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| Meeting of:  | <b>Cabinet</b>  |
| Date of Meeting:   | <b>Monday, 07 June 2021</b>   |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee:   | All Scrutiny Committees   |
| Report Title:  | The UK Government Levelling Up & Community Renewal Funds Bid Governance Arrangements  |
| Purpose of Report:   | To seek authority from Cabinet to submit an initial bid under the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund, and to set out an agile governance structure sufficient to allow submission within the deadlines set out in the programme guidance. |
| Report Owner:  | Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources   |
| Responsible Officer:   | Rob Thomas – Managing Director  |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation:   | Chair of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee   |
| Policy Framework:  | This is a matter for decision by Cabinet.   |
| <p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funds were announced as part of the UK Government 2020 Spending Review. The Levelling Up Fund will focus on capital investment in local infrastructure and is intended to build upon and consolidate prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund.</li> <li>• The £220m Community Renewal Fund will provide revenue funding to support people and communities most in need across the UK, creating opportunities to trial new approaches and innovative ideas at the local level.</li> <li>• Guidance on the Funding was released in March 2021 and there is a first-year bid deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021.</li> </ul> |   |

- The Levelling Up Fund budget has been set at £4billion and will run from 2021-22 until 2024-5. The fund will be considered by the UK Government through a bidding process, with no guarantee of success.
- An indicative allocation of £800 million has been allocated for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales , spread over the next 4 years, although no specific allocation is given to Wales and none is guaranteed to come to any Local Authority in Wales.
- The UK Government has utilised a prioritisation methodology to rank local authorities in terms of need. The Vale of Glamorgan has been ranked as a Category 2 Local Authority for Levelling up Fund purposes but falls outside the top 100 areas for Community Renewal Funding.
- All local authorities in Scotland, Northern and Wales are set to receive revenue funding of £125,000 to support detailed bid preparation irrespective of category ranking. This funding will also be used to build links with the UK Government. To date, this Council has yet to receive the funding.
- Standard bids can be up to a limit of £20m but the scheme allows for transport bids of up to £50m.
- It is a requirement that bids will be discussed in detail with the local Member of Parliament and the support of the MP is a factor to be considered as part of the bid evaluation process.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the Levelling Up Fund Prospectus attached at Appendix A and the [Community Renewal Fund Prospectus](#) (attached at Appendix B).
2. That Cabinet supports the production and submission of a bid to both the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund in line with the themes and objectives set out in this report.
3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Planning (in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, Managing Director and the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer).
4. That the Head of Regeneration and Planning be given delegated powers to procure any consultancy support that will be needed for the production of bid/s to the fund subject to the need for any financial or procurement resources required given the urgency of the process, being agreed by the Head of Finance /Section 151 Officer under the waiver process.
5. That the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated powers to review and agree any contractual arrangements should they be required to facilitate the process of making a bid/s.
6. That the Head of Regeneration and Planning be given delegated powers to allocate funds from the Barry Regeneration Programme to facilitate the bid/s. Such funds to be reinstated as and when the UK Government provides the revenue support as advised in the Fund Protocol advice.
7. That the response to the bid by the UK Government be reported back to Cabinet in due course together with more detailed governance arrangements relating to the delivery of any successful bid.
8. That the Urgent Decision Procedure set out in Section 14:14 of the Council's Constitution be approved in order to meet the deadline set by the UK Government for making initial bids under the Levelling Up Programme of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the Fund guidance.
2. That Cabinet supports the submission of a bid to each fund, given the opportunity to support investment in the Vale of Glamorgan.
3. To facilitate an agile response to the funding opportunity and to provide a governance structure in line with the Council's Project Management Toolkit.
4. To facilitate an agile response to the bidding deadline whilst giving consideration to the Council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Guidelines.
5. To facilitate the sign off of any contractual matters should they be required as part of the bid submission process.
6. To provide immediate access to funding in support of the bid submission process.

7. In order to report back to Cabinet on the success or failure of the bids and any advice received from the funding body.
8. The reporting of the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure is a requirement of the Council's Constitution.

## 1. Background

1.1 The Levelling Up Fund was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as part of the UK Government 2020 Spending Review. The Fund will focus on capital investment in local infrastructure and is intended to build upon and consolidate prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund.

1.2 In the forward to the Fund prospectus the Chancellor indicated that economic differences remain between different parts of the UK, including our cities, ex-industrial towns, and rural and coastal communities. These economic differences have real implications: they affect people's lives through their pay, work opportunities, health and life chances. Tackling these economic differences and driving prosperity as part of 'levelling up' left behind regions of the UK is a priority for the UK Government. The Fund Prospectus advises that *"Levelling up requires a multi-faceted approach, from supercharging our city regions, to supporting our struggling towns, to catalysing industrial clusters in the sectors that will drive the future economy"* – the Fund will deliver as part of a broad package of complementary UK-wide interventions, including:

- The UK **Community Renewal Fund (UKCRS)**, which will provide local areas across the UK with access to £220 million of additional funding as they prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund due to launch in 2022. As EU structural funds tail off after 2022-23, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will succeed them as a programme distinct from the UKCRF and help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need in a manner distinct but complementary to the Levelling Up Fund, through investment in skills, enterprise and employment. The funding structure of the Levelling Up Fund does not set a precedent for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The UK **Community Ownership Fund**, which will empower communities to protect vital community assets in their area by providing funding to take ownership over them, in support of the social wellbeing of local communities.
- The **Plan for Jobs**, which builds on DWP's Jobcentre Plus network, offering tailored support to help people find work, including through Youth Hubs, Restart, and Kickstart. The Plan for Jobs will support longer term recovery from the unprecedented economic impact of Covid-19.
- The **Freeports programme**, establishing national hubs for global trade and investment in every nation of the UK, promoting regeneration and job creation and creating hotbeds for innovation that will intensify the economic impact of our ports and generate increased economic activity in areas in need of regeneration across the UK.

- The **UK Infrastructure Bank**, which will provide financing support to local authority and private sector infrastructure projects to help meet UK Government objectives on climate change and regional economic growth. It will also establish an advisory function to help with the development and delivery of projects, and
- The **Towns Fund**, providing £3.6 billion to drive the economic regeneration of deprived towns and deliver long-term economic and productivity growth, by renewing and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves user experience, and ensures future sustainability.

**1.3** This report relates to the Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funding programmes as applicable in Wales (majority of the other fund programmes are not applicable to Wales).

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** At the Spending Review, the UK Government committed an initial £4 billion for the Levelling Up Fund for England over the next four years (up to 2024-25) and set aside at least £800 million for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK Government will use the new financial assistance powers in the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 (UKIM Act) to make the Fund available to the whole of the UK, enabling all communities to receive the investment and support they need to recover from the pandemic. As such, up to £4.8 billion until 2024-25 will be available for the Fund across the UK, with at least £800 million invested in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, during that 4-year period.
- 2.2** In England, Scotland and Wales, funding will be delivered through local authorities.
- 2.3** Capacity funding will be allocated to local authorities most in need of levelling up in England, as identified in the index published alongside the prospectus. It will also be allocated to all local authorities in Scotland and Wales, to help build their relationship with the UK Government for the purposes of the Fund. The Fund Prospectus indicates that for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales all Local Authorities will receive capacity funding of £125,000 regardless of their ranking on the Prioritisation Table produced.
- 2.4** The Vale of Glamorgan was indicated as being a Priority 2 Local Authority based upon the methodology utilised. There are 3 priorities with 1 being the highest and 3 the lowest. In Wales seventeen authorities have been identified as priority 1, three (including the Vale of Glamorgan) as priority 2 and two as priority 3 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/966137/Levelling\\_Up\\_Fund\\_list\\_of\\_local\\_authorities\\_by\\_priority\\_category.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966137/Levelling_Up_Fund_list_of_local_authorities_by_priority_category.xlsx)).
- 2.5** Every local authority can make at least one bid but the number of total bids that can be made relates to the total number of MP's who have constituencies which lie wholly in the local authority area. For the purposes of bid submission officers are assuming that the Vale of Glamorgan Council will be allowed one bid.
- 2.6** The Levelling Up Fund will focus investment in projects that require up to £20m of funding. However, there is also scope for investing in larger high value

transport projects, by exception. Bids above £20m and below £50m will be accepted for transport projects only, such as road schemes, and can be submitted by any bidding local authority. They will be subject to a more detailed business case process and will need to score highly overall. Local authorities may wish to consider pooling funding from their bids to improve the chance of taking forward a larger transport scheme.

- 2.7** The Levelling Up Fund Guidance document indicates that the UK Government recognises the important role of Members of Parliament in championing the interests of their constituents. The bid guidance expects bidding authorities to consult local Members of Parliament as part of their bid, though such support from local MPs is not a necessary condition for a successful bid. The guidance suggests MPs can have a positive role in prioritising bids and helping broker local consensus. When considering the weighting given to bids, the expectation is that an MP will back one bid which they see as a priority, and any bid may have priority backing from multiple MPs and local stakeholders. But Members of Parliament may also want to support any or all schemes that would have a benefit to their constituencies in the usual way.
- 2.8** The first round of the Fund will focus on three themes: smaller transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK's world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets, in particular:
- Transport investments including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. High-impact, small, medium and by exception larger local transport schemes which reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth and improve the experience of transport users are suggested.
  - Regeneration and town centre investment, building on the Towns Fund framework (which is not applicable to Wales) to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
  - Cultural investment maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.
- 2.9** In line with the themes set out above it is proposed to utilise existing Vale of Glamorgan policy, planning, marketing, investment and master planning documents in order to provide the context for drafting a bid. The bid document will provide the evidence as to the progress of the projects indicated in these documents and will prioritise a set of projects for which the Levelling Up fund might provide the necessary gap funding where projects are either stalling or where funding of this scale has not, as yet, become available.
- 2.10** A bid focussing upon investment in Barry and concentrating upon a range of investment in business facilities, transport and Active Travel, investment in the

Waterfront area and tourism and leisure are best placed for submission by the deadline indicated.

- 2.11** In order to facilitate the bid in line with the first year deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021 a series of recommendations have been included in this report in order to facilitate agile working whilst maintaining appropriate due diligence to the process.
- 2.12** In addition to the Levelling up Fund, Local Authorities across the UK are being asked to act as Lead Authorities for the submission of a Community Renewal Fund bid of between £500,000 and £3m and in England, Wales and Scotland, are the only eligible applicant for this funding.
- 2.13** On April 13 2021, the Council opened a call for applications to this revenue fund for projects that will complete in 2021/22. Over £1.6M of projects were submitted during this open call process. Due diligence and eligibility checks are currently underway on projects and applicant organisations.
- 2.14** The Vale is not a top 100 area so must score highly across all shortlisted projects in order to be successful in accessing this funding. In order to ensure a transparent shortlisting process, the Council proposes to use its existing Strong Communities Grant panel to advise on the shortlisting projects. The Council has responsibility for the final decision making and submission of projects to UK Government.
- 2.15** If successful, the funding will be administered by the Council who will be required to comply with the terms and conditions.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** The project accords with the Five Ways of Working and our Well-being objectives as follows:
- 3.2** a) Involvement - the bid will build upon existing work undertaken in collaboration with Barry Town Council and other partners as part of the Barry Making Waves Sense of Place project as well as previous Welsh Government Projects such as Vibrant and Viable Places. It is also proposed that were the bid to be successful the Council will work with partners such as ABP, the Waterfront Consortium and Barry Town Council to ensure the ultimate delivery of the grant funding; The Council also proposes to involve Public, Private and Voluntary Sector Partners in the shortlisting of Community Renewal Fund bids.
- 3.3** b) Collaboration – As advised above the bid will include reference to multiple partners to ensure that the Waterfront and Town centre would achieve maximum benefits from any funding secured;
- 3.4** c) Integration – The aim of the bid is to ensure both economic, transport and heritage and leisure assets are sensitively and positively developed and integrated within the master plan for the Innovation Quarter and wider Waterfront;

- 3.5 d) Prevention – The aim of the funding is to prevent the decline of the town centre and other brown field sites close to the town, via a pipeline of projects which will support a vibrant sustainable mixed-use town and waterfront;
- 3.6 e) Long Term - An aim of the bid is to strengthen Barry as great place to live, work and play and in so doing provide long term economic benefits for the town and its surrounding area.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1 The bid process will be led by officers from the Regeneration team with the Head of Regeneration and Planning acting in a Project Sponsor role.
- 4.2 Funding for the bid process is to be drawn from the Barry Regeneration Fund.

### **Employment**

- 4.3 The bid may need external support to be provided and will provide some temporary consultancy work in the short term. Should the bid be successful further report will be provided regarding the delivery process for the projects and the possible need for additional staff.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.4 The recommendations include delegated powers for the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services to review and sign off any contractual matters associated with the bid.
- 4.5 It is expected that the project team created will include officers from the Legal Section and in the longer term, if the bid is successful, specific matters such as state aids provisions may need consideration if third party land interests are involved in project delivery.
- 4.6 The Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. It aims to help those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. The duty puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making, to ensure decisions improve inequality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The roll of the Levelling Up and Community Renewal funding is to focus on capital investment in local infrastructure and to support local communities and therefore the bid will accord fully with the socio-economic duty.

## **5. Background Papers**

None.



HM Treasury



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Department  
for Transport

# Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus

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March 2021





# Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus

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March 2021



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# Foreword

Infrastructure improves everyday life. A new bridge or a bus lane makes the journeys of local people easier; town centre improvements help local businesses and cement pride in a place; and upgrades in local heritage sites strengthen the local economy and build civic identity. These are things that people rely on every day in communities up and down the country – the infrastructure of everyday life.

This is why I created the Levelling Up Fund, which applies to the whole of the UK. It brings together the Department for Transport, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Treasury to invest £4.8 billion in high-value local infrastructure. In doing so, it removes silos between departments, allowing areas to focus on the highest priority local projects rather than shaping projects to fit into narrowly defined pots of funding. It also embodies the approach of the Green Book Review, focusing on the needs of individual places and the strategic case for investment.

While the Fund is open to every local area, it is especially intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities. It is also designed to help local areas select genuine local priorities for investment by putting local stakeholder support, including the local MP where they want to be involved, at the heart of its mission. Local areas across the UK share similar needs, so the Fund will be delivered in partnership with local areas across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Finally, this Fund is one part of this government's broader offer to level up opportunity across the UK. Our Plan for Jobs continues to support employment across the UK. Our National Infrastructure Strategy sets out our long-term approach to investment. We are today confirming the UK Infrastructure Bank – headquartered in Leeds – to invest in public and private projects to drive growth and create green jobs. And Our Plan for Growth published at the Budget sets out how we are bringing these and other elements together.

All of these put this government's central mission at their heart and also embodied in this Fund: to unite and level up the country.



Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** Investing in infrastructure has the potential to improve lives by giving people pride in their local communities; bringing more places across the UK closer to opportunity; and demonstrating that government can visibly deliver against the diverse needs of all places and all geographies. Our local communities and the links between them across the UK are fundamental parts of our shared economy, culture and society.

**1.2** Nevertheless, economic differences remain between different parts of the UK, including our cities, ex-industrial towns, and rural and coastal communities. These economic differences have real implications: they affect people's lives through their pay, work opportunities, health and life chances. Tackling these economic differences and driving prosperity as part of 'levelling up' left behind regions of the UK is a priority for this Government.

**1.3** Prosperity can be measured in many ways. However, for many people, the most powerful barometer of economic success is the positive change they see and the pride they feel in the places they call home. People want to be able to look around their towns and villages and recognise that their homes and communities are better off than five years ago.

**1.4** In this vein, the most impactful infrastructure projects – those that help bring pride to a local area – are often smaller in scale and geography: regenerating a town centre, local investment in cultural facilities or upgrading local transport infrastructure. As the country recovers from the unprecedented economic impacts of Covid-19, it is more important than ever to prioritise investment that not only brings economic benefits, but also helps bind communities together.

**1.5** The Levelling Up Fund was announced at the 2020 Spending Review to support communities in realising this vision. The Fund will focus on capital investment in local infrastructure thereby building on and consolidating prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund. It will have a visible, tangible impact on people and places, and support economic recovery. In doing so, it will also create opportunity across the country, prioritising bids that invest in regeneration and growth in places in need and areas of low productivity and connectivity. This prospectus sets out how local areas can access the first round of funding.

**1.6** The Fund sits within the wider context of the Chancellor's announcement at the Spending Review of £100 billion of capital spending in 2021-22, a £30 billion cash increase compared to 2019-20. This is part of plans to deliver over £600 billion in gross public sector investment over the next five years. Over the coming years, all parts of the country will feel the benefits of this investment: from better broadband

to upgraded local transport and flood defences. Alongside this, investment in transport through HS2, the Integrated Rail Plan and Intra-City Transport Settlements, and the Government's commitment to transform bus and cycle infrastructure will strengthen the spine of connectivity across the country. In the summer, Sir Peter Hendy will publish the Union Connectivity Review, which will focus on enabling a more joined-up United Kingdom than ever before.

**1.7** We recognise that levelling up requires a multi-faceted approach, from supercharging our city regions, to supporting our struggling towns, to catalysing industrial clusters in the sectors that will drive the future economy – the Fund will deliver as part of a broad package of complementary UK-wide interventions, including:

- **The UK Community Renewal Fund**, which will provide local areas across the UK with access to £220 million of additional funding as they prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund due to launch in 2022. As EU structural funds tail off after 2022-23, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will succeed them as a programme distinct from the UKCRF and help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need in a manner distinct but complementary to the Levelling Up Fund, through investment in skills, enterprise and employment. The funding structure of the Levelling Up Fund does not set a precedent for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- **The UK Community Ownership Fund**, which will empower communities to protect vital community assets in their area by providing funding to take ownership over them, in support of the social wellbeing of local communities.
- **The Plan for Jobs**, which builds on DWP's Jobcentre Plus network, offering tailored support to help people find work, including through Youth Hubs, Restart, and Kickstart. The Plan for Jobs will support longer term recovery from the unprecedented economic impact of Covid-19.
- **The Freeports programme**, establishing national hubs for global trade and investment in every nation of the UK, promoting regeneration and job creation and creating hotbeds for innovation that will intensify the economic impact of our ports and generate increased economic activity in areas in need of regeneration across the UK.
- **The UK Infrastructure Bank**, which will provide financing support to local authority and private sector infrastructure projects to help meet UK Government objectives on climate change and regional economic growth. It will also establish an advisory function to help with the development and delivery of projects.
- **The Towns Fund**, providing £3.6 billion to drive the economic regeneration of deprived towns and deliver long-term economic and productivity growth, by renewing and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves user experience, and ensures future sustainability.

# Chapter 2

## How the Fund will operate

**2.1** The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities. This includes a range of high value local investment priorities, including local transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets. The Fund is jointly managed by HM Treasury (HMT), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Transport (DfT). This cross-departmental Fund represents a new approach to local investment and will end siloes in Whitehall that make it difficult to take a holistic approach to the infrastructure needs of local areas.

**2.2** At the Spending Review, the UK Government committed an initial £4 billion for the Levelling Up Fund for England over the next four years (up to 2024-25) and set aside at least £800 million for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK Government will use the new financial assistance powers in the UKIM Act to make the Fund available to the whole of the UK, enabling all communities to receive the investment and support they need to recover from the pandemic. As such, up to £4.8 billion until 2024-25 will be available for the Fund across the UK, with at least £800 million invested in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**2.3** Where appropriate, MHCLG and DfT will seek advice from the relevant devolved administrations at the shortlisting stage on projects that will be delivered in their geographical areas, including on deliverability and alignment with existing provision.

### Approach in England, Scotland and Wales

**2.4** In England, Scotland and Wales, funding will be delivered through local authorities. The Scottish and Welsh Territorial Offices will be consulted in the assessment of relevant bids.

**2.5** This prospectus sets out the approach for the first round of the Fund, which will prioritise bids that can demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in the coming financial year. We will keep the approach in this prospectus under review for future rounds. The Fund is open to all local areas. The amount of funding each area receives will be determined on a competitive basis to ensure value for money.

**2.6** Capacity funding will be allocated to local authorities most in need of levelling up in England, as identified in the index published alongside the prospectus. It will also be allocated to all local authorities in Scotland and Wales, to help build their relationship with the UK Government for the purposes of the Fund. This capacity funding will help support the relevant local authorities develop high-

quality bids for the Fund and ensure that investment is targeted where it is needed most.

**2.7** The index is based on a combination of metrics including need for economic recovery and growth, need for improved transport connectivity and need for regeneration.

**2.8** Further detail on how the Fund will operate from 2022-23 onwards will be set out later this year.

## **Approach in Northern Ireland**

**2.9** We are taking a different approach to delivering the Fund in Northern Ireland, which takes account of the different local government landscape compared to England, Scotland and Wales. Capacity funding will also be made available.

# Chapter 3

## Eligibility

**3.1** All areas in the UK are able to access the Fund. Specifically, in Great Britain:

- Unitary authorities (including metropolitan borough councils), London borough councils and district councils in two tier areas in England; and, unitary authorities in Scotland and Wales are eligible to submit bids in line with para 3.2;
- County councils with transport powers, combined authorities, mayoral combined authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA) are eligible to submit one transport bid; and unitary authorities in Scotland and Wales, and unitary authorities in England with transport powers are able to submit one additional bid which must be for transport.

**3.2** We expect Members of Parliament, as democratically-elected representatives of the area, to back one bid that they see as a priority. The number of bids that a local authority in the first category can make will relate to the number of MPs in their area. Accordingly, local authorities can submit one bid for every MP whose constituency lies wholly within their boundary. Every local authority can submit at least one bid. Where an MP's constituency crosses multiple local authorities, one local authority should take responsibility as the lead bidder and local areas should work together to designate that lead bidder. MHCLG will engage with local government on whether any further guidance would be helpful on who should be designated 'lead bidders' in these circumstances.

**3.3** The Fund will focus investment in projects that require up to £20m of funding. However, there is also scope for investing in larger high value transport projects, by exception. Bids above £20m and below £50m will be accepted for transport projects only, such as road schemes, and can be submitted by any bidding local authority. They will be subject to a more detailed business case process and will need to score highly overall. Local authorities may wish to consider pooling funding from their bids in order to improve the chance of taking forward a larger transport scheme.

**3.4** All bids should have the approval of the relevant authority responsible for delivering them. For example, transport bids submitted by district councils should have the approval of their relevant transport authority.

**3.5** Bidding authorities are encouraged to collaborate with neighbouring authorities on cross boundary schemes and to submit joint proposals across their local areas where appropriate.

**3.6** The above bidding authorities should consult a range of local stakeholders across the full geography of a place in developing their proposed investments for

the Fund. Potential relevant local stakeholders and partners include local businesses, public transport providers, police and emergency services, community representatives, environmental representatives and universities and FE Colleges (FECs). Where relevant, bidding authorities should also consider how to reach stakeholders from harder to reach rural communities in formulating proposals. Bids should demonstrate evidence of this overall local engagement as part of their strategic case through stakeholder letters or similar.

**3.7** The Government recognises the important role of Members of Parliament in championing the interests of their constituents. We expect bidding authorities to consult local Members of Parliament as part of their bid; though such support from local MPs is not a necessary condition for a successful bid. MPs can have a positive role in prioritising bids and helping broker local consensus. When considering the weighting given to bids, the expectation is that an MP will back one bid which they see as a priority, and any bid may have priority backing from multiple MPs and local stakeholders. But Members of Parliament may also want to support any or all schemes that would have a benefit to their constituencies in the usual way.

**3.8** We expect local authorities submitting multiple bids to spread these fairly and equitably within the authority boundary and across their full range of constituencies, targeting pockets of deprivation as appropriate.

**3.9** A different approach is being taken in Northern Ireland. The UK Government will accept bids at the most local level, from a range of local applicants, including but not limited to businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations, district councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and other public sector bodies.

# Chapter 4

## Investment themes for the first round of funding in 2021-22

4.1 The first round of the Fund will focus on three themes: smaller transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK's world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets, in particular:

- **Transport investments** including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. We are requesting proposals for high-impact small, medium and by exception larger local transport schemes to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth and improve the experience of transport users.
- **Regeneration and town centre investment**, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
- **Cultural investment** maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces

4.2 Investment proposals should focus on supporting high priority projects that will make a visible impact in local areas, recognising that what constitutes priority investment will vary across local authorities and geographies, including in rural areas of the UK.

4.3 This Government's Net Zero and wider environmental<sup>1</sup> ambitions represent a key part of our commitment to building back better – and this is particularly important with regards to capital and infrastructure projects, which have a visible impact on our surroundings. Projects should be aligned to and support Net Zero goals: for instance, be based on low or zero carbon best practice; adopt and support innovative clean tech and/or support the growth of green skills and sustainable supply chains. Where applicable, bids may also seek to demonstrate compliance with relevant Publicly Available Specifications such as PAS 2080 and PAS

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

2035. Bids should also consider how projects can work with the natural environment to achieve project objectives – considering at a minimum the project’s impact on our country’s natural assets and nature, as well as the resilience of the capital and infrastructure project to potential hazards such as flooding.<sup>2</sup>

## Transport

**4.4** Investment in local transport networks can revitalise local economies by boosting growth, improving connectivity and making places healthier, greener and more attractive places to live and work. Almost all local journeys start and finish on local transport networks, so investment can make a real, tangible difference to local residents, businesses and communities. Local transport projects can play a pivotal role in enhancing local places and efforts to level up. This could be upgrading bus and cycling infrastructure to improve access to jobs whilst supporting cleaner air and greener, healthier travel, targeting local road enhancements at congestion pinch points, and repairing bridges to ensure that communities aren’t isolated from key services.

**4.5** In view of their typically high value for money credentials when delivered effectively, well-formulated bids for local transport are likely to score highly on at least the value for money assessment criteria. Projects submitted for appraisal under this investment theme may include, but are not limited to:

- Investments in new or existing cycling provision<sup>3</sup>.
- Improved priority for local bus services (e.g. bus priority lanes or signal priority at junctions).
- Enhanced public transport facilities, such as bus stops and stations.
- Accessibility improvements to local transport networks for disabled people.
- Enhancements and upgrades to local road networks (e.g. by passes and junction improvements)<sup>4</sup>.
- Structural maintenance works to local roads, including bridges.
- Multi-modal proposals which combine two or more interventions to enhance transport across modes.

**4.6** Bids will be accepted for larger transport schemes, by exception, such as investments in the road network. Such bids will need to be between £20 million and below £50 million, and can be submitted by any bidding local authority. However, they will be subject to a more detailed business case process and will need to score highly overall. LAs may wish to consider pooling funding from their bids in order to improve the chance of taking forward a larger transport scheme.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

<sup>3</sup> All cycling proposals should follow the Government’s cycling design guidance which sets out the standards required if schemes are to receive funding

<sup>4</sup> Local areas are reminded that the UK Government expects that all local road projects in England funded by the UK Government will deliver or improve cycling and walking infrastructure (unless it can be shown that there is little or no need to do so). They are also expected to either support bus priority measures or funding bids should explain why doing so would not be necessary or appropriate.

### Case Study: Lincoln Transport Hub

The Government invested £11 million from the Local Growth Fund in this project led by the City of Lincoln Council. The scheme achieves significant regeneration and transformation of the city centre. It brings together a state-of-the-art bus station with stand, public realm improvements including a new pedestrian plaza, car park and retail space. The project has also improved Lincoln Central railway station.

The transport hub project was a key component of the local growth strategy in Lincoln. It has created a more accessible and attractive gateway to the city. This has kickstarted wider regeneration in the city centre and it has helped unlock wider retail, commercial and residential development in the city. Construction was completed in 2018 and the scheme is now fully operational.

### Case Study: Thanet Parkway

Funded by £12 million from the Getting Building Fund, Thanet Parkway is a new railway station near Cliffsend in Thanet, East Kent, consisting of two 12-car platforms to accommodate existing High Speed and mainline train services. It will be accessed by stairs and lifts via a refurbished Victorian underpass, which will also bring public realm improvements to an existing public right of way. The station will be connected to the village by a new footway/cycleway and have direct vehicular access from the A299 (part of the Major Road Network) to its 299-space car park.

The goal of the project is to utilise improved transport accessibility to spark regeneration, boosting job creation and house building in this historically economically disadvantaged area. The station will create up to 800 new jobs and accelerate delivery of up to 3,200 homes as well as supporting the 17,410 homes in the Thanet Local Plan. The project has long been an economic priority and its importance is now heightened by the determinantal economic impacts of Covid-19.

## Regeneration

**4.7** Town centres are a crucial part of our communities and local economies, providing both a focal point for retail and hospitality trade and a meaningful centre of gravity for local communities. The UK Government recognises that in recent years, changing consumer behaviour has made things tougher for retailers in our town centres and high streets, an issue made even more apparent by the impact of COVID-19. In addition, while some local areas have benefited from programmes such as the Towns Fund, some places such as smaller towns have not yet been able to access this investment.

**4.8** At the 2018 Budget, the UK Government published 'Our Plan for the High Street', spearheading a number of initiatives including the Towns Fund, to renew and reshape town centres and high streets so they look and feel better and can thrive in the long term. The regeneration pillar of Levelling Up Fund seeks to build on this philosophy and on the investments made so far through the Towns Fund.

We want to help communities transform derelict, vacant or poorly used sites into vibrant commercial and community hubs that local people can be proud of.

4.9 Projects submitted for appraisal under this investment theme may include:

- Regenerating key leisure and retail sites and improving their security, in order to encourage new businesses and public services to locate there.
- Removing derelict buildings and other eyesores to make way for new developments.
- Site acquisition and remediation of abandoned or brownfield sites, for both commercial and new residential use.
- Improving the public realm including high streets, parks and green spaces, designing out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Creating better connectivity between and within key retail and leisure sites.
- Putting forward 'Town Deals' for individual or groups of smaller towns that did not receive investment from the Towns Fund.

#### **Case Study: Strabane Town Centre**

Funded through the City Deals programme, Strabane town centre in Derry will be re-imagined and revitalised through the creation of new physical infrastructure, centred around its historic Canal Basin.

This project will enable key services to be more accessible for residents, including the relocation of the North West Regional College campus, the creation of new small business incubation units, a primary health care hub, a leisure centre and new improved connections to public transport to revitalise Strabane. The unique co-location of critical public services on a key strategic site will provide better connectivity and leverage economic, health and social benefits for people in the area.

### Case Study: The Bath Quays South Phase 1a

Funded by £2 million from the Getting Building Fund, the Bath Quays South Phase 1a project comprises the delivery of essential infrastructure and enabling works to bring forward the Quays South site for development. The project aims to bring this neglected strategic site back into use and will remove former development barriers and enable subsequent delivery of much needed modern office stock to support the creation of a new Central Business District.

The enabling works delivered through this project will facilitate completion of a flood risk management scheme, provision of public realm, improved access and bridge landing, conservation of Grade II listed Newark Works to provide 4,500sqm of creative work space, 5,000sqm of new Grade A Commercial office space, and up to 65 new riverside residential units.

## Culture and Heritage

**4.10** Investment in cultural assets can rejuvenate places, leading to positive economic and social outcomes at a local level. It can help to retain and grow a highly skilled workforce, attract tourists to bolster local business, and provide opportunities to grow people and communities' connections with places. Additionally, supporting the development of a more positive relationship between people and place can have a positive impact on both mental and physical health. In short, culture and heritage are things that people up and down the country bring people together and strengthen communities.

**4.11** Perception of place is an important 'pull' factor in investment and business location decisions and can affect a place's capacity to attract talent – especially young people – and retain workers. Many towns already have a strong heritage and sense of place, and benefit from their cultural and civic assets both directly, from tourism and visitor revenue, and indirectly, by inspiring a sense of local pride and community cohesion, making places more attractive to live and work in. Alongside towns, rural areas also often possess a rich tapestry of local culture and heritage assets.

**4.12** Preserving heritage is not limited to simply attracting tourists; many town and city centres across the UK are historic and beautiful in their own right and ensuring this remains the case is crucial to securing the future of the businesses that occupy them, working in synergy with the regeneration and town centre investment theme of this Fund.

**4.13** Proposed investments should actively complement, rather than duplicate or compete with funding already delivering or set to deliver in their areas (such as through the Heritage High Streets Fund). Where appropriate, the UK Government will seek advice from the devolved administrations as part of bid assessment in their geographic areas on shortlisted projects, regarding alignment with existing provision. Interventions that have a heritage and cultural focus when combined with other interventions in a place function in a complementary manner, greatly increasing the overall impact. Investments in cultural assets should be driven by an evidenced place-sensitive need or opportunity and have clear outcomes that align with areas' vision for place-based economic and social development, as well as the

health and wellbeing of local people. Projects submitted for appraisal under this investment theme may include:

- Upgrading and creating new cultural and creative spaces including sports or athletics facilities, museums, arts venues, theatres, libraries, film facilities, prominent landmarks or historical buildings, parks or gardens.
- New, upgraded or protected community hubs, spaces or assets (and associated green spaces).
- Acquiring and refurbishing key cultural and heritage sites including hotels and historic buildings.

### **Case Study: Inverness Castle**

Funded with £3 million from the Highland Council, development of Inverness castle and the surrounding area will add to the town's tourism offer by creating an attraction that celebrates the spirit of the Highlands past, present and future, including its creativity, well-being, culture, heritage and natural environment. The vision for the project includes new galleries to bring national and international exhibitions to the Highlands and museum displays celebrating Highland culture and heritage alongside shops, restaurants, bars and cafes promoting the best of Highland crafts and products. In addition, future work will include the development of public spaces within the Castle esplanade and the potential for new hotel accommodation in the vicinity of the development to further boost Inverness' tourism offer and help bring visitors to the area.

### **Case Study: Stoke-on-Trent Heritage Action Zone**

Funded by Historic England, the Stoke-on-Trent Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is a 5-year plan centred around Longton, one of six historic towns in the city that had suffered following the post-industrial decline of its ceramics industry, with residents moving to the suburbs and industry moving to business parks, affecting the town's central retail offer.

Working closely with community bodies, including the Potteries Heritage Society, Longton Traders, Staffordshire Film Archive, and the Universities of Keele and Staffordshire, the HAZ aims to help property owners convert the spaces over shops into accommodation, bringing people back to live in the centre of the town. In parallel, it has supported conversion of heritage bottle kilns and factories have been repurposed to enterprise space/studios for a resurgent pottery industry, and driven forward a design and work programme on heritage assets owned by the council that including the Spode Factory site, Stoke Town Hall, Longton Town Hall, Tunstall Town Hall, the Spitfire at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery and Trentham Mausoleum.

# Chapter 5

## Funding and targeting approach

**5.1** The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK on the basis of successful project selection. The Fund will set aside at least £800 million across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over four years from 2021-2022 to 2024-2025. For the first round of funding, at least 9% of total UK allocations will be set aside for Scotland, 5% for Wales, and 3% for Northern Ireland.

### Approach to England, Scotland and Wales

**5.2** Within the competition, funding will be targeted towards places in England, Scotland and Wales with the most significant need, as measured by an index taking into account the following the following place characteristics:

- need for economic recovery and growth;
- need for improved transport connectivity; and,
- need for regeneration.

**5.3** Using this index, places have been placed into category 1, 2, or 3, with category 1 representing places with the highest levels of identified need. These bandings will form part of our criteria for assessing bids, as set out in paragraph 7.1. While preference will be given to bids from higher priority areas, the bandings do not represent eligibility criteria, nor the amount or number of bids a place can submit. Bids from categories 2 and 3 will still be considered for funding on their merits of deliverability, value for money and strategic fit, and could still be successful if they are of exceptionally high quality.

**5.4** A list of all places' categorisation has been published alongside this document and can be found at [this link](#). We will shortly publish further detail on the methodology used to calculate the index.

**5.5** In the first round of funding, we will prioritise projects which are able to demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in the 2021-22 financial year. There will be future opportunities to bid in subsequent rounds. We would expect all funding provided from the Fund to be spent by 31 March 2024, and, exceptionally, into 2024-25 for larger schemes.

**5.6** County Councils, Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority are not listed in the index. Transport bids from these authorities will be assessed with respect to the characteristics of the place criteria of the lower-tier or single-tier authorities where the bid is located.

## Approach to Northern Ireland

5.7 A different approach is being taken in Northern Ireland. The UK Government will accept bids at the most local level, from a range of local applicants, including but not limited to businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations, district councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and other public sector bodies.

# Chapter 6

## Putting together proposals

**6.1** Local areas should take a holistic approach to their infrastructure needs across transport, regeneration and cultural investment when developing their bids. Applications for funding should clearly demonstrate how proposed investments will support relevant local strategies and their objectives for improving infrastructure, promoting growth, enhancing the natural environment and making their areas more attractive places to live and work. Local areas will also need to show why the proposed investment or set of investments represents the highest value local priorities.

**6.2** Each bid submitted by local institutions can be a bid for an individual project or a package bid consisting of multiple projects. Bids for an individual project or package bids can both request up to £20 million of funding, except in exceptional cases as set out in paragraph 3.4. Package bids must clearly explain how their component elements are aligned with each other and represent a coherent set of interventions. They can include a mix of projects from the Fund's three investment themes but any one bid should not include multiple unrelated investments.

**6.3** Local authorities may submit joint bids. The maximum bid size for joint bids will be determined by adding up the individual £20 million caps of each bidding authority. Joint bids will count towards the maximum number of bids that each local authority is able to submit. Joint proposals can contain a combination of interventions both within counties, regions and across borders. However, they must not be a disparate package of interventions - as part of the strategic case bidders must demonstrate that joint bids are a cohesive and coherent investment proposal. Any elements of a joint bid that are jointly delivered should be fundamental to the joint bid as a whole and serve to unlock any elements of the bid that are not delivered jointly.

**6.4** In the case of package bids containing more than one project, bids should come in two parts, covering the following:

- Part I (for the whole overall bid): a summary of the project proposals within the bid (up to a maximum of three projects per bid); and an overall financial case;
- Part II (for each individual project): the main theme this falls under; summary and strategic link to overall bid; information on deliverability (management, risk, finances, and benefits)

**6.5** To apply for investment from the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, eligible local institutions must submit their bids to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June 2021. Majority-transport bids will be assessed by the Department for Transport. Bids may also be

submitted before this date. It is expected that investment decisions will be made by the UK Government for this funding round by autumn 2021. We will publish further guidance on how places can submit bids shortly.

**6.6** Local authorities may wish to consider submitting bids for high value pipeline projects that they have already developed but not yet funded. In particular, the Levelling Up Fund supersedes in England the £150 million local pinch point programme, and local areas in England are encouraged to prioritise submitting for the first round of the Fund high quality proposals that have been developed for this programme where they exist, as well as for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

**6.7** The Government is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. To ensure we are considering the potential impact of funding on individuals with protected characteristics, we will give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty at key decision points and will seek information from applicants and lead authorities to support this process. Although this is not part of the bid assessment, in making final decisions, Government will give due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty. All local authorities are required to consider the equalities impacts of their bids under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**6.8** We recognise the importance of not only meeting our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 but also giving due regard to the additional equalities considerations that apply in Northern Ireland.

**6.9** All applicants must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control (or State Aid in Northern Ireland) as per Government guidance [<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/subsidy-control-designing-a-new-approach-for-the-uk>], as well as all other relevant legal obligations such as procurement. This will be tested as part of the appraisal process and monitored thereafter.

**6.10** The UK Government has a responsibility to support people, businesses and communities across the whole of our United Kingdom, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 recovery. Through the UK Internal Market Act 2020, the UK Government can invest in supporting communities throughout the UK.

**6.11** All proposals in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must fall within the scope of the financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Act 2020. Details of the Act, and explanatory notes, can be found on [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) or at the following web address: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/27/contents>. Other vires such as the Industrial Development Act (1982) may be used where relevant.

**6.12** Further guidance and templates for bid submissions, including package bids, will be provided to local authorities shortly after Budget.

## Delivery and funding requirements

**6.13** Once funding awards are decided, relevant local institutions are responsible for their delivery. Further contributions from the Fund will not be provided to meet cost overruns after funding has been agreed.

**6.14** For future rounds, the parameters set out in this prospectus will be kept under review, including updated to reflect any operational feedback and wider changes in government policy.

**6.15** Local authorities can only have one successful bid for each of their allocated number of bids over the lifecycle of the Fund. Local authorities are therefore encouraged to consider whether bids that they wish to submit for the first round of the Fund reflect their local priorities, or if they should wait until later rounds so that they have more time to consider and develop their proposals.

# Chapter 7

## Assessment criteria

7.1 The assessment process will focus on the following key criteria:

- **Characteristics of the place** – each local authority will be sorted into category 1, 2 or 3 based on our assessment metrics, with category 1 representing the highest level of identified need.
- **Deliverability** - will be based on supplementary finance, management and commercial cases, with bids able to demonstrate investment or which begin delivery on the ground in 2021-22 financial year prioritised in the first round of funding.
- **Strategic fit with local and Fund priorities** – this should be addressed in the strategic case of submissions and should include support from stakeholders.
- **Value for money** – an economic case should be submitted to explain the benefits of the bid and how it represents value for money.

### Characteristics of the place

7.2 Investment will be prioritised for local areas that are most in need of levelling up, with each LA given a category of 1, 2 or 3 against this criterion, with category 1 representing the highest level of identified need. The metrics used to determine a given place's category includes consideration of its need for economic recovery, regeneration and improved connectivity. Recent and committed levels of Government investment may also be considered as part of our assessment of an area's need for funding, including investment from any of the devolved administrations.

### Deliverability

7.3 All bids will be assessed for the evidence of clear and robust delivery and procurement plans, governance structures and project costings. Any delivery risks should be clearly explained alongside appropriate mitigating actions. Bids with multiple projects should clearly explain how they could be scaled back to a smaller total value if necessary. To ensure projects are delivered to programme and budget, we encourage bids to include a local financial contribution representing at least 10% of total costs. A contribution will be expected from private sector stakeholders, such as developers, if they stand to benefit from a specific project.

## Strategic fit with local priorities

7.4 Bids should set out a compelling case for why the proposed investment supports the economic, community and cultural priorities of their local area. Projects should be fully aligned and support any relevant local strategies (such as Local Plans, Local Industrial Strategies or Local Transport Plans) and local objectives for investment, improving infrastructure and levelling up. Projects should also be fully aligned to UK legal commitments, such as delivering Net Zero. Where applicable, bids should complement other investments from different funding streams.

7.5 As set out in paragraph 3.8, proposed bids and constituent projects should secure the support of and be developed after consultation with relevant local stakeholders and partners, such as other local authorities and local MPs. When considering the weighting given to bids, the expectation is that an MP will back one bid which they see as a priority, and any bid may have priority backing from multiple MPs and local stakeholders. But MPs may also want to support any or all schemes that would have a benefit to their constituencies in the usual way. In Northern Ireland, local councils should indicate whether they support bids within their geographies.

## Value for money

7.6 Bids should demonstrate how they represent public value to society. This could include where applicable adhering to the social value in government procurement framework (see Procurement Policy Note PPN 06/20) or the balanced scorecard. A range of benefits will be considered in our value for money appraisal of projects. This includes potential to boost local economic growth, environmental benefits (including contribution to achieving the UK Government's Net Zero carbon commitments and improving local air quality), greater employment opportunities, reduced travel times to key services, increased footfall in town and city centres, crime reduction and social value to local communities.

7.7 Different types of schemes will represent different levels of value for money. For example, local transport schemes are typically some of the highest value for money local interventions and we would therefore in particular expect well-designed and targeted local transport improvements to score highly on this criterion. Further guidance on what level and type of analysis should be provided by local authorities for bids of different sizes will be provided shortly after Budget.

# Chapter 8

## Decision making

**8.1** In the first round of funding, we will prioritise projects which are able to demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in the 2021-22 financial year. There will be future opportunities to bid in subsequent rounds. We would expect all funding provided from the Fund to be spent by 31 March 2024, and exceptionally into 2024-25 for larger schemes.

**8.2** For each of the four criteria, bids that progress will be assessed on a each of the criteria set out in paragraph 7.1. In its assessment, the UK Government will consider any relevant information provided in the bid proposal, as well as any publicly available data to test assertions in local submissions.

**8.3** The metrics that comprise the ‘characteristics of place’ assessment criterion will comprise data relating to places’:

- need for economic recovery and growth;
- need for improved transport connectivity; and,
- need for regeneration.

### Decision framework – England, Scotland, Wales

**8.4** Once we receive all bids we will assess them against the four criteria, with the ‘characteristics of place’ score determined by the index of priority places.

**8.5** Alongside these assessments, Ministers will have the opportunity to exercise discretion to meet the following additional considerations:

- Ensuring a reasonable thematic split of approved projects (e.g. across regeneration and town centre, transport and culture and heritage);
- Ensuring a fair spread of approved projects across Great Britain;
- Ensuring a fair balance of approved projects across places in need;
- Prioritisation of either ‘strategic fit’ or ‘deliverability’ or ‘value for money’ over the other criteria (noting this must be applied consistently to all projects);
- Taking into account other investment in a local area. In future rounds, this could include funding provided to local areas through the first round of this Fund.

**8.6** Further detail on the assessment and scoring process will be published following the Budget, alongside more detail on the framework for Northern Ireland.

# Chapter 9

## Monitoring and Evaluation

**9.1** The Levelling Up Fund will reflect this Government's greater emphasis on high-quality evaluation, which is critical to understanding what types of interventions work well in addressing levelling up challenges, through individual projects and across varying spatial scales. The development of a local growth and transport evaluation culture, which promotes sharing learning across the UK, will be an important strand of this work.

**9.2** To provide assurances that projects are delivering value for money and to time, the Levelling Up Fund will have a robust, coherent monitoring system. This will be built around a common understanding of outputs and outcomes sought through the Fund.

**9.3** Monitoring and evaluation of the Levelling Up Fund will involve a combination of national-level evaluation activity with project-level monitoring and evaluation. National-level evaluation activity will include the production and publication of an M&E framework and guidance later this year, in order to support the development of project-level evaluations. As part of business case development, local authorities should set out a proportionate plan for project-level monitoring and evaluation.

**9.4** Further detail on the data we will be utilising as part of our monitoring and evaluation approach, and what we will be expecting local authorities and delivery partners to provide will be published as part of supplementary guidance following this prospectus.

# Chapter 10

## Supporting places with their bids

**10.1** Capacity funding will be provided to local authorities in England most in need of levelling up investment and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales, recognising that unlike in England the Levelling Up Fund does not supersede any existing funding streams. This will help support relevant local authorities to develop high quality bids and therefore ensure that the Fund distributes funding to areas where it is needed most and achieves a suitable balance of spending across the UK.

**10.2** Local areas should consider opportunities to join up capacity funding received from related funding streams, such as the UKCRF in support of forming a single cohesive local growth strategy across their areas.

**10.3** A flat £125,000 of capacity funding will be allocated to all eligible local authorities. This capacity funding will be provided with the primary intention of supporting the relevant local authorities to develop their bids for later rounds of the Fund. It is expected that local authorities will not be able to use the capacity funding in time to support bids for the first round and that it will instead support the development of proposals for later bidding rounds. Further guidance on capacity support will be provided to local authorities shortly after Budget, including when funding will be allocated and what it can be used for.

**HM Treasury contacts**

This document can be downloaded from  
[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

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## [UK Community Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22](#)

Updated 11 May 2021

### **Ministerial foreword**

Now is the right time to prepare for our national recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

We want people across all parts of the UK to see, feel, and experience the benefits as we bounce back and level up.

Now we have left the European Union, the opportunities to deliver this ambition are in our own hands. Investment from EU Structural Funds will continue to be spent by local areas until 2023 and this government has committed to at least matching EU receipts through the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund, on average reaching around £1.5 billion a year. This new Fund, to be launched in 2022, will operate throughout the UK and play a part in uniting and levelling up the whole country.

This is about more than replacing like with like. We can go beyond the limitations of EU funding with a successor to those arrangements far better tailored to the needs and aspirations of our own country. To give real focus to our domestic priorities for people and places by championing local insight, stripping out overly prescriptive categories for spending, and reducing bureaucracy.

That is what our UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be all about. Its long term vision, which will be set out in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Framework, is designed to increase funding for projects that are supporting people and places across the UK, focused on our domestic priorities, growing local economies, and breathing new life into our communities.

And to ensure that local communities are best placed to do this we are starting work now, with the UK Community Renewal Fund being provided for 2021-22 – an additional £220 million of investment. This Fund, which this prospectus outlines, will help support local areas to pilot imaginative new approaches and programmes that unleash their potential, instil pride, and prepare them to take full advantage of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund when it launches in 2022.

We recognise that each area has its unique challenges requiring unique solutions. So each pilot will empower places to explore how best to tackle local challenges – whether through building skills, supporting local businesses, supporting communities and places, or providing employment support – to build communities where people want to live, work and visit, while allowing government to evaluate how best to ensure levelling up right across the country.

There is a real opportunity to help build the safer, greener, more prosperous and neighbourly country that we all want to see after Covid. Along with the Cabinet colleagues with whom I will be working to deliver the Fund, including the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – I am excited to see the creativity and ambition of the proposals we receive to help realise this Government's mission to level up every part of our United Kingdom through this Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that will follow it.

**Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**

**Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government**

## **1. Introduction**

The UK's departure from the European Union is an historic opportunity to build a productive and prosperous economy that is fit for the future and works for all people, communities and nations across the United Kingdom. As we build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, this government will deliver growth that levels up opportunity, is aligned to our net zero objectives and cements our status as Global Britain.

Our thriving communities form a fundamental part of the fabric of life in the UK. Economic differences still remain between different parts of the United Kingdom, from our cities to ex-industrial, rural and coastal communities. These inequalities have real implications. They affect people's lives through their pay, work opportunities, health and life chances.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be a flagship policy in delivering on this Government's commitment to level up the country. It will target people and places most in need across the UK. It will be focused on our domestic priorities and seize the opportunities that come from our departure from the EU and the bureaucracy of EU structural funds.

The UK pays for EU structural funds through its EU Budget contributions, made of UK taxpayers money. Local areas will continue to spend investment from EU structural funds until the end of 2023. Due to the way these funds operate, levels of investment from EU structural funds will be higher across the United Kingdom in the coming financial year 2021-22 than they were in 2020-21.

In addition to this investment, to help the UK prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, this government is providing funding in 2021-22 through the UK Community Renewal Fund. This Fund aims to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches, aligning national and local provision.

The UK Community Renewal Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK, creating opportunities to trial new approaches and innovative ideas at the local level. Through this Fund, we will strengthen the relationship between UK government and places across the UK. The UK government will work directly with local partners, so that the people that know their places best are front and centre of the decisions that impact their areas and lives. This Fund will also provide capacity funding to help places prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

This prospectus sets out our ambition for the UK Community Renewal Fund, with guidance to help people access the funding.

### **1.1. Investing at the local level: Our offer to people and places**

All places face a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Boosting productivity growth across the UK relies on harnessing local knowledge, expertise and social capital. Ensuring that all places can take advantage of economic growth requires support tailored to the individual barriers faced at a local level.

Investing at the local level can help provide the support people and places need to achieve higher levels of productivity and tackle disadvantage to ensure that future prosperity is felt across the UK. This is especially true as we build back stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside national provision, targeted public investment can help renew communities, supporting their recovery and boosting resilience.

Any investment must recognise the challenges faced by the people living in them and ensure that everyone is able to take advantage of economic growth. Ensuring that everyone has the skills they need to take advantage of the opportunities in their local area is critical to sharing prosperity. Yet people face different barriers to gaining employment and accessing the skills needed to progress in life. Overcoming those barriers requires support tailored to the challenges people face at a local level.

These pilots complement this Government's strategy to support people and places across the UK, which looks to supercharge the economic performance of our major cities, catalyse industrial centres of excellence across the country in the sectors of importance to the future economy, and support our struggling towns to ensure no places are left behind. The existing offer includes:

- **Levelling Up Fund**, which will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. The Fund will be jointly managed by HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Transport. This is a new approach to investing in local growth – ending siloes in Whitehall that make it difficult to take a holistic approach to the needs of local areas.
- **City and Growth Deals**, which are locally led, with local partners working with UK government, Devolved Administrations and the public and private sectors to develop proposals, deliver interventions and attract further investment to our cities. To date, the UK government has committed more than £3 billion to the Deals.
- **Plan for Jobs**, in which the government has announced unprecedented support to help unemployed people in Great Britain find a job. This includes many Great Britain-wide measures, such as doubling the number of work coaches, the Kickstart Scheme to support young people at risk of long-term unemployment, an expanded Youth Offer for young people on Universal Credit and investment in externally contracted provision via the Job Entry Targeted Support and the Job Finding Support programmes to expand support even further. Additionally, the Restart programme will provide regular, personalised support for Universal Credit claimants in England who have been searching for work for over a year. Plan for Jobs will support the longer-term recovery from the unprecedented economic impact of COVID-19.
- **Freeports**, which provides funding to establish Freeports as national hubs for global trade and investment across the UK, promote regeneration and job creation and create hotbeds for innovation that will intensify the economic impact of our ports and generate increased economic activity across the UK.
- **UK Community Ownership Fund**, which will empower communities to protect vital community assets in their area by providing funding to take ownership over them, in support of the social wellbeing of local communities.

In England, this funding will also sit alongside the following programmes and through which Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have received investment via the Barnett Formula:

- **The Towns Fund**, which provides the core public investment in Town Deals to drive the economic regeneration of towns to address growth constraints and deliver long-term economic and productivity growth through urban regeneration, skills and connectivity.

- **Future High Streets Fund**, which helps local high streets evolve and adapt to change, providing investment to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, promotes social connection, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.
- **Getting Building Fund**, which targets investment in areas facing the biggest economic challenges as a result of the pandemic, supporting the delivery of shovel-ready infrastructure projects, agreed with mayors and Local Enterprise Partnerships to boost economic growth, and fuel local recovery and jobs.
- **Skills Bootcamps**, which deliver a flexible training programme based on employer/sector 'in-demand' skills needs which may be either regulated (i.e. qualification based) or non-regulated (i.e. based on alignment with industry standards). They currently cover digital, technical and construction sectors.
- **Further Education Reform**, which aims to support people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, wherever they live in the country. Focusing post-16 skills on this core mission will increase productivity, support growth industries, and give individuals opportunities to progress in their careers.

## 1.2 Moving on from EU Structural Funds

Leaving the European Union is an opportunity to change the way we support our people and places. We will replace EU structural funds with a domestic successor that is tailored to the UK and its priorities for people and places.

In designing a new programme, it has been important to learn lessons and we have worked closely with stakeholders to understand how we can design a fund which better meets our priorities. We hosted 25 engagement events across the UK, attended by more than 500 representatives from a variety of sectors, and continue to work closely with businesses, Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships, higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector organisations, and rural partnership groups.

The feedback has been consistent. Our offer to places will champion local insight, strip out overly prescriptive categories for spend and reduce bureaucracy. We will maximise the benefits of leaving the EU through:

- **Quicker delivery of funding** including providing £220 million to spend in 2021-22 to help local areas transition away from EU structural funds.
- **Better targeting** for places in need, for example ex-industrial communities, coastal communities, rural areas and deprived towns, and for people most in need of additional support.
- **Better alignment with domestic priorities** moving away from a focus on overly prescriptive, siloed priority axes and instead enabling more holistic, joined-up investment based on local insight.
- **Cutting burdensome EU bureaucracy** including nurturing innovative proposals and reducing forms and targets that have created an unsustainable burden and led to a focus on outputs not outcomes.

The UK government has a responsibility to support people, jobs, and communities across the whole of our United Kingdom, particularly in the context of our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the UK Internal Market Act 2020, the UK government can invest in supporting communities across the UK. This paves the way for a new relationship between the UK government and local partners who will be front and centre of this fund.

A big part of testing and trialling means evaluating what works well and what does not, so that it can feed into the development of both the places and people portions of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Evaluation will be central to this process from the start and should be embedded as a key element of proposals. Further details can be found in section 5.2.3 and section 9 of this prospectus.

### **1.3 Looking ahead to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Our long-term vision is for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places. We have already committed to ramping up funding so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match EU receipts, on average reaching around £1.5 billion a year. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will include:

- A place-based portion which will target places most in need across the UK, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities. It will support people and communities, opening up new opportunities and spurring regeneration and innovation. It will enable joined-up, holistic investment to support local communities and people; and
- A second portion of the Fund will be targeted differently to people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that are tailored to local need. This will support improved employment outcomes for those in and out of work in specific cohorts of people who face labour market barriers.

We will publish further details on this in a UK-wide Investment Framework later this year and the profile will be confirmed at the next Spending Review.

The UK government will engage the Devolved Administrations and local partners as we develop the UK Shared Prosperity Fund's Investment Framework and in advance of its publication. We intend to work with the Devolved Administrations to ensure that funding is used to best effect and supports citizens across the UK. We have demonstrated this commitment by confirming that the Devolved Administrations will have a place within the governance structures for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The UK Community Renewal Fund will help inform the design of the UK Shared Prosperity through funding of one-year pilots, but the funds are distinct with regard to design, eligibility and duration. Successful UK Community Renewal Fund bids will be for 2021-22 only.

## **2. UK Community Renewal Fund: An overview**

### **2.1 Objectives of the UK Community Renewal Fund**

#### **2.1.1 Supporting a smooth transition**

The UK pays for EU structural funds through its EU Budget contributions and local areas will continue to spend investment from EU structural funds until the end of 2023. Due to the way

these funds operate, levels of investment from EU structural funds will be higher across the UK in the coming financial year 2021-22 than they were in 2020-21.

In addition to this investment, we are providing £220 million of additional funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to help us move smoothly away from the EU structural fund programme. The UK Community Renewal Fund will help us prepare over 2021-22 for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by piloting new approaches and through provision of capacity funding.

### **2.1.2 Enabling innovation through pilots**

The UK Community Renewal Fund will support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches ahead of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Through these pilots, we want to unleash new ideas and pilot programmes to better support people and communities in need across the UK.

We want to support innovative responses to local challenges and local need across the UK, spanning urban, rural and coastal areas. We want to use the UK Community Renewal Fund to test greater integration of types of interventions and greater flexibility between investment themes than under EU structural funds.

This includes removing barriers that people face in accessing skills and local labour market opportunities, building the evidence base for future interventions and exploring the viability of new ideas.

### **2.1.3 A new way of working between UK government and places**

The UK Community Renewal Fund also offers us an opportunity to establish a new way of working between UK government and places. We want to work directly with local partners in each nation across the UK, putting people that know their places best front and centre in shaping decisions, forming a new, direct relationship with the UK government.

See section 5 for detailed guidance on the delivery model.

### **2.1.4 Levelling up and creating opportunity**

The UK Community Renewal Fund will be a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility. In Great Britain, to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places we have identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience. We will prioritise projects that target investment at communities in need, especially at the top 100 priority places and provide capacity funding to the [lead authority for these 100 places](#).

We are taking a different approach to delivering the UK Community Renewal Fund in Northern Ireland, which takes account of the different local government landscape in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain. There will be a pre-determined national allocation for Northern Ireland, set at £11 million.

See section 4 for further information on the investment process and selection criteria for all places. We will publish a methodological note to explain how the index was developed.

### **2.1.5 Building capacity**

We want to support places to develop their capabilities to maximise the benefits of local investment. That is why we are reserving a portion of the UK Community Renewal Fund for capacity funding:

- Providing up to £2 million in total for bid co-ordination and appraisal as part of the UK Community Renewal Fund, available to the lead authorities of each of the 100 priority places, to help them coordinate and appraise bids.
- Providing up to £14 million capacity funding to support with preparation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, available to local partners in Great Britain later in the year. In Northern Ireland, we will also provide capacity funding to partners such as sector groups and key stakeholders. Details on eligibility for this capacity funding, and the funding itself, will be released later this year.

Further details on capacity funding can be found in section 4.4 of this prospectus.

## **2.2 How the Fund will work – a summary**

This prospectus sets out how the UK Community Renewal Fund will operate across the UK and is a guide for applicants entering the process. A summary is provided below and a glossary of terms is provided at [Annex A](#).

The following details apply to the UK Community Renewal Fund only and do not predetermine the approach to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. We will publish further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide Investment Framework later this year and the profile will be confirmed at the next Spending Review.

### **2.2.1 Investment priorities**

To nurture innovative thinking and offer flexibility, projects may align with one, or deliver across several, of the following investment priorities:

- Investment in skills
- Investment for local business
- Investment in communities and place
- Supporting people into employment

There will be no ringfences applied across these themes.

90% of funding available through the UK Community Renewal Fund is revenue funding.

Section 3 sets out further detail on the Fund's investment priorities.

### **2.2.2 Delivery in Great Britain**

In Great Britain, UK government will run a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility.

To ensure the UK Community Renewal Fund funding reaches the most in need, we have identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills and population density. This has been developed based on a consistent approach to identifying need across these nations.

For the purposes of the UK Community Renewal Fund, place is defined at the lower tier, borough and unitary geography as set out in the [glossary of terms](#).

A lead authority has been assigned for each place. These are:

- Mayoral Combined Authorities, where they exist in England
- The Greater London Authority
- County Councils
- Unitary authorities elsewhere in England and in Scotland and Wales

Lead authorities should invite project proposals from a range of local applicants, including local district councils, voluntary and community sector organisations and local education providers including universities. Lead authorities should then appraise these projects and produce a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place for submission to UK government. The UK government will select projects in line with the selection criteria set out in [section 6](#). The UK government will not accept direct bids from any bodies other than the lead authority.

The lead authority of each of the 100 priority places will receive capacity funding to help them with this bid co-ordination and appraisal.

Further detail on the distribution of funding in Great Britain can be found in section 4.1 and detail on the assessment process for all places is set out in [section 6](#). The 100 priority places and lead authorities for each place can be found at the end of this prospectus.

Further detail on the role of lead authorities is set out in more detail in section 5.3.

Separate guidance will be made available for the lead authorities in Great Britain shortly.

**The lead authority should submit their project shortlist to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June 2021.**

### **2.2.3 Delivery in Northern Ireland**

We are taking a different approach to delivering the UK Community Renewal Fund in Northern Ireland, which takes account of the different local government landscape in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain. There will be a pre-determined national allocation for Northern Ireland, set at £11 million. By treating Northern Ireland as one geographical area we will ensure all communities have equal access to apply for the Fund.

UK government will accept bids from a range of local applicants, including but not limited to universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, and umbrella business groups.

**Bids should be submitted directly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June 2021.**

### **2.2.4 Delivery in Gibraltar**

As a recipient of EU structural funds, the overseas territory of Gibraltar will also be eligible for up to £500,000 of investment from the UK Community Renewal Fund. The UK government will discuss the delivery of funding in Gibraltar directly with the Government of Gibraltar. A separate [guidance document for Gibraltar](#) has been published.

## **2.2.5 Preparing for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Through the UK Community Renewal Fund, UK government will also provide up to £14 million capacity funding to support with preparation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, available to local partners in Great Britain later in the year. In Northern Ireland, we will also provide capacity funding to partners such as sector groups and key stakeholders.

Further details on capacity funding can be found in section 4.4 of this prospectus.

## **2.2.6 Further details**

You can contact [UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk) to request clarification on any of the content of this prospectus until 17 March 2021. A summary of frequently asked questions and answers will then be published online.

## **3. UK Community Renewal Fund: Investment priorities**

We know the EU structural funds programmes were administratively burdensome and overly prescriptive. At times, local partners were unable to invest funds in line with the needs of their area where local demand did not align with the overly prescriptive funding priorities and 'priority axes'. We will change this, and instead empower places to take a more holistic approach.

### **3.1 Guidance for investment**

To nurture innovative thinking and offer flexibility, projects may align with one, or deliver across several, of the following investment priorities:

- Investment in skills
- Investment for local business
- Investment in communities and place
- Supporting people into employment

There will be no ringfences applied across these themes. This will empower places to take a more holistic approach, changing overly prescriptive funding priorities and 'priority axes'.

90% of funding available through the UK Community Renewal Fund is revenue funding, with a small amount of capital funding. Prospective applicants should calibrate their bids accordingly. We are interested in bids that are either wholly or predominantly revenue based. Further detail on guiding principles for prospective applicants can be found in section 5.2 of this prospectus.

We are interested in bids that build on local insight and knowledge, and project proposals that align with long-term strategic plans for local growth, target people most in need and support community renewal. In addition, projects should show how they complement other national and local provision. A focus for this Fund is to support innovation and new ideas in these areas, investing in pilots that draw on local insights and which will help places to prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022.

#### **3.1.1 Contributing to our Net Zero and environmental objectives**

This Government's Net Zero ambitions represent a key pillar in our commitment to build back better. We are focused on delivering the kind of growth that levels up, reduces emissions, and cements our status as Global Britain.

Investment made under this Fund should be able to demonstrate the extent of contribution to net zero objectives or wider environmental considerations. Projects should be based on low or zero carbon best practice, adopt and support innovative clean tech where possible and support the growing skills and supply chains in support of Net Zero where possible. As a minimum, investment under this fund should meet the clean growth principle and must not conflict with the UK's legal commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

To support green growth, bids should also consider how projects can work with the natural environment to achieve project objectives, and – at a minimum – consider the project's impact on our natural assets and nature. For further information on how to take these considerations into account, see the [Enabling a Natural Capital Approach \(ENCA\) resources](#).

This is not applicable to interventions focused on supporting people into employment. Further detail on UK-wide selection criteria can be found in [section 6](#) of this prospectus.

### **3.1.2 Using the UK Internal Market Act 2020**

The financial assistance power in the UK Internal Market Act 2020 allows the UK government to invest across the whole of the UK for the purpose of economic development and will therefore be used to deliver the UK Community Renewal Fund UK-wide.

The power, in addition to the Devolved Administrations' existing powers, allows the UK government to complement and strengthen the support given to citizens, businesses and communities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Proposals submitted for the UK Community Renewal Fund must therefore fall under the scope of the power, in that they must support economic development. Other areas covered by the power include culture, sport, and educational and training activities.

Details of the Act can be found on [legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk).

Other vires such as the Industrial Development Act (1982) may be used where relevant.

### **3.1.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty**

As a public sector body, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. To ensure we are considering the potential impact of funding on individuals with protected characteristics, we will give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty at key decision points, and will seek information from applicants and lead authorities to support this process.

Although this is not part of the project assessment, in making final decisions on the portfolio of approved projects the department will give due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty. All applicants should consider equalities impacts in formulating their bids and lead authorities are required to consider the equalities impacts of their decisions on proposals under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We recognise the importance of not only meeting our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 but also giving due regard to the additional equalities considerations that apply in Northern Ireland.

### **3.2 Investment in skills**

The UK Community Renewal Fund will help equip people with the skills they need to seize new opportunities and ensure their local communities are prosperous and productive. This includes equipping people with the skills they need to capitalise on the opportunities and needs of their local area and meet the needs of an increasingly green and digital economy.

Proposals should form part of the broader local growth bid and be clearly distinct from funding provided through other funding streams such as the Adult Education Budget, Apprenticeships, the Strategic Development Fund and Skills Bootcamps.

We are interested in proposals for innovative projects that address current and emerging local skills needs and are complementary to broader place-based investment. Bids may include, but are not limited to interventions that address:

- **Work-based training** – for example addressing specific local need from local employers for on-the-job training to support local growth, such as taking on trainee builders for a new infrastructure project.
- **Retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce** – for example helping organisations to identify and understand skills gaps or provide access to financial support for relevant training where the local workforce may require new skills to meet the needs of a local employer or sector and support local economic transitions.
- **Promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion** – for example supporting the development of digital skills for digitally excluded individuals, especially where digital exclusion presents a barrier to employment, building confidence in application of basic and advanced digital skills and promoting safety and awareness online.

Proposals should demonstrate their strategic fit and link to local skills and labour market need. Bids need to evidence that the project does not conflict with wider UK government policy. Further details on assessment criteria can be found in [section 6](#) of this prospectus.

### **3.3 Investment for local business**

Targeted support for local business can help local residents through increased employment, better training and in-work opportunities and creating new entrepreneurial ventures.

We are especially interested in projects that target support for under-represented groups and community-level interventions that can increase opportunity for all, including coastal and rural enterprises.

Investment in pilots can also help create an innovation culture across the UK. This could be through finding new ways to promote green and tech adoption, commercialisation or helping create a pathway for upskilling local businesses through collaborations between higher education and small businesses.

We are interested in proposals for innovative pilots and projects that address local business and innovation needs. Bids may include, but are not limited to, interventions that address:

- **Supporting entrepreneurs and helping businesses with potential to create more job opportunities for current employees or take on new employees** – for example helping businesses to access the specialist support they need such as investor readiness schemes and private sector experts like experienced non-executives.
- **Encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential** – for example facilitating small businesses grow and to develop new and improved products and services by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing, including small-scale knowledge transfer activity. This may include nurturing further join up between higher education institutions and small businesses, capitalising on research outcomes and building innovation capacity through development of plans for local innovation facilities and opportunities such as innovation centres and incubation services.
- **Supporting decarbonisation measures** – for example encouraging local businesses and organisations to reduce greenhouse gases through investment in new technology or energy efficiency measures that can have bottom line benefits and improve business productivity.

Proposals should demonstrate evidence their strategic fit and link to local economic and business need. Loan or equity investments are not in scope of this funding. Bids need to evidence that the project does not conflict with UK government policy. Further details on assessment criteria can be found in [section 6](#) of this prospectus.

### **3.4 Investment in communities and place**

Our communities are at the core of our cultural and economic heritage and identity. We need to invest further to maximise opportunities to bring people together, build our social fabric and boost recovery and resilience. In turn, this will create places where people want to work, visit and live. Investing in improving, protecting and creating community and natural assets can boost pride and wellbeing, drive productivity, attract and retain talent, and nurture a unique sense of place.

90% of funding available through the UK Community Renewal Fund is revenue funding. Applicants should calibrate their bids accordingly. Further detail on guiding principles for prospective applicants can be found in section 5.2.1 of this prospectus.

We are interested in proposals for innovative pilots and projects that address community needs and support local places. Bids may include, but are not limited to, interventions that address:

- **Feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects** – for example assessing opportunity and viability of green projects that contribute towards our green agenda or net-zero objectives such as installing electric vehicle charging points and coastal investment projects. This may include investing in feasibility studies to assess, for example, scheduling considerations, legal, economic and technical factors for projects that could support local decarbonisation where this brings social or economic benefits to local people and promoting environmentally conscious or collaborative local solutions such as clean energy projects.

- **Exploring opportunity for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development** – for example investing in culture focused feasibility studies and community facilities to attract people to places, including city centres and rural and coastal towns. This may include research for projects that could generate footfall to support other private-sector businesses, opportunities to improve efficiency and collaboration by joining up local public services to produce better local outcomes or investing in the preservation or enhancement of cultural and sporting facilities such as museums, galleries, visitor attractions, pier restoration and heritage assets.
- **Improving green spaces and preserving important local assets** – for example enhancing natural assets, including green spaces in neighbourhoods and housing estates, to enhance quality of life to attract and retain talent, and attract tourism.
- **Promoting rural connectivity** – for example developing opportunities for digital functionality and physical connectivity to help realise the full potential of rural businesses. This may include exploring proposed innovative ideas for enhancing accessibility and social, economic and cultural opportunities for rural communities, including rural and green infrastructure.

Proposals should demonstrate evidence their strategic fit and link to local community, social or economic need. Bids need to evidence that the project does not conflict with UK government policy. Further details on assessment criteria can be found in [section 6](#) of this prospectus.

### **3.5 Supporting people into employment**

We need to act to reduce the additional barriers some people face to employment in order to enable them to take advantage of the economic opportunities as the UK moves forward.

Investment here will help places provide local, tailored, wrap-around support to those furthest from the labour market – focusing on individuals who find it difficult to engage with mainstream provision or for whom mainstream provision is not an option. This will support people in overcoming a variety of additional barriers to employment or mainstream programmes which they are unable to fully utilise without additional support.

This should be additional to other public support and may support but not duplicate, other government initiatives and core departmental provision (such as the Adult Education Budget or the Flexible Support Fund).

Bids should also demonstrate how their proposal will complement mainstream activity, such as the Kickstart Scheme, Restart Programme and other Plan for Jobs initiatives, highlighting what wrap-around support is being proposed, and how the target audience will be identified and engaged.

Pilots should draw upon and enhance multi-agency delivery teams, including the community and voluntary sector along with public provision. They should bring together a range of service providers to embed and provide a coordinated service to support individuals along the journey to employment.

We are interested in proposals for innovative pilots and projects that focus on delivering bespoke programmes, utilising a needs-based approach to support individuals to overcome their multiple or complex barriers which inhibit their ability to gain employment. These pilots

should support those most disengaged from the labour market. Bids may include, but are not limited to, interventions that address:

- **Supporting people to engage with local services which support them on their journey towards employment** – such as bringing together multi-agency teams to join up a variety of services around an individual to address the variety of barriers to employment they may face; or key-worker support to connect individuals with existing public or voluntary provision.
- **Identifying and addressing any potential barriers these individuals may face in gaining employment or moving closer to the labour market** – such as the use of key-worker support to work with beneficiaries to identify barriers to employment; working with and connecting individuals to the most appropriate services throughout the employment journey.
- **Raising aspirations, supporting individuals to access Plan for Jobs employment support, jobs and find sustainable employment** – such as providing holistic support to address the long-term barriers to employment including but not limited to: support for alcohol and drugs interventions, skills for life such as timekeeping, confidence building and, employability support, including work experience, CV writing or interview preparation.
- **Supporting people to gain the basic skills they need to develop their potential for sustainable work** – such as English, Maths, Digital and English for Speakers of Other Languages skills and training courses. Other suitable provision could include support intended to develop communication, interpersonal and presentation skills.
- **Testing what works in helping people move towards work** – such as testing new initiatives which support people along the employment journey to understand how different interventions, or targeting approaches, can maximise the effectiveness of employment programmes aimed at those furthest from the labour market.

These pilot projects should enable us to test various interventions with a view to providing an evidence base to understand what really works in supporting people into employment. They should test ways of working collaboratively at a local level, taking a multi-agency approach, working with Jobcentre Plus and including the community and voluntary sector to provide the complete suite of support that those with additional or complex barriers might face.

Proposals should demonstrate evidence their strategic fit and link to local labour market and employability needs. Bids need to evidence that the project does not conflict with UK government policy. Further details on assessment criteria can be found in [section 6](#) of this prospectus.

## **4. Distribution of the UK Community Renewal Fund**

### **4.1 Distribution of funding in Great Britain**

The UK government will run a competitive process that all places in Great Britain are eligible to apply for. Bids for the UK Community Renewal Fund will be managed by the following, hereafter referenced as the 'lead authority':

- Mayoral Combined Authorities, where they exist in England

- The Greater London Authority
- County Councils
- Unitary authorities elsewhere in England and in Scotland and Wales

These lead authorities must invite bids from project applicants prior to submitting a shortlist of project bids to UK government. This is set out in more detail at section 5.3. This approach is for the UK Community Renewal Fund in 2021-22 only.

To ensure the UK Community Renewal Fund funding reaches the most in need, we have identified 100 priority places for investment based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills and population density. This has been developed based on a consistent approach to identifying need across Great Britain.

The UK Community Renewal Fund will prioritise bids that target the top 100 places (“100 priority places”), alongside a good contribution to strategic fit and delivery/effectiveness. The assessment process for all places is set out at [section 6](#).

Funding will not be awarded for projects that do not demonstrate a good contribution to the selection criteria. Being listed as a priority place does not guarantee funding.

The lead authority of each of the 100 priority places will also receive capacity funding to help them invite bids locally and appraise these bids. Each lead authority will receive £20,000 per priority place. This funding can be incurred from April 2021 for staff or other resources needed to coordinate and appraise bids. It will be paid to lead authorities in the summer and will be paid regardless of whether bids are successful.

We are committed to transparency and a methodological note will be published, explaining how the index of economic resilience was developed and the 100 priority places identified.

#### **4.2 Distribution of funding in Northern Ireland**

A different approach will be taken for Northern Ireland, where UK government will run a national competition against a fixed national allocation. All areas in Northern Ireland are eligible for funding and applicants will be able to apply directly to UK government. This will equate to £11 million of funding.

Distributing funding through a national competition rather than through local councils takes account of the different local government landscape in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain. We have not applied any sub-national targeting within Northern Ireland to seek to ensure that all communities across Northern Ireland can apply for these funds.

#### **4.3 Distribution of funding in Gibraltar**

As a recipient of EU structural funds, Gibraltar will also be eligible for up to £500,000 of investment from this fund. We will discuss this directly with the Government of Gibraltar and the following sections do not apply.

#### **4.4 Capacity funding to support preparation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

A portion of the Community Renewal Fund will be reserved for capacity funding, to be allocated to local partners for preparation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Capacity funding to support preparation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be available to local partners in Great Britain later in the year. This funding will help build internal capacity and develop a project pipeline ahead of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. In Northern Ireland, we will also provide capacity funding to partners such as sector groups and key stakeholders to build awareness of UK Shared Prosperity Fund opportunities, assist potential applicants applying to government and support us in developing a local investment plan for Northern Ireland.

Up to £14 million will be available for supporting preparation ahead of the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This will be made available when the long-term allocation profile for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is published later this year. We will also set out details on how this capacity funding will be distributed at this time. The allocation of capacity funding under the UK Community Renewal Fund does not pre-determine the allocation approach for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

## **5. Administering the Fund: Process and selection**

### **5.1 Overview of delivery approach**

We are committed to ensuring that local partners across the UK can shape investment from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

The approach outlined below applies to the UK Community Renewal Fund only. Further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund delivery approach will be published in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Framework later this year.

#### **5.1.1 Delivery in Great Britain**

In Great Britain, we are inviting lead authorities to: invite bids from a range of project applicants; appraise and prioritise a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place (as defined in the [glossary of terms](#) and set out in the [list of 100 priority places](#)); and submit a shortlist of projects to UK government.

To ensure the 100 priority places are able to undertake the functions carried out above, the lead authorities in the 100 priority places will receive capacity funding as set out at Section 4.1. Capacity funding is not available for lead authorities in other places.

The shortlist of projects should be submitted by lead authorities to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by **noon on Friday 18 June 2021** by emailing [UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk).

Bids received after the deadline or not through a lead authority will not be considered. We will then confirm which projects will receive funding from late July 2021 onwards.

Further information for lead authorities in Great Britain can be found in section 5.3 of this prospectus.

#### **5.1.2 Delivery in Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, the UK government will oversee a project competition directly.

We are expecting bids to be prepared by a range of applicants, including but not limited to universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, and umbrella business groups.

Any legally constituted organisation delivering an appropriate service should feel able to submit a bid.

Financial due diligence checks will be undertaken on non-public sector applicants. These checks will include assessment of the applicant's financial standing including ability to deal with cost overruns, the ability to fund the project and repay funds if required. The outcome of these checks may exclude applicants from further consideration.

Bids should be submitted by applicants to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by **noon on Friday 18 June 2021** by emailing [UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk).

Bids received after the deadline will not be considered. We will then confirm which projects will receive funding from late July onwards.

### **5.1.3 Delivery in Gibraltar**

The UK government will work with the Government of Gibraltar to agree the delivery arrangements for Gibraltar.

### **5.1.4 Timeline**

A full timeline for the UK Community Renewal Fund is at section 10; the below summarises the funding application process.

#### **3 March 2021**

- UK government publishes the UK Community Renewal Fund prospectus.
- The list of priority places and lead authorities in Great Britain is published within the prospectus.
- UK government launches a project competition in Northern Ireland.

#### **18 June 2021**

- Lead Authorities in Great Britain submit shortlists of projects to UK government for assessment.
- Applicants in Northern Ireland submit their bids to UK government for appraisal and assessment.
- From 18 June and throughout July, UK government assesses bids.

#### **Late July 2021 onwards**

- UK government announces successful projects for the UK Community Renewal Fund.

## **5.2 Information for prospective applicants across the UK**

### **5.2.1 Bid preparation**

Prospective applicants, for example business groups, charities, and universities across the UK, should ensure that their proposals demonstrate alignment with the objectives set out in

this prospectus and the Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance. The Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance will be published shortly.

Prospective applicants across the UK should also take account of the following guiding principles:

- Bids which respond holistically to issues or challenges, are encouraged.
- Bids need to evidence that the project complements and does not conflict with UK government policy.
- Bids cannot be submitted for projects that benefit a single entity (for example a single business) – there must be evidence of wider impact for multiple individuals, businesses or other organisations.
- We anticipate supporting a range of projects by theme and size, but we encourage applicants to maximise impact and deliverability through larger projects (£500,000+) where this is possible.
- The funding available consists of 90% revenue funding and 10% capital funding overall – applicants should calibrate their bids accordingly.
- Project proposals should demonstrate alignment with strategic plans relevant to each place(s) as well as local need.
- Projects should contribute to key objectives and outcomes of the Fund, including outcome/ output indicators set out in Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance, which will be published shortly.
- Project applicants should consider equalities impacts.
- Projects must deliver in accordance with branding requirements set out in Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance, which will be published shortly.
- Projects should meet the expectations for monitoring and evaluation, as outlined in section 5.2.3 below. Projects should include appropriate costs to ensure that any project delivery, monitoring or evaluation obligations can be met from the approved project amount.
- All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control (or State Aid for aid in scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol) as per [UK government guidance](#) – as well as all other relevant legal obligations such as procurement. This will be tested as part of the appraisal process, and monitored thereafter.
- Interventions must be financially completed (i.e. all delivery activity concluded) by 31 March 2022 and will be for this year only.

If there is more than one organisation applying to deliver a project, a lead organisation must be selected to become the lead applicant (and grant recipient) with the remaining organisation(s) acting as delivery partner(s). In this situation the applicant would be responsible and liable for the delivery partner(s) and ensuring the project is operating as planned.

### **5.2.2 Submitting your bid**

In Great Britain, prospective applicants should contact their [lead authority](#) to submit bids. The UK government will not accept bids directly – they must be submitted by lead authorities following a local appraisal process.

Each lead authority will set out its own requirements, but will utilise a common application form and appraisal process across the UK. These will be published shortly.

In Northern Ireland, bids should be submitted by project applicants directly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by emailing [UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk).

### **5.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation**

We expect successful proposals to meet the following requirements for monitoring and evaluation:

- All proposals will be required to set out the intended impact of the project.
- Project performance will be monitored by progress against agreed targets and milestones.
- Applicants, if successful, will need to develop an evaluation plan with between 1-2% of their award to be dedicated to that evaluation with a minimum threshold of £10,000.

All projects will be monitored either by the lead authority (in the case of Great Britain) or by the UK government (for Northern Ireland). All projects will be required to submit evidence to the lead authority or UK government demonstrating progress towards achievement of project targets and investment profiles at regular intervals. This will need to include both quantitative and qualitative data.

Each successful applicant in Northern Ireland will also be required to submit an independent report (or for public bodies, an independent or internal report of equivalent value of standard) confirming regularity and adherence to contract.

### **5.3 Information for lead authorities in Great Britain**

Detailed requirements will be published shortly for lead authorities, setting out a number of minimum requirements for their role for UK Community Renewal Fund expenditure.

In Great Britain, we are inviting lead authorities to undertake the following role:

- Invite bids from a range of project applicants, including but not limited to universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, and umbrella business groups. Any legally constituted organisation delivering an appropriate service should feel able to prepare a proposal.
- Undertake constructive engagement with local partners, including but not limited to lower tier local authorities and elected representatives, and other public, private and third sector organisations.
- Collaborate with other lead authorities or partners across the UK where relevant – for example to promote cross-border project opportunities that address needs in common or achieve efficient delivery scale.

- Appraise and prioritise a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place (as defined in the [glossary of terms](#), for the UK Community Renewal Fund we define place at the lower tier, borough and unitary geography, (see [list of places](#)), from which the UK government will select projects.
- Submit shortlist to UK government who will assess the proposals and select projects based on the criteria set out at [section 6](#) below.
- Issue grant agreements to successful bidders once funding has been agreed by UK government, and then undertake monitoring and assurance activity.

To ensure the 100 priority places are able to undertake the functions carried out above, the lead authorities in the 100 priority places will receive capacity funding as set out at section 4.1. Capacity funding is not available for lead authorities in other places.

The shortlist of projects should be submitted by lead authorities to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June 2021 by emailing [UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk).

Bids received after the deadline or not submitted via the lead authority will not be considered. We will then confirm which projects will receive funding from late July 2021 onwards.

Each lead authority will be assessed against the requirements set out in Lead Authority Requirements document. Lead Authorities should also take account of the [Cabinet Office Grants Standards](#) in an appropriate and proportionate manner, drawing on them as examples of good practice and sources of information.

Failure by a lead authority to demonstrate delivery in line with the requirements may result in the rejection of bids they submit.

## **6. Assessment of bids by UK government: Assessment criteria**

The UK government will assess all bids from across the UK against the assessment criteria below.

Final decisions to approve or reject a bid will be made by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Where appropriate, UK government will seek advice from the Devolved Administrations at the shortlisting stage on projects that will be delivered in their geographical areas, including on deliverability and alignment with existing provision.

### **6.1 UK-wide gateway criteria**

All proposed projects must be received by the deadline, with a complete bid that demonstrates they:

- Will be delivered (including all expenditure incurred) by 31 March 2022
- Respond to a need identified in the prospectus
- Do not duplicate other national or local provision
- Do not conflict with national policy
- Will be delivered by a legally constituted organisation that can receive public funds

- Can deliver project activity in line with subsidy control/State Aid requirements
- Will be delivered in accordance with branding requirements.
- For Great Britain only: Have been submitted by the lead authority. Bids submitted independently from the lead authority will not be accepted.
- For Great Britain only: The lead authority must also show they have led an open process by which organisations are invited to submit bids.

Projects must pass all gateway criteria to be considered for selection. Failure to adequately demonstrate one or more of these criteria will result in project rejection.

## **6.2 UK-wide selection criteria**

Applications will be sifted in response to the themes of strategic fit, and deliverability, efficiency and effectiveness. We will publish more information on the criteria and approach to selecting successful projects in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland shortly, alongside rules and guidance for applicants and lead authorities.

### **6.2.1 Strategic fit**

All proposed projects will be assessed against the following strategic fit considerations:

- Level of contribution to local needs articulated in relevant local plans and with evidence of local support
- Level of contribution to an articulated investment priority set out at sections 3.2 to 3.5 in the prospectus
- The extent of contribution to net zero objectives, as set out at section 3.1.1, or wider environmental considerations (not applicable to employment support interventions)
- The extent to which the project can inform UK Shared Prosperity Fund through transferable learning or opportunity to scale up for local partners and UK government
- The extent to which the project demonstrates innovation in service delivery, through:
  - introducing new delivery approaches (for example, trialling new modes of delivery)
  - integrated approaches across policy themes or
  - collaboration across more than one place

### **6.2.2 Deliverability, effectiveness, and efficiency**

All proposed projects will be assessed against the following deliverability, effectiveness and efficiency considerations:

- That it can be delivered as proposed by March 2022 with realistic milestones identified
- Project risks have been identified and are adequately mitigated, including project-level management controls

- The applicant sets out an efficient mode of delivery, taking account of the level of innovation proposed and will operate at an appropriate scale. This shall include an assessment of value for money taking account of:
  - the level of contribution to programme outputs for funding sought
  - the amount of match funding or leverage proposed to maximise impact (not applicable to employment interventions)
- That the project would not proceed without funding or could only be delivered on a smaller scale
- An effective monitoring and evaluation strategy has been identified for the project

### **6.3 Additional information on the assessment of bids in Great Britain**

In Great Britain, UK government will apply a £3 million cap per place for investment in final project selection. In addition to assessment against strategic fit and deliverability, effectiveness and efficiency considerations, Ministers can exercise discretion to meet the following set of additional considerations:

- Ensuring a reasonable thematic split of approved projects (e.g. skills, local business, communities and place, employment support)
- Ensuring a balanced spread of approved projects across Great Britain
- Ensuring that the balance of approved projects between those focused on priority and non-priority places gives appropriate regard to priority places
- Where no distinction can be made between two or more projects on the basis of the selection criteria and the prioritisation of the relevant place(s) via the index (i.e. where projects score the same and e.g. cover the same geography), Ministers can make decisions between projects based on which they consider the best value for money in delivering the objectives of the programme.

Applicants should note that this is a competitive process and there is no minimum amount available per place. Where bids do not meet minimum standards, they will not be supported.

### **6.4 Additional information on the assessment of bids from Northern Ireland**

Projects can be of any value up to the total allocation of £11 million for Northern Ireland. However, applicants should note that this is a competitive process, and the UK government will be looking to select a portfolio of different size projects, covering a range of themes and geographies, subject to the volume and quality of proposals received.

We recognise the importance of not only meeting our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 but also giving due regard to the additional equalities considerations that apply in Northern Ireland.

In addition to assessment against strategic fit and deliverability, effectiveness and efficiency considerations, Ministers can exercise discretion to meet the following additional considerations:

- Ensuring a reasonable thematic split of approved projects (e.g. employment, skills, communities and place, local business)

- Ensuring a fair geographical spread of approved projects across Northern Ireland
- Where two or more projects are scored the same on all assessment criteria, but cannot all be funded, Ministers have the discretion to choose the project(s) they consider to be better value for money in achieving the programme's objectives.

## **7. Leveraging other funds**

The UK government encourages applicants and lead authorities to maximise the leverage of other funding. This has a number of benefits including enhanced alignment with other provision and efficient delivery which increases value for money.

We recognise that not all projects or applicants will be able to secure match funding, and it is not expected for employment support projects. However, applicants and lead authorities should note that value for money is a selection consideration. This will take the overall funding package for each project, including any match funding, into account.

## **8. Grant funding and payments**

Following conclusion of the selection process, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will enter into agreements with:

- Lead authorities – for an agreed package of projects as well as bid coordination and appraisal support where relevant (as set out at sections 4.1 and 5.3)
- Individual project deliverers (successful project applicants) in Northern Ireland

Each agreement will set out the rights and obligations for each party and a template will be published later in the spring.

This shall include the mechanism for paying lead authorities in Great Britain, and individual project deliverers in Northern Ireland. We anticipate making an initial payment on project commencement and then a second payment on completion. This is designed to accelerate early delivery and simplify the monitoring and claims process compared with predecessor EU funds.

For the avoidance of doubt, we expect/require that each grant must be used for the purpose intended, and this will be subject to monitoring and final review. Any underspend will be recovered and/or not paid.

## **9. Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation requirements for applicants are set out in section 5.2 above.

The UK government is placing greater emphasis on high-quality evaluation, which is critical to understanding what works. To support this, at a national level, we will be setting up evaluation networks to support the development of evaluation plans, sharing of best practice and to support thinking on more comprehensive indicator requirements for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Other national activity will include:

- Beginning to develop the supporting infrastructure required to facilitate the efficient sharing of information and data built around user needs.

- Undertake a comprehensive process evaluation to understand how efficient the delivery structures and business processes are including the impact of capacity funding.
- Undertake evaluation's which consider both the impact of funding on place and investment themes.

The monitoring and evaluation work will be taken forward in consultation with the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth to reinforce and build on their work to date. It will also look to build on existing approaches such as the Towns Fund Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

## **10. Timelines**

Included here is a summary of the UK Community Renewal Fund timelines and key dates.

### **3 March 2021**

- UK government publishes the UK Community Renewal Fund prospectus.
- The list of priority places and lead authorities in Great Britain is published within the prospectus.
- During March, lead authorities launch invite bids from their places in Great Britain. UK government launches a project competition in Northern Ireland.

### **1 April 2021**

- Bid assessment and coordination capacity funding can be incurred by lead authorities of the 100 priority places in Great Britain.

### **18 June 2021**

- Lead authorities in Great Britain submit a shortlist of project bids to UK government for assessment.
- Applicants in Northern Ireland submit their bids to UK government for appraisal and assessment.

### **Late July 2021 onwards**

- UK government announces successful projects for the UK Community Renewal Fund.
- First tranche of funding flows to lead authorities (Great Britain) and projects (Northern Ireland).

### **November and December 2021**

- Mid-point monitoring reviews of projects with lead authorities (Great Britain) and project deliverers in (Northern Ireland).

### **31 March 2022**

- UK Community Renewal Fund finishes.

## **Quarter 1 2022-23**

- Second tranche of funding paid to lead authorities (Great Britain) and project deliverers (Northern Ireland).

## **Annex A: Glossary of terms**

### **100 priority places**

We will prioritise bids that target investment at the top 100 priority places based on the UK Community Renewal Fund index of economic resilience. We will also provide capacity funding to the lead authority for these 100 places.

### **Index of economic resilience**

In Great Britain priority places have been identified using an index of economic resilience which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills and population density. A methodological note will be provided, explaining how the index was developed. This prospectus sets out the top 100 priority places according to this index and the associated lead authorities.

### **Lead authority**

The institution responsible for inviting project bids for a place, appraising project bids and submitting a project shortlist to UK government in Great Britain. These are county councils, Mayoral Combined Authorities, Greater London Authority and unitaries. See the [list](#). In Great Britain we will only accept projects from lead authorities.

### **Project applicant**

Across the UK project applicants include, but are not limited to, universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, and umbrella business groups. In Great Britain, project applicants should submit bids to lead authorities who will appraise projects and submit a shortlist to UK government. In Northern Ireland, project applicants should submit bids directly to UK government.

### **Project deliverer**

Successful project applicants across the UK.

### **Place**

These are the places where investment will be received. For the purpose of the UK Community Renewal Fund, “places” are defined at the district, unitary or borough scale in England, council areas in Scotland and unitaries in Wales. This definition applies to the UK Community Renewal Fund only, details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be published later this year. All areas in Northern Ireland are eligible for funding and applicants will be able to apply directly to UK government.

### **Project shortlist**

In Great Britain lead authorities should submit a short list of projects to UK government after having invited and appraised bids locally.