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UK Community Renewal Fund

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Following on from Blackpool Council's invitation in April 2021 for organisations to submit project proposals to be included within a combined Community Renewal Fund bid, we are pleased to announce the following schemes have been successful:

Ready for work (Inspira Cumbria Limited)

This project, delivered under the supporting people into employment priority, will help individuals (aged 18 to 24) who are considering moving into work to develop their life skills, undertake job-searching and move into work, education or training.



Blackpool youth hub (Blackpool Council)

This initiative, also delivered under the supporting people into employment priority, will help individuals (aged 16 to 24) to move into work, education or training through the piloting of new delivery approaches in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions work coaches, local employers, local employment and skills providers. What works best will form the basis of future schemes, including the follow-on project funded under Town Deal.

Piloting place-based innovation catalysts: supporting innovation leadership, clean growth and secure digitisation (Lancaster University)

Innovation driven enterprises (IDEs) provide high value employment, grow quickly and are, typically, sustainable. This project, delivered under the investment for local business priority, will focus upon supporting the creation and development of IDEs in Blackpool through innovation, talent and skills initiatives, fostering knowledge transfer and developing innovation plans.

The role of digital museums and archives in culture-led regeneration: A feasibility study (University of Central Lancashire)

The scheme, also delivered under the investment for local business priority, complements a similar Lancashire-wide project and will foster knowledge transfer and the development of innovation plans in local businesses through:

- Increasing awareness of the social and environmental benefits derived from digital museums/ archives.
- Providing forums to exploit digital cultural skills and achievements for the benefit of local communities.
- Supporting the development of local creative networks

CRF application process

A total of 27 applications were received by the deadline, each delivering CRF activity in Blackpool and together seeking £7,434,520 of CRF support.

This was almost two and half times the maximum allocation available to apply for, highlighting the success of the awareness raising exercise and the appetite within local organisations to provide assistance within the town.

An independent consultant was appointed to undertake stage one of the independent appraisal of the applications and an in-depth report was compiled and presented to Blackpool's Town Deal Investment Panel (TDIP). The TDIP is an executive subcommittee of the Town Deal Board, the latter formed to oversee investments in Blackpool consequential to the creation of the town's investment plan.

The report comprised of the following:

- The appraisal process undertaken, including the scoring methodology
- A short description of each scheme
- A score for each project
- Recommendations to accompany the highest scoring schemes to be considered for inclusion in the final amalgamated bid

At the 7 May 2021 TDIP meeting, members of both the TDIP and Town Deal Board with council officer support reviewed the report and recommendations.

As a result, 12 projects covering all four themes and having a combined total value of £2,684,643 were agreed. An additional £53,693 (a prescribed 2% surcharge to support monitoring and evaluation activity) created a total bid of £2,738,336.

The final bid was submitted on 11 June 2021. In November the council received confirmation that four of the projects, having a total value of £763,370, had been successful. The delayed decision from central government has seen an extension in delivery timescale and the projects must now be completed by the end of June 2022.

CRF background information

As part of the March 2021 Budget, the chancellor announced the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) within a broad package of complementary UK-wide interventions. CRF was established to provide local areas across the UK with access to £220 million of additional funding prior to the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022. These funds are intended to help create opportunities where there is most need and in a manner distinct but complementary to the Levelling-Up Fund.

The investment priorities included:

- Investment in skills
- Investment for local business
- Investment in communities and place
- Supporting people into employment

As the lead authority, Blackpool Council were required to:

- Invite project proposals that would benefit Blackpool and its residents from applicants such as community sector organisations, business groups and local education providers before 23 April 2021, which would be delivered until March 2022
- Appraise and prioritise the submissions
- Submit a shortlist of appropriate projects to central government with a combined maximum value of £3 million before 18 June 2021

This programme of activity is funded/part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.

[The UK Community Renewal Fund](#) is a UK Government programme for 2021/22. This aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches to prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It invests in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

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