

To: Leadership Board

On: 18th June 2021

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: UK Government Community Renewal Fund Application

1. Summary

- 1.1. In March 2021 the UK Government announced a Community Renewal Fund of £220M to pilot local area approaches during 2021-22 to help stimulate local economic recovery across the UK.
 - 1.2. The Fund aims to act as a pilot programme to allow local areas to prepare for and take full advantage of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will replace current EU Funding Programmes when it launches in 2022.
 - 1.3. One hundred priority areas were identified across the UK based largely on employment/ unemployment/ poverty factors and with the aim of levelling up these areas to average UK levels. Renfrewshire was not identified as one of the priority areas.
 - 1.4. This report outlines the funding opportunity and the bid for the Renfrewshire Council area.
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2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
 - i. Notes the opportunity presented through the Community Renewal Fund and the open and transparent approach taken in Renfrewshire;
 - ii. Supports the submission of the Renfrewshire bid to the UK Government consisting of 3 individual proposals relating to the themes of investing in skills, local business and communities / place.
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3 Background

- 3.1 The UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) was launched in March 2021 and provides an additional £220 million of investment across the UK during 2020/21. This Fund 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 (SPF) when it launches in 2022.’
- 3.2 The new UK Shared Prosperity Fund is projected on average to be worth around £1.5 billion a year and replaces previous EU funded programmes. This will be launched later in 2021 with applications commencing around April 2022. The CRF will help inform the design of the UK Shared Prosperity through funding of one-year pilots.
- 3.3 The UK Community Renewal Fund is a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility. The focus of the fund is to “level up” and create opportunity across the UK for people and places; 100 priority places have been identified based on an index of economic resilience. These 100 areas will be prioritised for funding and will receive capacity funding to support the development of a local bid.
- 3.4 The Renfrewshire area was not identified as a priority area due to the higher than average levels of employment, lower levels of economic inactivity and other socio-economic factors. Priority areas in Scotland are:
- Argyll and Bute
 - Dumfries and Galloway
 - East Ayrshire
 - Falkirk
 - Glasgow City
 - Inverclyde
 - Na h-Eileanan Siar
 - North Ayrshire
 - North Lanarkshire
 - Scottish Borders
 - South Ayrshire
 - South Lanarkshire
 - West Dunbartonshire
- 3.5 Local Authorities in Scotland are expected to act as the Lead Authority for the local bid. Across 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.
- 3.6 Lead Authorities should produce a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place for submission to the programme. 90% of funding available is to support revenue costs and projects will be selected in line with the selection criteria. The lead authority should submit their project shortlist to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June

2021 and all activity should be delivered /all expenditure incurred by 31 March 2022.

3.7 The Investment Priorities for bids are primarily the previous ESF / ERDF and LEADER programme 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.

3.8 Further information regarding the Investment Priorities is attached as Appendix 1.

4. Bidding and Assessment Process in Renfrewshire

4.1 The CRF demands clarity on respective roles of key individuals/agencies to ensure that the processes of assessing and allocating local bids and future fund allocations are transparent, and that potential conflicts of interest are handled in an appropriate way.

4.2 The programme guidance requires each lead authority to identify the role of Senior Responsible Officer for each bidding organisation. The Senior Responsible Officer for the CRF for Renfrewshire is the Economic Development Manager, Renfrewshire Council. The Senior Responsible Officer has overall responsibility for bid submission and ensuring necessary local approvals.

4.3 As a potential applicant for CRF funding the Council developed additional levels of scrutiny and transparency in terms of the bidding and assessment process. A panel of CPP partners was established to undertake the appraisal and assessment process with representatives from West College Scotland, University of the West of Scotland, Engage Renfrewshire, Skills Development Scotland and Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce meeting to discuss and appraise applications. Additionally, an Independent Advisor from Smart Consultancy Scotland Ltd was appointed to provide advice and information to bidders through the initial phases of preparing applications and to independently chair and provide secretariat support to the bid assessment process.

4.4 The opportunity to bid for the Community Renewal Fund was advertised on the Council Website and a number of meetings were held with interested parties.

4.5 The Assessment Panel met on Monday 24th May to discuss the outline bids and to hear more from the applicants. Bids valued at around £1.58M were discussed, with all but 1 bid being progressed to a full application, At the meeting there was consideration of how bids may be integrated and fine-tuned to maximise impact.

- 4.6 The bid not progressing to a full application related to Paisley Museum. While the project itself was a good fit to the fund it could not be linked to any of the other projects and applications have to reach an a grant request of several hundred thousand pounds to be considered. The Renfrewshire Leisure and Economic Development Staff are now working together to realise the project through other resources and are confident of being able to deliver the project (without the restriction of having to conclude by end March 2022).

Outline Application bids submitted for assessment:

Lead applicant(s)	Project name	CRF funding request
West College Scotland	Your Next Big Idea!	£95,218
West College Scotland	Critical Engineer	£75,900
University of the West of Scotland/Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce	Net Zero Business initiative	£700,000
Renfrewshire Leisure	Paisley Museum Re-imagined project	£39,984
Renfrewshire Council – Economic Development service	Start Up Support	£173,00
Renfrewshire Council – Communities	Green Spaces, Play Parks and Villages Investment Fund	£500,000
		£1,584,102

5. Renfrewshire Final Bids to UK Community Renewal Fund

- 5.1 The full Renfrewshire application will be submitted on 18th June 2021 following the necessary approvals at the Council Leadership Board on 17th June. Three proposals will be submitted for Renfrewshire and each of the three applications will stand alone for assessment, these are as follows:

APPLICATION 1:

Investment in Skills and Local Business		
A joint bid by Renfrewshire Council (Economic Development) and West College Scotland		
Project 1:	Critical Engineer	
Applicant:	West College Scotland	
Description:	The project will build upon existing strategic partnerships between NMIS, Renfrewshire Council and West College Scotland to deliver an integrated package of Manufacturing 4.0 and meta skills delivery for Advanced and Digital Manufacturing companies.	
Outcomes:	Outcome Indicator	Number
	People gaining a qualification following support	24
	People into employment as a result of support	6

	Businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support	8														
	Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	8														
	Innovation plans developed as a result of support	8														
Cost:	£75,900 (at time of writing, this may change slightly in the final version)															
Project 2: Your Next Big Idea!																
Applicant: West College Scotland																
Description:	<p>The project is a new approach to developing and cultivating entrepreneurship between local people with a great idea, small local businesses and students at West College Scotland.</p> <p>The project builds upon existing partnerships between West College Scotland and the local community, Creative Scotland and local employers, including those in the creative and cultural industries. The ambition is to develop and deliver a wholly integrated creative ecosystem, which provides for local people with ambition to set up their or develop their own micro business, opportunities for micro businesses to utilise creative services to grow, and experience for our student to hone their skills in a live environment.</p>															
Outcomes:	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Outcome Indicator</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Number of new businesses created as a result of support</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Employment increase in supported businesses as a result of support</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People into employment, including self-employment, as a result of support</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support</td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Innovation plans developed as a result of support</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Investment attracted as a result of support</td> <td>£10,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Outcome Indicator	Number	Number of new businesses created as a result of support	10	Employment increase in supported businesses as a result of support	5	People into employment, including self-employment, as a result of support	5	Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	30	Innovation plans developed as a result of support	15	Investment attracted as a result of support	£10,000
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Investment attracted as a result of support	£10,000															
Cost:	£95,129 (at time of writing, this may change slightly in the final version)															
Project 3: Increasing Enterprise and Start-Up across Renfrewshire																
Applicant: Renfrewshire Council, Economic Development																
Description:	<p>This application aims to support the UK Govt Levelling Up agenda by stimulating more interest in enterprise, self-employment and start-up within the area to increase the business birth rates and improve self-employment across Renfrewshire. The bid adds value to the existing supports on offer across Renfrewshire and aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engage with and support over 100 new potential entrepreneurs with business ideas and create 42 new and additional businesses (Oct 21 - Mar 22) 															

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provide start-up support in terms of grants and access to premises for new businesses •Create networks of like-minded businesses to support each other and work together on new products and services •Promote Enterprise activities and opportunities at Renfrewshire’s secondary schools to support the entrepreneurs of the future (100 young people). 												
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	Outcome Indicator	Number											
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	Businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support.	20											
	Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	80											
	People into employment, including self-employment, as a result of support	20											
Employment increase in supported businesses as a result of support	10												
Cost:	£260,000 (at time of writing, this may change slightly in the final version)												
TOTAL APPLICATION	£431,029 (at time of writing)												

APPLICATION 2:

Investment in Skills and Local Business: Achieving Net Zero													
Joint Bid by University of the West of Scotland and Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce													
Description:	This partnership application proposes to deliver a comprehensive framework mechanism against which any organisation in Renfrewshire can assess their capabilities in reaching the national ambitions in net-zero goals; and their progress in achieving these aims and identifying practical solutions, through a fair and unbiased transition.												
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Cost:	£700,000 (at time of writing, this may change slightly in the final version)												

APPLICATION 3:

Title: Investment in Communities and Place											
Applicant: Renfrewshire Council, Communities											
Description:	<p>The Green Spaces, Play Parks and Villages Investment Fund is already well established with Renfrewshire community groups. The appetite from community groups to deliver change and improvements within their neighbourhoods, for the benefit of local residents, has been overwhelming.</p> <p>This application is for further grant funding to enable communities to deliver the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upgrading Jenny's Well Nature Reserve; - Reinstating the bandstand within Paisley's oldest Park (Fountain Gardens - grow wildflower verges across the authority via the Team Up to Clean Up Team - interactive play park equipment and inter-generational equipment in local parks; - A community garden in the heart of Foxbar. 										
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Cost:	<p>£500,000</p> <p>(at time of writing, this may change slightly in the final version)</p>										

5.2 Bids to the (approx.) value of £1.631M will be submitted to the UK Govt on 18th June.

5.3 The UK Government are due to announce successful projects for the UK Community Renewal Fund at the end of July and a further update to Board will be brought after that time.

Implications of the Report

1. Financial

No additional finance is sought for this proposal. Resources are sought from the CRF to support new initiatives in Renfrewshire.

2. **HR and Organisational Development** – no immediate implications although options for additional staff to provide new services is currently being discussed should the applications be successful.
3. **Community Planning**
 - Our Renfrewshire is thriving – The proposal would support additional business start-up growth and sustainment in Renfrewshire and would be an additional local service.
 - Our Renfrewshire is well - The delivery of new opportunities have the potential to positively impact on physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing.
 - Reshaping our place, our economy and our future - The approaches outlined in the report will contribute to supporting growth, the development of skills and experiences and sustainable jobs while improving the physical infrastructure of vacant and derelict buildings.
4. **Legal** - Any formal partnership with successful applicants or other parties would be subject to legal documentation.
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - Support from IT would be required to ensure that adequate resources and networking were available to support successful bids.
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** - none
10. **Risk**

The projects actively monitor key risks and issues associated with delivery in accordance with the Council's Project Management Framework. Risks are identified and mitigating actions and allowances have been made and will be continually monitored.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

12. **COSLA Policy Position** - None

13. **Climate Risk** – None..

List of Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1 Renfrewshire Council UK Community Renewal Fund – summary of Investment Priorities

Guidance and investment priorities

Projects may align with one, or deliver across several, of the following investment priorities.

1. Investment in skills

The CRF will help to 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.

This could include interventions that address:

- Work-based training;
- Retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce;
- Promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion.

Proposals should demonstrate their strategic fit and link to local skills and labour market need.

2. Investment for local business

Targeted support for local business can help local residents through increased employment, better training and in-work opportunities, and in creating new entrepreneurial ventures. Particular interest is in projects: that target support for under-represented groups; community-level interventions that can increase opportunity for all; create an innovation culture; projects that find new ways to promote green and tech adoption; or help create a pathway for upskilling local businesses through collaborations with higher education.

This could include interventions that address:

- Supporting entrepreneurs and helping businesses with potential to create more job opportunities for current employees or take on new employees;
- Encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential;
- Supporting de-carbonisation measures.

Proposals should demonstrate evidence of their strategic fit and link to local economic and business need. Loan or equity investments are not in scope of this funding.

3. Investment in communities and place

There is a need to invest further to maximise opportunities to bring people together, build the social fabric, and boost recovery and resilience. 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.

This could include interventions that address:

- Feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects;
- Exploring opportunity for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development;
- Improving green spaces and preserving important local assets;
- Promoting rural connectivity.

4. Supporting people into employment

There is a 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.

Bids should also demonstrate how their proposal will complement mainstream activity, 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.

The CRF is 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.

This could include interventions that address:

- Supporting people to engage with local services which support them on their journey towards employment;
- Identifying and addressing any potential barriers these individuals may face in gaining employment or moving closer to the labour market;
- Raising aspirations, supporting individuals to access Plan for Jobs employment support, jobs and find sustainable employment;
- Supporting people to gain the basic skills they need to develop their potential for sustainable work;
- Testing what works in helping people move towards work.

Pilot projects should enable the testing of 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.

Guiding principles

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

Bids are invited that:

- Build on local insight and knowledge;
- Align with long-term strategic plans for local growth;
- Target people most in need;
- Support community renewal;
- Complement other national and local provision;
- Demonstrate innovation and new ideas;
- Demonstrate the extent of their contribution to net zero objectives and wider environmental considerations.

Assessment criteria

Strategic fit considerations

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

- Level of contribution to local needs;
- Level of contribution to an articulated investment priority;
- The extent of contribution to net zero objectives or wider environmental considerations (not applicable to employment support interventions);
- The extent to which the project can inform UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- The extent to which the project demonstrates innovation in service delivery.

Deliverability, effectiveness, and efficiency considerations

- All deliverability as proposed by March 2022, with realistic milestones identified
- Appropriate risk management and mitigation plans;
- An efficient mode of delivery, including an assessment of value for money;
- Evidence the project would not proceed at the scale suggested without CRF funding;
- An effective monitoring and evaluation strategy has been identified for the project.

Leveraging other funds

Leverage of other funding may be important in improving value for money, but is not a requirement for project proposals.

Scale of funding

There is no minimum or maximum limits on project scale, but the UK Government has indicated a preference for larger projects (500k plus) to maximise impact. This significantly restricts the number of projects Renfrewshire can apply for; but some scope may be available to imaginatively 'package' a series of activities.