is recommended that the flooring and heating upgrades at Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

To refurbish the Granwood hall flooring which has become damaged over the years and is at risk of becoming a safety hazard. The works will be carried out by a specialist. The heating control panel will be upgraded, as the current system is ineffective and inefficient. The upgrade will allow users to control which rooms are heated and will lead to reduced energy bills and carbon emissions, improving the overall sustainability of the asset.

UK SPF Output & Outcomes	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	1

UKSPF Grant request: £8,313

Project 4: The Friends of Seven Sisters application for upgrades to the cycling and walking track at Seven Sisters Playing Fields was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

Approved in principle, subject to formal Cabinet approval, with a special condition that the applicant is required to take appropriate insurance cover upon approval of grant and provides a copy of the policy to the Project Manager prior to first draw down of grant.

Panel Approved £9,600

Cllr. Stephen Hunt is involved in this project as both the applicant and as Vice Chair / Treasurer of the Friends of Seven Sisters.

It is recommended that the proposed improvements at Seven Sisters Playing Fields is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

The mile long walking and cycle track will receive repairs and light drainage works to ensure the safety of the many children and adults using the facilities on a regular basis. Maintenance of this important local asset will support the health and wellbeing of the local community, encouraging people to spend time outdoors. The applicant has a vision of a masterplan for Seven Sisters and this project will act as a catalyst for further development and investment.

UK SPF Output	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1

UKSPF Grant request: £9,600

Next steps

Following approval being granted, the Project Manager will issue Third Party Grant Agreements to successful applicants. The Project Manager will arrange project inception meetings and project

monitoring meetings to ensure all projects deliver in line with approved application forms.

Financial Impacts:

Funding for the UKSPF programmes is via the overall grant provided to the Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme (included in 19th January 2023 Cabinet papers) to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

The nature of the UKSPF Investment Plan will have a positive impact on the valley communities and is aligned to the Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan, Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan and the Wellbeing Assessments.

Workforce Impacts:

Project Manager and Officers have been recruited and appointed to manage the UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds at the local level.

Legal Impacts:

Grant awards will be assessed to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Any procurement activities will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

Swansea Council, as Lead Local Authority (LLA) for the South West Wales region has entered in to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UK government regarding the administration and delivery of the UKSPF including the release of annual funding allocations for the region. Each partner local authority has entered into a Service Level Agreement with Swansea Council to ensure compliance with the MoU and to receive their annual funding allocation.

Standard Third Party Grant Agreements have been developed to be issued to successful organisations.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

The UKSPF application form requires applicants to develop a risk register which will be managed as part of the project plan.

Due diligence checks including Subsidy Control assessments will be carried out prior to formal approval.

The Project Managers and Officers will ensure compliant and effective delivery.

Consultation:

This item has not been subject to external consultation.

A UKSPF engagement plan is in development to ensure regular engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders.

Recommendations:

Having had due regard to the first stage of the Integrated Impact Assessment, it is recommended that:

- Members agree the recommendation to approve the following projects, which have Member involvement submitted under the Neath Port Talbot UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community Facilities Improvement Fund:
 - 1) Croeserw AFC – Changing room and electrical upgrades
 - 2) Aberavon Greenstars RFC – Solar panel installation
 - 3) Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre – Flooring and electrical upgrades
 - 4) Friends of Seven Sisters – Path and cycle track upgrades.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable Neath Port Talbot Council to implement the UKSPF Implementation Plan and advise applicants of the funding decision.

Implementation of Decision:

The decisions will be implemented after the three day call in process.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

Application forms have been provided.

Officer Contact:

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