

Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Policy

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Funded by
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1 Introduction

In April 2022, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107444/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus-2022.pdf).

The UKSPF is a central pillar of the UK government's levelling up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025.

In September 2022, the government launched the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) prospectus www.gov.uk/government/news/110m-fund-to-level-up-rural-communities-unveiled as an addition to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Stafford Borough Council was provisionally allocated £487,936 to spend between 2023 and 2025 on capital interventions in our rural communities as part of the REPF. 25% of the funding allocation must be spent in 2023/24 and 75% in 2023/25. To claim the monies the Council had to submit a proposal as to how the allocation would be spent:

Our proposal sets out that we will allocate:

- £121,984 to support Rural Communities
- £365,952 to support Rural Businesses

2 Rural Funding

Rural Locations

Projects must be based in a rural area. For fund purposes, rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services

Eligibility

The following bodies are eligible to apply to access the funding:

- local authorities
- public sector organisations
- higher and further education institutions
- private sector companies
- voluntary organisations
- registered charities

Private sector companies are eligible to apply, however are limited to the following:

Micro enterprises must satisfy two or more of the following requirements in a year:

- Annual Turnover under €2m (you will need to check the latest exchange rate of euro to £)
- Balance Sheet Total under €2m (you will need to check the latest exchange rate of euro to £)
- Number of employees: a headcount of staff of not more than 10

Small and Medium sized enterprises must satisfy two or more of the following requirements in a year:

- Annual Turnover under £36 million and/or
- Balance Sheet Total not exceeding £18 million
- Number of employees: a headcount of staff of less than 250

Amount of grant

Grants of a minimum of £5,000 up to £65,000 are available to eligible organisations. A match fund of 20% will be required.

We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- The Farming Investment Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

We also cannot support projects or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them.

Applicants will need to confirm that they have not received over £315,000 from public funds during the current and previous two financial years, as this is one of the required conditions to allow applicants to apply for funding.

Example projects

Grants for the following will be considered for funding amongst others:

Local Business

- Creation of event venues or farm tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities including pet and equine facilities
- Purchase of equipment for food processing for non-farmed own businesses such as brewery equipment, modernising existing kitchen equipment, onsite vending machines
- Capital grants for equipment to support showcasing of local food and drink products
- Capital grants to equip development kitchens or modernise existing kitchen equipment for increased energy efficiency or increased productivity through automation
- Capital grants to develop local tourist attractions such as information boards and visitor centres
- Provision of premises for community owned shops
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Conversion of farm buildings to other business uses

Rural Communities

- Capital grants for sustainable kitchens in community hubs which can support food and drink entrepreneurs to get accreditation for food production, whilst adopting low carbon technology.
- Capital grants to establish or enhance community gardens and green spaces
- Capital grants to develop, restore or refurbish local natural, cultural and heritage assets and sites
- Improving visitor experience and accessibility such as providing all terrain wheelchairs
- Capital grants to enable the provision of venues to host creative events
- Creation of new footpaths and cycle paths
- Capital grants to set up community led cafes or workshops including tools and equipment
- Capital grants to purchase equipment for local volunteering groups
- Installing EV charging points for the local community
- Retrofitting community buildings to reduce energy consumption and emissions e.g., installing insulation, double glazing, or solar panels

3 Application Process

Organisations will be invited to complete an Expression of Interest form.

- Applications will be reviewed in order of receipt
- A business advisor will make contact to discuss the project further and how the grant will help with developing the objectives
- Outputs and outcomes will be agreed to ensure that the project funded will deliver the required investment priorities

Those that meet the criteria will be invited to submit a full application.

Supporting evidence required at **full application** stage include:

- Organisation details including any relevant registration or reference numbers namely companies house, social enterprise or charity registration
- Contact details for two key people within the organisation
- Bank account details including current bank statement
- 2 years certified accounts or management accounts
- *Three quotes for each item to be funded to demonstrate best value for money for project costs £2,499-£24,999. Above £24,999 will require a tender.

*one item or the sum of many items from one supplier

Quotes should not be from people or businesses connected to your business, directors or shareholders

Project Overview to include:

- ✓ a short project summary
- ✓ project objectives
- ✓ predicted impacts
- ✓ a cost break down
- ✓ project timescales
- ✓ monitoring reports including risk assessment

Full applications will be assessed by a panel made up of experienced Officers from Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council Decisions will be based on schemes delivering a high number of outputs and outcomes, providing value for money, supporting green/innovative elements, encouraging increased private sector investment, boosting community cohesion, delivering wider economic growth to local businesses, evidence of the demand for the project.

Full applications must be submitted by 31st December 2023 and will be reviewed on a first come first served basis. Only those applications where all required documentation has been submitted will be assessed. Failure to provide all the information may mean your project not being reviewed.

Applicants will be notified as soon as the panel has approved or rejected the application.

Approval is not guaranteed, and the Investment Panel/Board will make one of three decisions:

- Application recommended for approval.
- Application deferred. In this case, you will be contacted for additional information before the decision can be finalised.
- Application declined. In this case, you will receive a correspondence outlining the reasons why your application was declined

It may take up to 6 weeks from a complete submission of your application to SBC before you receive a decision.

Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis and as such, awards will vary depending on evidence provided, viability of your business and the project to be undertaken.

This is a discretionary fund all decisions are subject to a project, business, financial appraisal and will be assessed on the basis of subject to availability of funds and first come, first served, principle.

Payments will be made directly and will be subject to the applicant having met all statutory regulations such as licencing, building regulations and planning permissions where appropriate.

The Council expects organisations to have relevant insurance cover in place for the operations they deliver, namely Public Liability Insurance, Professional Indemnity Insurance, Employee Liability Insurance

Timeline for applications

The community fund has now closed for applications. A wait list is in operation. Applications from local businesses will open shortly.

4 Appeals Process

Grants are paid at the discretion of the Council with awards being determined by the panel. No formal right of appeal exists, but an applicant who is dissatisfied with a grant determination may request that it be reviewed by the Head of Economic Development and Planning.

5 How we use your personal information:

The information provided will be used by Stafford Borough Council, as the data controller, to allow us to administer grant applications. We will only share your information, when necessary, with agencies involved in the processing of grants or where the law requires or allows us to. For further information, please see www.staffordbc.gov.uk/business-grant-applications-privacy-notice



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