

Title of Report	RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND 2025 - 2026 AWARD	
Presented by	James Arnold Strategic Director of Place PH Briefed: yes	
Background Papers	Rural England Prosperity Fund Community Cabinet Paper – July 2023	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	The Council have secured a further £140,699 of capital funding through the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).	
	This funding is for the Council to extend the delivery of the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund programme alongside the Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2025/26 programme.	
	Council Finance Officers will be directly involved in the Programme Management Board and have oversight of all the UKSPF Projects (including the REPF).	
Legal Implications	The Capital allocations will be managed through the Capital Strategy governance arrangements.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
	Council Legal Officers will be directly involved in the Programme Management Board and have oversight of the programme and to provide advice on funding agreements, grant offers and Subsidy Control implications.	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
	The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund will be delivered in-house by the Council's Economic Regeneration Service.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To provide background context to the one-year extension to the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the funding award made to the Council.	
Reason for Decision	To accept the funding award and deliver the Council's	

	<p>commitment to DEFRA's Rural England Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>To approve the spend of the award. Cabinet approval is required due to the value of the grant award.</p>
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <p>1. ACCEPTS THE £140,699 GRANT FROM THE RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND.</p> <p>2. RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL THAT £140,699 IS ADDED TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2025/26 FOR THE RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND.</p> <p>3. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (PLACE) IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO REVIEW AND AMEND THE DELIVERY OF THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL BUSINESS GRANT FUND AND WHERE REQUIRED TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE FUNDING PROGRAMME TO RESPOND AND ADAPT TO THE CHANGING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND/OR LOCAL NEEDS.</p> <p>4. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE SECTION 151 OFFICER IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO SUBMIT THE FORMAL REPORTING AS REQUIRED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA).</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND: Rural England Prosperity Fund 2023 to 2025

- 1.1 In April 2022, the government launched the £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) as part of the Levelling Up agenda. Following the submission of the North West Leicestershire UKSPF Investment Plan, the Council secured £2,414,817 of funding to deliver the investment plan up to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2 Furthermore, in September 2022, the Government announced the new Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) that was to be integrated into the UKSPF and required eligible Local Authorities to submit proposals in the form of an Addendum to the investment plan for how they would use REPF.
- 1.3 The Council's approach was to create a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund. This approach was based on good practice established through the Council's prior business grant funding programme and was shaped in consultation with representatives from the National Farmers' Union, the National Forest Company and representatives of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership.
- 1.4 In April 2023, the Council was notified that the Addendum was approved and that the Council had secured a further £469,090 of REPF funding to deliver a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund alongside the existing programme of work under the UKSPF.

- 1.5 The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund was delivered by the Council's Economic Regeneration service. Applications to the fund were encouraged through an open and competitive call from eligible businesses. Applications were subject to review and validation by the Economic Regeneration Service prior to being presented to a panel for determination.
- 1.6 The North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund was launched in August 2023 and closed to new applications in October 2024 as the funding was oversubscribed.
- 1.7 In total, the grants panel for the scheme approved to supported 28 business projects across rural North West Leicestershire. The successful applicants are summarised below:

Table 1.

The Cutting Garden Café, Appleby Magna, DE12 7AJ	Appleby Magna
Hastings Retreat, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 2UP	Ashby
Cureton Consulting Ltd, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1RX	Ashby
Absolute Solar Ltd, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1JS	Ashby
Troy Business Services Ltd, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1AN	Ashby
Castle Surveys Ltd, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 2FU	Ashby
Belton Grocers, Belton, LE12 9TP	Belton
RL Morris, Barley Croft, Bredon on the Hill, DE73 8AJ	Breedon
Pinnacle Store, Breedon on the Hill, DE73 8AN	Breedon
Healthy Stuff, Castle Donington, DE74 2PY	Castle Donington
On Event Production, Castle Donington, DE74 2NP	Castle Donington
The Priest House, Castle Donington, DE74 2RR	Castle Donington
(1) Pickering Grange Farm, Ellistown, LE67 1EZ	Ellistown
(2) Pickering Grange Farm, Ellistown, LE67 1EZ	Ellistown
Cattows Farm, Heather, LE67 2RF	Heather
K S Local Ltd, Ibstock, LE67 6LH	Ibstock
Sunnyside Garden Centre, Ibstock, LE67 6HL	Ibstock
Manor Organic Farm Shop Ltd, Long Whatton, LE12 5DF	Long Whatton
Measham Dental, Measham, DE12 7HR	Measham
Secura Labels Ltd, Measham, DE12 7DS	Measham
K-Tech Suspension, Moira, DE12 6EJ	Moira
Lakeside Bistro, Moira, DE12 6BW	Moira
EW Sumnall & Sons - Hill Farm, Packington, LE65 1WU	Packington
Clive's Candles, Ferrers Centre, Staunton Harold, LE65 1RU	Staunton Harold
Temple Bees, Swannington, LE67 8QE	Swannington
Key Accountants (Midlands), Whitwick, LE67 5GQ	Whitwick
Swannymote Farm, Whitwick, LE67 5UZ	Whitwick
Breedon Priory Health Club Ltd, Wilson, DE73 8LG	Wilson

2.0 Rural England Prosperity Fund 2025/26

- 2.1 On 4 March 2025, DEFRA announced a further year of Rural England Prosperity Funding with up to £33 million of funding available to eligible local authorities who successfully delivered their 2023 to 2025 award.
- 2.2 On 27 March 2025 DEFRA confirmed that the Council would receive an additional £140,699 to continue the delivery of the REPF programme into the financial year 2025/26.
- 2.3 Officers propose to continue to use the same delivery approach for the REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund 2025/26, with some minor administrative changes to speed up the application process.
- 2.4 Officers propose to relaunch the scheme on Tuesday 27 May. The updated draft guidance notes for the fund are attached as **Appendix 1.**

3.0 Project Deliverables

- 3.1 Funded exclusively through Rural England Prosperity Fund award, the grants programme will be managed through the Economic Regeneration Service and will provide funding to eligible rural small and medium sized business within North West Leicestershire.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<p>The UKSPF and REPF programmes will deliver a number of capital and revenue programmes across the district that will contribute towards:</p> <p>‘Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town’.</p> <p>‘Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs’.</p> <p>‘Developing a clean and green district’.</p> <p>‘Our communities are safe, healthy and connected’.</p>
Policy Considerations:	The delivery of the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant programme contributes towards the delivery of NWL Districtwide Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	If a vulnerable person contacts the Council then support will be provided to them to make an application, where possible, or refer them to other support services if required.
Equalities/Diversity:	The grant programmes are open to all eligible businesses across North West Leicestershire. All businesses will be offered support to apply for the funding.

Customer Impact:	The programme supports local communities and businesses by retaining local jobs, increasing employment opportunities and retaining local shops and facilities.
Economic and Social Impact:	<p>£140,699 of capital contributions from the Rural England Prosperity Fund to deliver the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Programme. No further funding is being sought.</p> <p>Resource to deliver the scheme will be met through existing staff capacity within the Economic Regeneration service.</p>
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	<p>Grants are intended to fund investment projects that can demonstrate business growth, tourism and visitor economy development, contribute towards net zero or rural diversification.</p> <p>Businesses are encouraged to utilise the funds to invest in a number of different areas of their business including investing in energy efficiency or achieving zero carbon.</p>
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The design of the grant scheme has taken representations from the National Farmers' Union, the National Forest Company and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership.
Risks:	<p>A requirement of the Rural England Prosperity Fund is that all funding must be spent before 31 March 2026.</p> <p>To ensure that all funding is claimed, and projects are delivered on schedule, Officers proposed to close the scheme to new applications at the end of October 2025 to allow sufficient time for all funded projects to be completed and the money paid well ahead of the 31 March 2026 deadline.</p>
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