

UK Community Renewal Fund

1. On March 3 the Government released initial details about two key funding streams, the UK Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling up Fund. Both identify Swale as a priority area for investment and this note provides a summary of UK Community Renewal Fund and updates Members on the bids that have been submitted to Government.
2. The UK £220m Community Renewal Fund will operate over the 2021/22 financial year only and was established as a forerunner to the long-awaited UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The fund is 90% revenue funding and 10% capital with the stated aim being to test new approaches and programmes and help local areas better prepare for the introduction of the £1.2bn UKSPF in April 2022.
3. Whilst the fund was open to all areas, a list of 100 priority areas was published. In Kent these are Swale, Thanet, Gravesham and Canterbury. Whilst these are identified at district level, upper tier authorities (KCC and Medway, in Kent) were designated the lead authority, through which any bids must be made.
4. The national investment priorities for the Fund are as follows:
 - **Investment in skills** - work-based training, retraining, up-skilling or reskilling members of the workforce, promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion.
 - **Investment for local business** – supporting entrepreneurs and helping businesses with potential to create more job opportunities, encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential, supporting de-carbonisation measures.
 - **Investment in communities and place** - feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects, exploring opportunities for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development, improving green spaces and preserving important local assets, promoting rural connectivity.
 - **Supporting people into employment** -- supporting people to engage with services which support them towards employment.
5. Projects supported through this fund should also demonstrate the contribution to net zero objectives and wider environmental considerations.
6. As the lead body, KCC engaged with local stakeholders, supported by partners including Swale Borough Council. Bids were invited via an open process and were required to be appraised and prioritised into a shortlist of projects, to be submitted to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government by the 18th June 2021. All projects must have completed spend by the end of March 2022.
7. The shortlist of projects could be up to a maximum value of £3 million per district authority. Whilst the guidance indicated that projects of a range of sizes could be supported, it encouraged the submission of a small number of larger projects, preferably of £500,000+ and encouraged collaboration across areas.
8. For each district authority, KCC pulled together an advisory panel, able to provide a range of expertise across the investment priorities, representation from the District Council and the Local MPs. For Swale, the panel considered a total of 22 projects and made judgements based on the project proposal and assessment criteria set by Government. The timescales involved to submit and deliver substantial revenue projects by March 2022 is an enormous challenge for any organisation and consequently many of the projects involved delivery across more than one local authority area.

9. Of the 22 projects 11 were shortlisted, broadly in line with the panel's views, as per the table at Appendix 1. These have been submitted to Government and based on the published prospectus, Government will confirm which projects will receive funding from late July 2021 onwards.
10. Once the bids to be funded have been confirmed, it will be important to work with each of the bid proposers to seek to optimise local benefit.

Appendix 1 Shortlisted Projects submitted to the UK Community Renewal Fund

Project Name	UKCRF ask for Swale	Project type	Project proposer
Swale & Ashford Skills Renewal	£509,321	This skills and employment project delivers 4 strands of activity: (1) Development of life skills; raising self-esteem; removing barriers to progression. (2) Provision of digital devices and connectivity where IT a barrier. (3) Delivery of skills programmes for the existing workforce, linked to economic recovery needs. Research into post-pandemic skills gaps & creation of bespoke action plan.	East Kent College Group
Trinity's 8-week Training & Work placement Program	£197,613	Trinity (a fencing and landscaping company) equips, mentors, qualifies and employs disadvantaged young people. The project offers young ex-offenders, those at risk of offending; and those with learning challenges and disabilities, homeless, long term unemployed (aged 18-25) a 8-week work-placement program that builds essential skills and qualifications needed for the industry. Beneficiaries will gain accreditation (CSCS card) on completion.	Trinity Fencing
Sheerness Dockyard Church Project	£83,260	The Sheerness Dockyard Church on the Isle of Sheppey is a Grade II* listed building, gutted by fire in 2001, which is now being restored (using alternative funding sources). The UK CRF funding will pay for the creation of a business model for an enterprise centre in the restored building, where young people can start up their own businesses and receive mentorship and guidance.	Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust
Growing Green: A net-zero innovation pathway for micro and SME businesses	£307,873	A programme that upskills and enables micro- and SME businesses, which don't normally access support, to innovate and respond to net-zero agenda. Activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upskilling through bespoke net-zero training package. Business-focused diagnostic audit to identify opportunities to introduce new processes/technologies. Demonstration sessions to overcome barriers to adoption. Provision of innovation grants to de-risk business engagement in net-zero agenda.	NIAB East Malling Research
Diversity House: Centre for Innovation and Development	£423,631	Delivery of a wrap-around, holistic intervention service to support disadvantaged and marginalised people with complex needs back into employment. Interventions are tailored to the person and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> life and social skills employability skills mental health and wellbeing support The project will target people from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds	Diversity House

Bridge the Gap	£168,485	An individualised and bespoke programme of support to bring unemployed, and economically inactive individuals back to the labour market. Multiple activities split across four phases comprising (1) outreach and engagement, (2) motivation and development, (3) pre-employment and progression, (4) support and sustainability.	CXK Limited
Employment and Support Hub - Gravesham & Swale	£681,512	An employment support programme that will focus on all cohorts within a family to offer holistic, specialist and tailored support. The project will provide Intensive Caseworkers to 170 families (per district) who have multiple issues affecting the ability of adults to secure employment, or are in a redundancy situation, and/or a young person who is long term NEET.	The Education People
Sustainability Spaces	£196,715	This project will establish sustained collaboration between the University, as an innovation leader and educational provider, with business, research and the future workforce. The core activity revolves around the creation of shared Sustainability Spaces for the community in places outside of the University to help break down these barriers to engagement and facilitate the co-creation of new innovations.	University of Kent
Growing Regional Innovation by Design	£231,967	The project brings together the key innovation drivers for businesses within Kent, supporting SME leaders to plug their business into digital, decarbonisation, advanced manufacturing and strategic leadership expertise, to drive forward innovation and adoption of net zero principles.	Canterbury Christchurch University
Kent and Medway Partnership for Enterprise, Food and Health	£179,763	The project builds partnerships that strengthen local capacity to grow, process and use healthy food. Partnerships will comprise: A community facility , where local communities learn the value of nutritious food. A business support facility , including a mentoring programme and an 'Impact Investment Fund', supporting investment in zero carbon and sustainable technologies. A market space , where producers bring their products.	University of Greenwich
The Kent Level Up Support Scheme	£19,860	A focused business support package, added to Kent County Council's zero interest loan scheme, to enable businesses to invest in new technology, support new management techniques and firm diversification, and increase employment. The bid is for the funding of this support package as a pilot to prepare for the UK Shared prosperity fund; funding for the loan scheme is already in place.	KCC