

Response ID ANON-695G-SB6V-C

Submitted to Rural England Prosperity Fund - Addendum to UKSPF Investment Plan
Submitted on 2023-01-03 11:58:45

Overview

Rules for applying

Additional information content

Select your area

1 Select area

Select your area:

King's Lynn and West Norfolk

2 Name of person submitting REPF additional information and contact details

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5 UKSPF Investment Plan reference number

UKSPF reference number:

ANON-QPA8-9PH7-2

Information

Information

Local context

6 You have already submitted your UKSPF investment plan. Here, we would like you to provide any additional information about specific rural challenges, market failures, and opportunities for rural businesses or rural communities in your area that you would like us to consider.

Here, we would like you to provide any additional information about specific rural challenges, market failures, and opportunities for rural businesses or rural communities in your area that you would like us to consider.:

King's Lynn and West Norfolk is the 5th largest rural district in England with 67.4% of people living in rural areas and 31% of these residing in sparse rural areas (Census 2001 ONS). As of 2021, the Borough is the second least densely populated area in the East of England, with an area equivalent to around one football pitch per resident (Census 2021 / ONS). Between 2011 to 2021 here has been an increase (17.9%) in people aged over 65 years, but a decrease (-0.1%) in people aged 15 to 64 years within the locality. (Census 2021 / ONS). Outward migration from rural areas reflects poor access to educational programmes, low wage jobs, high house prices and directly impacts on local economic sustainability and growth. The impact of geographic sparsity and a reducing working age population contributes towards a lower GDP per capita in King's Lynn and West Norfolk than the urban Norwich City Council area and relatively urban Broadland District Council area (Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy 2021 – 2024). The removal of the main economic driver and largest urban area of King's Lynn further reduces the performance of the Borough against key economic metrics and even with it included the area is classified as largely rural (Statistical Digest of Rural England 2022).

In the years preceding the pandemic (2015-19) King's Lynn and West Norfolk experienced strong manufacturing growth with a higher proportion of employment in manufacturing than in the largest urban centres in Norfolk. (Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy 2021 – 2024) but GDP per capita fell by 53.8% from 2019-2021 (ONS Regional gross domestic product (GDP) local authority reference tables 2018-2020). Localised and targeted capital investment will play a key part in turning around this downward trend. Rural West Norfolk also provides the highest number of employment opportunities in agriculture, forestry and fishing across the county of Norfolk (ONS 2018/ Norfolk Insight). These industries are increasingly impacted by macroeconomic factors including high energy costs, changing labour market dynamics and challenges in the export of food products, particularly for products of animal origin, shellfish and fishery products. Rural enterprises additionally experience challenges in recruitment and retention due to poor rural connectivity and limited availability of public transport. Empowering local businesses to invest in emerging technologies such as robotics and Artificial Intelligence, particularly in agriculture and horticulture, embracing low carbon energy production and taking advantage of diversification opportunities will help to contain threats to future business viability.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk experienced a strong birth rate of new businesses for the period 2016-18, 2019 and 2020 compared with other rural districts in Norfolk (ONS Business Demography 2022). The five year survival rate of new enterprises born in King's Lynn and West Norfolk in 2016 was 46%, with comparable early year trends seen in businesses born in subsequent years (ONS Business demography, UK 2022). These figures suggest both a local drive for enterprise start up and a clear need for the continuation and enhancement of localised business support services (through the SPF funding allocation), combined with capital investment and support will help establish a sustainable future of both existing and new enterprises within an environment of fast changing macroeconomics. The district is within a key part of the UK projected to grow and targeted local investment to facilitate enterprise growth through the diversification of offer and the harnessing of inward investment to boost productivity remains a key local focus. This links to the Norfolk Investment Framework priority to support Norfolk's existing and emerging clusters to grow and expand.

The Fens area has strong transport connectivity to Cambridge & Midlands and the King's Lynn to King's Cross rail service provides a strong link between our rural areas and Cambridge/London. The move towards more 'hybrid' working patterns for many since 2020 is very significant in our rural areas, which had high levels of out-commuting, as a result of these links, and some of the longest average commutes in the UK. Opportunities for businesses and their workforce to locate to more rural areas to improve quality of life (at work and home) and have space to expand are further enhanced by this change in working patterns. Market Towns will be encouraged to repurpose vacated premises into, for example, work hubs, which meet the need for changes in the community (Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy 21-24). This transition to new commercial uses encourages advancement in digital connectivity and provides the opportunity to make rural businesses and community facilities more sustainable with an increased working age demographic; this is a development priority for remote West Norfolk rural areas.

The physical connectivity barriers within the district's rural geography have been detailed within the UKSPF West Norfolk Investment Plan (WNIP). Rural residents are particularly impacted by limited public transport network which restricts ability to access education, training and employment in primary centres. Actions to improve accessible and environmentally sustainable travel options are essential to remove barriers to residents being able to access services and facilities in hub towns and other villages. Current bus links within rural areas are limited so that private transport is the current default option. The percentage of people who walk or cycle once a week remains below the national average owing to our rural geography (DfT, 2019/20). The priorities of the REPF align with the Norfolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which in turn plays an integral part in the delivery of the overall transport strategy for Norfolk and supports the ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choice for all types of users, in both rural and urban areas. The naturally flat landscape and relatively drier climate of Norfolk compared to the rest of UK, means there is an opportunity to encourage greater use of active travel to reduce transport emissions (the rurality of the district contributes towards the second highest road transport CO2 emissions in Norfolk - 2019 BEIS data), and increase the percentage of physically active adults, which is below the national average and has fallen over the last four years (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2019/20). Further investment in accessible all-weather rural footpaths will provide sustainable transport options, link rural areas, help to attract visitors and improve activity and wellbeing levels as well as supporting complementary projects within the WNIP such as cycle hubs and bike loan schemes. The flat rural landscape is suitable for walkers and cyclists both young and old from novices to experienced trekkers and ramblers. Providing opportunities for cycle hire and secure cycle racks in our villages, more provision of pathway information, boards and clear and connected waymarkers will enable this approach to become embedded and sustainable. This will not just support rural communities but also provide invaluable infrastructure to support a sustainable tourism economy which reduces the impact of increased visitor numbers on the local environment.

The tourism industry represents a high value and important economic sector for West Norfolk but faces challenges since the Covid-19 pandemic; in 2021 it provided 14.6% of all employment compared to 19.5% in 2019 and an economic value equalling £401.8m in 2021 compared to £577.3m pre pandemic. (Economic Impact of Tourism West Norfolk 2019 & 2021). The West Norfolk Destination Management Plan 2016-2020 highlights the diversity of the destination with its distinct geographical areas and visitor experiences. These include the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Estuarine coastline of the Wash (SSSI), the resort of Hunstanton, large areas of rolling Norfolk countryside, The Fens and the market town of Downham Market. To the north and east of King's Lynn the rural areas provide attractive countryside and villages, valued by visitors and with a moderately developed range of attractions and recreational facilities. To the south and to the west of King's Lynn the landscape and the extensive waterway network of the Fens provides a distinctive destination for visitors, particularly for those interested in activities such as bird watching, cycling and fishing. Consumers value and strongly associate the quality of the coastline, the natural environment and wildlife habitats offered as part of the Norfolk rural tourism sector. There is a consensus that tourism recovery will be segmented and gradual. West Norfolk is particularly well positioned to offer and build upon its qualities and capitalise on existing consumer interest but emphasising areas of distinctiveness needs to be addressed to enable it to stand out from alternative destinations. (West Norfolk Destination Management Plan 2016-2020).

West Norfolk's rural tourism industry's long-term growth depends upon the ability to establish year-round, adaptable and environmentally responsible tourism opportunities. However, consumer research has suggested that potential visitors are unsure of the range of attractions and things to do in Norfolk, so there is a priority through REPF to ensure this uncertainty is addressed for rural West Norfolk by developing and building upon local branding opportunities and harnessing the opportunities presented by sustainable local enterprises within rural areas. The affordability of the offer must be an important consideration to encourage new, repeat and future visitors year-round. REPF priorities to diversify the local offer to include active holidays, taking advantage of the predominantly flat and relatively dry environment, to invest in active travel and supporting the growth in ecologically sympathetic developments, clearly aligns with local priority policies. Rural villages are as much of an asset to local economic growth currently as our famed Norfolk coast has been in the past. A more open and detailed celebration of our rich rural history via investment in promotional infrastructure and recognising

the opportunity to use the future connection of King's Lynn to the Norfolk Coast Path to highlight our villages closer to the coast and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), will help to open this economic sector further. Furthermore, investing in closing known gaps in infrastructure provision is essential to future proof recruitment and retention opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector including improving local public transport links to facilitate access and remove barriers to employment for residents, particularly during unsociable hours.

Many rural community facilities within the borough have experienced deterioration due to limited historical investment and varied local community capacity to access and take advantage of funding opportunities such as lottery and European funding. Capital investment into rural facilities and services is essential to add value to the local offer, provide ownership of these facilities for local communities and to open possibilities for further growth in social capital opportunities. The provision of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments since 2017 have enabled the Borough Council to successfully provide capital investment to start to address these issues across the Borough by contributing towards community facility repairs and upgrades but the fund is annually over subscribed demonstrating a clear need for an accessible community grant scheme to level out the quality of provision and clean infrastructure across the Borough. Energy costs remain high and threaten viability of community facilities such as village halls, community centres and floodlit outdoor community facilities. Investment in maintainable net zero energy solutions to support local provision such as community energy projects and the creation and storage of renewable power will reduce recurrent energy costs thereby creating of a network of more resilient community facilities.

Climate change is a long-term risk impacting on all development priorities in the locality. Based on 2019 BEIS data, the geographic area of King's Lynn and West Norfolk has the highest per capita CO₂ emissions in Norfolk and the geographic Borough contributes 33.1% to Norfolk CO₂ emissions. This is impacted by the specific characteristics of the district, including high LULUCF (Land use, land-use change, and forestry) emissions due to the historically drained fenlands and the significant local industrial sector (King's Lynn and West Norfolk District CO₂ Emissions Report 2018 to 2019). Extreme weather events increase risks to arable land productivity and safety and large areas of the district are designated as flood zone 3a with areas of 3b flood plains (Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment: Flood Zones Map 2019). Investment in rural communities and businesses must demonstrate a clear link to the Norfolk Investment Framework priority to protect Norfolk's economic and natural assets from climate change. This would include supporting rural businesses and farms in the export of food for the UK and reducing reliance on imports. Rural areas experience distinct difficulties connected with net zero transition, for example: little to no connection to the gas grid; relatively high levels of fuel poverty; difficulties in EV infrastructure and solar PV deployment due to sparsity and the capacity and connections of the local grid; a high proportion of properties built prior to 1964 making retrofit activities and low-carbon heating a challenging activity; and susceptibility of older properties to planning obstacles (Net Zero East, Community Energy Kickstarter, Summary Sep22). REPF investment will enable projects with clear ambition to find solutions to overcome these difficulties and which contribute towards meeting carbon reduction targets. Investment will support the development of resilient infrastructure to protect communities and businesses from flooding, to enable businesses to adapt to change, to implement solution focused infrastructure and diversify the product offer to help mitigate climate challenges.

Interventions – rural business

7 Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural business investment priority (2023 - 2024). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy

8 Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural business investment priority (2024 - 2025). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy

9 Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural business challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words)

Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural business challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words):

Rural businesses face several challenges including need to adapt to changing macroeconomics, environmental pressures, increased energy costs, the effect of inflation and the impact of Brexit resulting in changes to rural policy, altered costs to overseas trading, skills shortages and reduced workforce availability. Investment will align with the business support objectives outlined in the WNIP. Specifically providing capital support for small rural enterprises will facilitate projects to deliver innovation in the form of technological investment, implementing net zero infrastructure, new business growth and the diversification of the existing offer. Whilst the nature of specific projects is not known in detail prior to REPF confirmation, the overarching intention is to fund forward thinking projects which enable rural enterprises to seize development opportunities whilst benefiting the local environment and wider rural community.

The rural tourism industry faces specific challenges resulting from infrastructure gaps, local environmental pressures, fragmented rural branding, rising energy costs and inflation impacting on both running costs and visitor spend. Capital investment to strengthen the existing offer by celebrating rural attributes, connecting tourism with nature and wildlife, encouraging active tourism and promoting sustainable local produce will take advantage of opportunities presented by the trend in high visitor numbers pre and post pandemic. Intervention delivery will be undertaken in alignment with environmental priorities, considerate conservation of the high-quality natural environment and biodiversity, incorporating and encouraging clean travel, building green infrastructure and contributing to the future of local economies. Investment to create a resilient year-round visitor offer which mitigates seasonal pressures and provides stable employment opportunities will make living and working in rural West Norfolk more attractive.

10 Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added.

Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added:

1= Highest Expected Value Added

1. Small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas

Businesses investment will be targeted to support businesses to become more sustainable, to invest in infrastructure that will reduce and / or offset carbon emissions and to invest in opportunities for growth and diversification which will positively benefit the wider rural economy. Investment will be prioritised on projects which clearly provide a wide environmental benefit for the rural area, for example resilient infrastructure to help mitigate the impact of environmental extremes.

2. Grants for the development and promotion of the visitor economy

Investment will be targeted towards projects which contribute towards the sustainability of the rural tourism industry, are environmentally responsible, strengthen and add value to the existing tourism offer and enhance the visitor experience to provide a more resilient tourism industry with reduced peak season pressures. Initiatives which benefit the rural community through infrastructure and service improvements and that seek to minimise the environmental impact and support carbon reduction of the visitor economy will be prioritised.

Interventions – rural communities

11 Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural communities investment priority (2023-2024). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

Capital grant funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups, Capital grant funding for active travel enhancements in the local area, Capital grant funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

12 Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural communities investment priority (2024-2025). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

Capital grant funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups, Capital grant funding for active travel enhancements in the local area, Capital grant funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

13 Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural communities challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words)

Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural communities challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words):

The landscape of rural West Norfolk makes it very suitable for active travel enhancements to support a reduction in west Norfolk's carbon emissions. This priority has been explored with Norfolk County Council to identify priority projects which will specifically benefit rural West Norfolk economy from the Norfolk wide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. Projects will upgrade key footpaths in rural areas including the provision of pathway information, boards and waymarkers to provide inclusive access and improve physical connectivity within and between geographical areas. Priorities will be for the creation of sustainable initiatives which will reduce the environmental impact of travel, enhance the user's wellbeing and reduce the physical connectivity barriers of the district's rural geography.

Funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects / capacity building and infrastructure support for local groups will be delivered as an overarching community grant scheme. The intention in selecting these investment priorities is to empower communities to build upon the local offer and benefit from well serviced facilities which meet specific local need now and into the future. 64% of neighbourhoods in the district have longer than average journey times to key services, compared to 17% of neighbourhoods nationally (National Audit Office, 2020). Projects will be sought which address the challenges of this rural isolation, particularly for the ageing population, to support social cohesion and encourage local pride. Additionally, prioritisation will be given to initiatives which improve the viability and resilience of community facilities and local infrastructure offer, for example by reducing recurrent energy costs for community buildings, establishing community energy projects, increasing green infrastructure and investing in supporting local groups and event delivery.

14 Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added.

Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added:

1= Highest expected value added

1. Funding for active travel enhancements in the local area

Investment in active travel enhancements to improve the connectivity of the rural area will support the wider climate change targets to reduce carbon emissions by providing alternatives to vehicle-based journeys, given the constraints of rural highway infrastructure. Support will be targeted to encourage modal shift and offer more carbon neutral opportunities for travel within and between rural areas and key destinations. Projects which can demonstrate the reduction of vehicular movements and carbon emissions, working towards the UK commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, improve health and wellbeing and contribute to the commitments of 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (DEFRA), will be prioritised.

2. Funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support will benefit projects which reduce carbon emissions, clearly work towards net zero targets, create resilient infrastructure and establish local green infrastructure projects in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan. Projects which incorporate this approach into the upgrade / creation of community facilities that benefit the rural community and the wider environment and increase opportunities for local groups to operate and further invest back into the area will be prioritised.

3. Funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

Funding in this intervention will provide social benefits to rural communities providing additionality through improvements to health and wellbeing, reductions in social isolation. Improving local pride and a sense of place will support the wider health and wellbeing for rural communities along with approaches that improve connectivity between areas, improve ease of access to services and facilities. These will also support a reduction in rural crime through increased social integration and opportunities to engage residents in volunteering activities or employment.

Interventions outcomes

15 Please select what outcomes the interventions selected in the rural business investment priority are expected to achieve

Jobs created, Jobs safeguarded, Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes, Number of businesses with improved productivity, Number of businesses experiencing growth, Number of businesses increasing their turnover

16 Please select what outcomes the interventions selected in the rural communities investment priority are expected to achieve

Increased users of facilities or amenities, Increased use of cycleways or paths, Improved engagement numbers, Volunteering numbers as a result of support

Delivery

17 Please set out the indicative spend profile of your REPF allocation, additional to that of your UKSPF investment plan. Please detail the indicative budgets at investment priority level and at intervention level, for the 2 years of the fund, including if REPF money will be used to complement UKSPF funded projects. (300 words max)

Please set out the indicative spend profile of your REPF investment plan, additional to that of your UKSPF investment plan. Please detail the indicative budgets at investment priority level and if known, at intervention level, for the 2 years of the fund (300 words max):

Total indicative allocation: £1,496,455
2023-24: 25% allocation £374,113.75
2024-25: 75% allocation £1,122,341.25

INVESTMENT PRIORITY: SUPPORTING RURAL BUSINESS
Total £896,455.00 (59.91% of total indicative allocation)
2023-24 (25%) £224,113.75
2024-25 (75%) 672,341.25

INTERVENTION: Capital grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas
2023-24 £124,113.75
2024-25 £372,341.25
Total £496,455

INTERVENTION: Capital grants for the development and promotion of the visitor economy
2023-24 £100,000
2024-25 £300,000
Total £400,000

INVESTMENT PRIORITY: SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES
Total £600,000 (40.1% of total indicative allocation)
2023-24 (25%) £150,000
2024-25 (75%) £450,000

INTERVENTION: Funding for Active Travel Enhancements
2023-24 £75,000
2024-25 £225,000
Total £300,000

INTERVENTION: Capital grants for investment in capacity building & infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups
2023-24 £37,500
2024-25 £112,500
Total £150,000

INTERVENTION: Capital grants for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

2023-24 £37,500
2024-25 £112,500
Total £150,000

The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk has considered the distribution of funding between investment priorities based on known local need and demand.

Business grants for small scale investment and development and promotion of the visitor economy will specifically complement the predominantly revenue-based interventions and support identified in the UKSPF WNIP;

- community measures to reduce the cost of living;
- development & promotion of the visitor economy;
- strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems; and
- business support measures to drive employment growth.

The indicative allocation for active travel has been determined following prioritisation of the Norfolk Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan with Norfolk County Council and identification of projects with specific benefit to rural West Norfolk to complement wider active schemes that will be delivered through the UKSPF WNIP and Norfolk County Council active travel programmes.

18 Please set out how you intend to select projects to support, detailing including how you will ensure they deliver value for money, including additionality. Please also set out how you will determine that projects cannot be funded by private finance. (500 words max)

Please set out how you intend to select projects to support and ensure they will deliver value for money (500 words max):.

The interventions for small-scale investment in micro and small enterprises, and the development and promotion of the visitor economy, will be delivered as a Business Grant Programme, which will be overseen by the Borough Council as the accountable body but delivered by a third party. The Council is currently exploring options regarding the most impactful and effective method of delivery. It is proposed that interventions for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local groups, and funding impactful volunteering and social action projects, would be delivered as a Community Grant Scheme which would also be overseen by the Borough Council as the accountable body, but delivered by a third party. Discussions with strategic partners who provide existing specialised support for communities are underway to explore this opportunity.

End to end grant delivery programmes will be established and overseen by a Grant Panel Board, consisting of senior officers, members and key partners, which will meet at pre-determined intervals to consider and allocate grant awards. Grant application processes will ensure the eligibility of each application, the strategic fit with our REPF priorities and requirements of the funding and that the projects selected add clear value and deliver against the REPF outputs and outcomes within the priorities of the rural funding. Robust due diligence procedures will be established to assess the economic viability of the entity and the proposed activity. Historic bank / financial statements will be sought prior to award to clarify availability of resources and determine justification for investment of public sector funding. Discrepancies impacting on the request for funding will be discussed with applicants and further checks will be made prior to payment where appropriate. Recommendations to grant panels will be mindful of this process and possible availability of alternative funding options will be highlighted prior to grant award decisions.

The active travel priorities have been agreed with the Lead Programme Manager for active travel at Norfolk County Council to discuss priority projects which will specifically benefit rural West Norfolk from the Norfolk wide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and would not be otherwise funded within the time period of REPF or through alternative funding streams. Projects have been identified to add value to the connectivity of rural areas, to support the tourism economy, and improve access to services and employment, particularly in areas of identified health need. The County Council will be the delivery partner for this intervention and the Borough Council will be the accountable body. A regular project monitoring schedule will be established with appropriate officer involvement throughout the lifetime of the project.

Project monitoring processes will be established to provide clear qualitative and quantitative analysis of outcomes and outputs with the involvement of key partners. The grant programme processes will align with the Programme Board for West Norfolk UKSPF who will use their expertise in programme delivery to support decision making, ensure alignment with other funding, programmes and service delivery and provide oversight on the impact and evaluation of projects.

Delivery

19 Have you identified opportunities to work with other places on specific interventions and/or projects for the rural business interventions?

Yes

Delivery

20 Intervention(s) you intend to collaborate on

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on?:

Small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas
The development and promotion of the visitor economy

We will collaborate with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and with local businesses in the development of proposals which meet the intervention objectives. Interventions will be aligned with the recommendations and priorities of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and the Norfolk Tourism Best Practice Group to ensure a joined-up approach to addressing interrelated issues.

21 Place(s) you intend to collaborate with.

Which places do you intend to collaborate with:

N/A

Delivery

22 Have you identified opportunities to work with other places on specific interventions and/or projects for the rural communities interventions?

Yes

Delivery

23 Intervention(s) you intend to collaborate on

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on:

Active travel enhancements in the local rural area
Capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups
Supporting impactful volunteering and social action projects

In the delivery of active travel enhancements, the Borough Council will work closely with Norfolk County Council to achieve West Norfolk focused projects from the Norfolk wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the Norfolk Bus Service Improvement Programme and the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy. This will ensure continued collaboration to meet the wider county aims.

In the delivery of Community Grants the Borough Council will liaise with Parish Councils and community groups to identify priority projects and work closely with the Norfolk Community Foundation to ensure that projects add value and complement other investment programmes.

24 Place(s) you intend to collaborate with.

Which places do you intend to collaborate with:

Investment will be targeted within the strategic objectives of the Norfolk wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy which will ensure continued collaboration to meet the wider county aims and ambitions.

Approach to engagement with rural partners

25 Further to your UKSPF Investment Plan engagement, have you engaged or consulted with rural stakeholders, or expanded your UKSPF local partnership group, to inform the information you have submitted above? If yes, please give details. You should also use this section to tell us about planned future engagement with rural stakeholders.

Describe the engagement you have undertaken with your Rural Advisory Group and any other local rural stakeholders to inform your investment plan and what support you have from them (500 words max):

Local analysis and engagement has been undertaken to inform the development of the addendum, supplementing the previous engagement and analysis undertaken for the UKSPF WNIP. An online survey was conducted from 14th-30th October 2022 seeking views specifically from residents, parishes, community groups and businesses in the rural areas of West Norfolk on the priority outcomes which should be targeted by the REPF. 284 people responded to the survey, 218 responses were from residents/community organisations and 66 were from businesses. A clear area for action highlighted amongst the community respondents was the need for the provision of better services, facilities and infrastructure in small communities. This was supported by prioritised outcomes to improve 'active travel' opportunities (footpaths and cycleways), funding to improve local facilities to support community activities, funding to set up community projects where people can learn new skills; and community energy projects. Business respondents identified three clear areas needing support in the rural borough; helping businesses to increase turnover, protecting existing jobs and helping businesses to create jobs. Grants and or support were identified as important to address the following: help businesses to innovate or implement new technology or processes; to diversify; to be more sustainable; to be more productive; to develop the visitor economy; and to improve the local transport infrastructure.

The survey responses were collated and considered in detail by the Regeneration Team and compared against key data metrics. Investment priorities were reviewed against the REPF prospectus, interventions, outcomes and outputs and subsequently presented to the SPF WNIP Stakeholder group, with an expanded representation of organisations who represent or are involved in the delivery of services and programmes in rural areas. Stakeholders were in support of the priorities identified and added comments on specific areas of need which will help inform funding delivery.

Future engagement to develop a pipeline of projects which could be funded through the grant programmes will continue into early 2023 with business and community workshops to support the development of projects to meet the West Norfolk priorities for REPF.

The scope of Programme Board established for the UKSPF WNIP will be expanded to include oversight and coordination of delivery of the REPF, informed by regular engagement through the wider Stakeholder Group who will provide the advisory function to advise on the effectiveness of the programme.

26 Are there aspects of your plans to use your REPF allocation that are not supported by rural stakeholders and the rural community?

No

Approach to engagement with rural partners

28 Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?

No

Confirmation of approval

30 Chief executive

Chief executive name:
Lorraine Gore

31 Elected leader

Elected leader name:
Cllr Stuart Dark

32 Section 151 officer

Section 151 officer name:
Michelle Drewery

Confirmation

33 Email address

Email address to receive PDF:
nicola.cooper@west-norfolk.gov.uk