

### **Briefing Note: Local Partnership Group and Themes Group Membership**

The UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund Programme in East Lindsey District is strategically overseen by the Connected Coast Town Deal Board, with the Board regularly receiving reports of the Funds progress, performance, awards of grant and key areas of risk. Membership of the Connected Coast Board can be found here: <https://connectedcoast.co.uk/meet-the-board/>

In line with the published UKSPF Prospectus and in compliance with MHCLG guidance, UKSPF Grant applications are assessed by three individual grants panels before a recommendation on decision is made to the relevant Portfolio Holder and Senior Responsible Officer:

**1. Officer Panel** – This is a Panel of internal economic development officers employed by the Council, consisting mostly of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme Team. They assess the application for eligibility, compliance with national policy and summarise the application for the two succeeding Panels. At this Panel, the ‘Theme’ of the application is decided (Supporting Local Business, Communities and Place or People and Skills). At this Panel, an application may ‘filtered out’ on the grounds of non-eligibility or non-compliance.

**2. Theme Group** – The applications are presented to one of three specialist ‘Theme’ Groups which operate across the Partnership, where participants have been selected on the basis of their subject-matter expertise in each of the three themes. This is a consultative process and the views of the Theme Groups are reflected in the successful/unsuccessful recommendation to the SRO/PFH. Membership of each group is as follows:

- Communities and Place – Heritage Lincolnshire, Destination Lincolnshire, Active Lincolnshire, LCVS, NHS Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Community Foundation, Magna Vitae
- Supporting Local Business – x2 Private sector representatives, x1 independent economic development consultant (J. Leckie), Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, Greater Lincolnshire LEP, Chair - Connected Coast Town Deal Board, NBV Enterprise Solutions, Federation of Small Business.
- People & Skills – Boston College, TEC Partnership, 2x independent skills and employment consultants (A. Brooks, R. Harper), Department for Work & Pensions, Greater Lincolnshire LEP, 1x Independent Training Provider (Steadfast Training), 2x SELCP Skills Representatives (L. King, R. Warwick), Federation of Small Business, Heritage Lincolnshire, the University of Lincoln, Bishop Grosseteste University.

**3. Partnership Sub-Group** – The application is then presented to the East Lindsey Partnership Sub-Group, which is a Sub-Group of the Connected Coast Town Deal Board. The purpose of this group is to provide advice on the strategic fit of the UKSPF application and its applicability to local circumstances. The current membership includes the Chair of the Connected Coast Board, YMCA Lincolnshire, TEC Partnership, the National Trust, Magna Vitae, Sir Joseph Banks Society, 1x employment and skills representative (M. Gill) and 1x private sector business representative (A. Conyard). This is a consultative process and the views of the PSG is reflected in the successful/unsuccessful recommendation to the SRO/PFH.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund reached full commitment in April 2024. Where applications for underspends or efficiency savings realised in late delivery have been made ‘by exception’ (through a referral from Inward Investment or Place – for example, for the Louth Riverhead Theatre), then they have been assessed through steps 1 and 3 alone, in line with the current agreed UKSPF underspend procedure. This has been due to the comparatively small sums of money allocated through this

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medium and the 'ad hoc' nature of the requests received. An underspend round is currently in progress, determining a limited number of applications (5) for award in early September. All other underspends have been routed to the LCF GRASSroots Scheme and Grants 4 Growth for distribution to local businesses, village halls, Parish Councils and small community projects by agreement with SRO and the relevant Portfolio Holder. This has the benefit of enabling efficiency savings to be quickly recycled into impactful projects that deliver for communities, reducing the risk of the funding being returned from East Lindsey to Whitehall at the end of the Programme as an 'underspend'.

Where an application is made to the LCF GRASSroots Scheme or to Grants 4 Growth, the Theme Groups and PSG are substituted by an individual grants panel (due the smaller scale of both), which work across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership [If the Chair wishes to see the Membership of these too, I am happy to provide].

With the UK Shared Prosperity Fund now reaching the end of the current Programme (in March 2025), there is limited scope to change current working arrangements as the funding has been nearly fully committed (97%) and is nearly half spent. However, should UKSPF and REPF be renewed, it is likely that there will be a consultation on the decision-making model and we very much welcome the input of Members on any suggestions for change and improvement.