



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

13 JUNE 2023

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) UPDATE & NORTHUMBERLAND DELIVERY

Report of: Councillor Wojciech Ploszaj, Cabinet member for Business

Lead Officer: Simon Neilson, Executive Director of Place and Regeneration

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme and the UKSPF funded projects secured by Northumberland County Council to support levelling-up activity across the County.

Recommendations

- 1. Endorse the progress and content of the UKSPF Investment and Delivery Plans for the North of Tyne Area;**
- 2. Welcome and endorse the Northumberland County Council-led UKSPF funded projects, described in this report and summarised in table 1, which secures over £7.085m to deliver a range of levelling-up activities and support for Northumberland's businesses and residents over 2022 - 2025.**
- 3. Endorse the Inclusive Economy Community Partnership project, which, working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), will build capacity and deliver activities in support of the inclusive economy, focused in our most deprived communities and, if successful, accept £0.4m capital and 1.15m**

revenue funding into the **Medium-Term Financial Plan**, as set out in paragraph 19 and annex A.

Link to Corporate Plan

4. UKSPF supports the levelling-up agenda and particularly the Corporate priority of driving Economic Growth and tackling inequalities through investing in thriving places and culture, a diverse and resilient economy, and people and skills.

Background

5. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. Nationally it provides £2.6 billion for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the fund.
6. The primary goal of UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. With the following objectives:
 - a. Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards, especially in those places where they are lagging.
 - b. Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
 - c. Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
 - d. Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency .
7. Underpinning the overarching aim of building pride in place and increasing life chances, there are three UKSPF investment priorities:
 - a. **Communities and Place;**
 - b. **Supporting Local Business;** and
 - c. **People and Skills.**

There are detailed objectives associated with each of these priorities which are aligned to the relevant Levelling Up White Paper missions.

Funding and Allocation

8. The fund primarily operates over the strategic geographies of the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) where they exist, or Local Authorities where they do not, which act as Lead Authorities for the purpose of the fund.
9. The allocations are based on both a per capita basis as well as a needs-based index which includes factors such as productivity, household income, skills, and productivity. Allocations also include an allocation for Multiply, a UK-wide

programme for adult numeracy.

10. The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) is the Lead Authority for the Northumberland area, alongside the wider NTCA area (Newcastle and North Tyneside local authority areas). The allocation for the NTCA area (for the period 2022 - 2025) is:

a. UKSPF Core funding	£47,085,061
b. Multiply funding	£4,128,607
c. Total	£51,213,688

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

11. Announced in September 2022 the REPF is a capital funding top-up to the UKSPF and is available to eligible local authorities in England, the Combined Authority's allocation in relation to Northumberland County Council is £3,043,546. The funding succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England. This Fund is a "rural top up" to the UKSPF rather than a new discrete pot of money. Aligned with interventions in the Supporting Local Business and Communities and Place investment priorities, it will provide capital funding to:

- a. support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy
- b. support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy

Key issues

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

12. Building on existing priorities, a robust evidence base and following extensive consultation the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA), together with its constituent authorities, developed a Local Investment Plan which was submitted to Government in summer 2022. In December 2022 the Investment Plan was approved by Government.

13. To access the REPF allocation, the Combined Authority was required to provide specific additional information by the end of November 2022, as an addendum to the UKSPF submission. The recently agreed Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment programme provided the basis for determining the information for the addendum, ensuring the funds supported the priorities agreed in

the plan. This element of the Investment Plan received Government approval in April 2023.

Delivery Plan

14. A North of Tyne delivery plan has been developed which sets out the delivery mechanisms within each of the programme areas of the Investment Plan. The Plan provides clarity and transparency to partners on any likely opportunity to access funding or support project delivery. The plan sets out activity in each of the programme areas (further details set out in Annex A).

Northumberland County Council-led Projects

15. The County Council has been fully engaged in developing the Investment Plan for UKSPF and has secured early resource in a number of areas to take forward Council priorities, set out in the following paragraphs. Whilst the Council will be the recipient and Accountable Body for much of the funding outlined in this report, a large amount will be used to support delivery by partners, to deliver activities for residents and provide grants for businesses and the VCS.

16. It should also be noted that this report covers projects secured by the County Council for delivery, however there is significant delivery, particularly in the areas of people and skills and business support, which will be delivered by other delivery agents locally or across the wider North of Tyne area, and which will be accessible to Northumberland residents and businesses. We will always promote opportunities to relevant stakeholders and ensure links are made between projects and activities to further increase impact and value for money.

Investment Priority - Communities and Place

17. A total of £15.3m UKSPF funding is available to invest in communities and places in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025, of which £11.2m is revenue and £4.1m is capital. UKSPF funding will be invested in activities to build thriving urban and rural communities and boost pride in place across the North of Tyne area. This will include regenerating high streets and town centres, supporting local cultural activities and events, investing in jobs and wellbeing in the most disadvantaged areas, building capacity in local communities to support themselves, and helping households to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. As part of this Investment theme the County Council will deliver the following projects (more detail contained in annex A):

Rural Growth & Stewardship - Rural Asset Multiplier Pilots (RAMPs)

18. In February 2023, Cabinet endorsed the concept of RAMPs as innovative place-based pilots that will seek to improve the balance between stewardship and rural

growth within their areas in a way that multiplies the environmental, social and economic benefits. The initial two pilots are proposed as follows:

- a. North Northumberland Coast RAMP – targeted on the area of the Coast AONB, this RAMP will focus on better managing the challenges and opportunities of the seasonal influx of visitors (for trips, holidays, and second home residences) to improve the sustainability of local communities, reduce the area’s carbon footprint, and better protect the inherent value of the coastal landscapes, habitats, and species.

- b. Bridging the North to South Tyne River RAMP – targeted on the southwestern part of the National Park bounded by Bellingham and Haltwhistle, this RAMP will focus on unlocking the natural capital potential of an extensive, unspoilt area of countryside whilst sensitively promoting access for educational, health and well-being purposes.

The Business Case for the project is currently in development, with delivery expected to start in September.

Northumberland Inclusive Economy Community Partnership

19. As part of the County Council’s leading role in managing the employability support infrastructure across the County and in response to a North of Tyne project specification the Council has been working with partners to develop an Inclusive Economy Community Partnership (IECP). The partnership will have a specific focus on achieving the Levelling Up mission of restoring a sense of community and local pride and belonging, as well as create the infrastructure for the delivery of wider UKSPF funds. Working with local VCS sector infrastructure organisations and employability and inclusion stakeholders, the Community Partnership will support some of our most deprived communities to develop local solutions to identified needs and opportunities and will build on successful partnerships, including those previously in receipt of EU funds.

Ashington High Street Innovation Programme

20. Subject to a separate report to Cabinet the Ashington Regeneration Programme is a placemaking ‘whole town’ suite of emerging investments which will contribute to the economic growth of the town whilst seeking to address inequality and promote inclusion. As part of the overall £30m portfolio for the transformation of Ashington town centre, and building on the North of Tyne High Street Innovation Programme (HSIP), the County Council was invited to submit an updated Delivery Plan to bid for additional budget (£576,898) available from UKSPF to extend the HSIP

programme to March 2025.

21. In addition to three existing workstreams funded by NTCA (Public Realm and Connectivity; Accelerate Ashington Business Support and Animating Ashington event programme) the UKSPF funds has allowed a fourth workstream to be added to the programme – Ashington Regeneration Plan –focused on the development of a detailed Town Centre Regeneration Plan.

Alnwick Winter Trail Culture & Tourism

22. Growing our local culture and tourism sector including events, festivals and destination marketing is built into the UKSPF Investment Plan. As part of this the County Council and Visit Northumberland will seek £0.1m to deliver the Alnwick Winter Trails programme. The Alnwick Winter Trails programme will build on the success of The Alnwick Garden's Christmas Light Trail and anticipated increase in visitors to the new Lilidorei attraction in winter 2023, to bring more visitors into the town and provide an engaging and entertaining winter experience for visitors.

Supporting Local Business

23. A total of £18.3m UKSPF funding is available to invest in support for local businesses in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025, of which £13.8m is revenue and £4.5m is capital. UKSPF funding will be invested in activities to support businesses in the North of Tyne area to succeed and grow, through innovation and R&D, specialist advice and support, access to finance, and targeted support for businesses in key sectors, rural areas, and local communities. Much of the delivery of this activity will be delivered across the North of Tyne area, through specialist programmes of support, however Northumberland-focused programmes have been secured, building on existing good practice and in acknowledgement of the specific challenges rural business face.

Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)

24. Subject to an earlier report and endorsed by Cabinet in February 2023, £4.8m, made up of UKSPF (£2.85m) and NTCA Investment Fund (£1.96m) resource, will fund the creation of a new service, that builds upon our recent experience of similar initiatives to deliver business diagnostic and brokerage services to all small and micro businesses across the county. The Service will also deliver an enhanced rural growth and resilience support service and a rural capital Grant Investment Fund, as well as providing a bespoke, countywide farming business advisory service via the National Park Authority.
25. Alongside the Northumberland Small Business Service the County Council will also support, via £0.15m of UKSPF, the continuation of the successful **Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) North East** project, delivered from three of

the County's libraries: Berwick, Morpeth and Hexham. The project is part of a network of 22 BIPCs across the country, co-ordinated by British Library BIPC. The project delivers free to access support to businesses, pre-starts and not-for-profit organisations and provides a 'front-door' to BIPCNE services and other locally delivered business and pre-start support.

People and Skills

26. A total of £11.6m UKSPF revenue funding is available to invest in People and Skills activities in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025. UKSPF funding will be invested in activities supporting local residents to secure jobs, stay in work, and progress their careers through skills development. This will include: one-to-one support to help economically inactive people overcome barriers to work, such as lack of basic skills or health problems; supporting people to stay in work by helping with childcare or improving their skills; and helping people currently in work to update their skills so they can do jobs in the growing 'green economy'.

Multiply Delivery in Northumberland

27. Multiply funds are a dedicated fund from UKSPF to be directed to improving numeracy rates in adults by helping people improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work.

28. Through collaborative commissioner – deliverer arrangement working across the Economy and Regeneration Service and Northumberland Skills, NCC has been awarded £187,944 to deliver 288 outcomes to residents in 2023/24 under the themes:

- a. Making my money go further
- b. Managing my money and finances, and
- c. Maths in my workplace.

29. A separate allocation of Multiply has been allocated in an open bidding process to VCS organisations to deliver through engagement with communities and community organisations. A partnership of VCS deliverers in Northumberland was successful in securing funding.

30. The NCC Employability Partnership function is actively supporting promotion and coordination of provision, working with Northumberland Skills, Advance Northumberland (for the workplace element), and VCS deliverers, meeting regularly to ensure the programme is well coordinated and reaching all Northumberland residents who need its support.

31. The People and Skills element of UKSPF, commissioned directly by NTCA to deliver £3m in 2023-24 through VCS organisations, will align with Communities and

Place and support wider Inclusive Economy aims. Northumberland has a well-established VCS delivery infrastructure and good partnership arrangements and is well placed to meet UKSPF aims and ensure capacity for the sector to deliver is retained.

32. Table 1. Northumberland County Council-led UKSPF/REPF Funded Projects

UKSPF / REPF Northumberland County Council Projects	UKSPF / REPF Funding
Communities & Place	
Rural Asset Multiplier Pilots (RAMPs) - Rural place-based regeneration*	£1.67m (part of a £3.6m project)
Inclusive Economy Community Partnership*	£1.55m
Ashington High Street Innovation Programme (HSIP)*	£0.577m (part of a £2.9m project)
Alnwick Winter Trail*	£0.1m
Supporting Local Businesses	
Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)	£2.85m (part of a £4.8m project)
Business & Intellectual Property Centres (BIPC) at Berwick, Morpeth and Hexham Libraries*	£0.15m
People & Skills	
Multiply – adult numeracy programme	£0.188m
Total	£7.085m

*subject to formal approval from NTCA

33. All projects are required to develop delivery plans and business cases to comply with the external funding requirements that will ensure value for money. Business cases undergo full appraisal by North of Tyne to ensure funding requirements are met and funding decisions are made by the member-led NTCA Investment Panel and NTCA Cabinet.

Implications

Policy	The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. The policy supports the County Council's priorities for economic growth and tackling inequalities through its investments into place and communities, people and skills and business.
Finance and value for money	A total of £51.2m (UKSPF Core funding and Multiply) has been allocated to the North of Tyne Combined authority to deliver UKSPF objectives in support of local priorities between 2022-2025. An Investment Plan, developed via wide consultation, including via a senior Stakeholder Group, and based on a sound evidence base was approved by the NTCA Cabinet and subsequently by Government. Alongside the projects worth over £7m described in this report a number of activities will be led at

	NTCA level and will be accessible to Northumberland residents and businesses.
Legal	<p>Legal advice will be sought on all projects as they are developed and move into Grant Funding Agreements, including Subsidy Control advice where this is relevant.</p> <p>The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.</p>
Procurement	Project spend will be subject to the Council's recognised procurement procedures. Rule 4.9.1(e) of the Council's Finance and Contract Procedure Rules requires Executive approval before commencing procurement of goods or services where the value is over £2m.
Human Resources	The projects included in the report are managed mainly by NCC's Economy and Regeneration Service, with delivery by Northumberland Skills and also Visit Northumberland. Management fees are built into projects where possible to ensure the appropriate level of capacity is in place to successfully develop and deliver projects. HR processes will be adhered to in any necessary recruitment.
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The promotion of inclusive growth is a core aspiration and expectation of UKSPF with specific metrics included in the monitoring and evaluation framework to establish performance.
Risk Assessment	A risk register is in place for the programme at the NTCA level, with regular updates and monitoring in place to effectively manage risk. Individually projects will identify and manage risks as part of their project plans and delivery.
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	There has been extensive stakeholder engagement in the development of the UKSPF Investment Plan, with events and briefings held across the region. A senior Stakeholder Panel with membership from MPs and social-economic partners was also convened to endorse the Investment Plan prior to approval. Individual projects will work with relevant stakeholders as either delivery partners or recipient of grant funds.

Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	Inclusive growth is central to the UKSPF Investment Plan, with UKSPF investments supporting activities specifically to improve the health and well being of residents, through employability support, volunteering, to engagement in culture and support to businesses to grow and take on more staff.
Wards	All wards

Linked Reports

NORTHUMBERLAND STEWARDSHIP AND RURAL GROWTH INVESTMENT PROGRAMME - February 2023 Cabinet

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s13317/10%20Rural%20Growth%20Strategy.pdf>

Ashington Regeneration Programme Establishment – June 2023 Cabinet

Background papers:

NTCA UKSPF Investment Plan - [220728-NTCA-UKSPF-IP-Summary-Document-Final.pdf \(northoftyne-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
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UKSPF / REPF North of Tyne Delivery Plan Summary & Northumberland County Council-led projects

Communities and Place

UKSPF funding will be invested in activities to build thriving urban and rural communities and boost pride in place across the North of Tyne area. This will include regenerating high streets and town centres, supporting local cultural activities and events, investing in jobs and wellbeing in the most disadvantaged areas, building capacity in local communities to support themselves, and helping households to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.

A total of £15.3m UKSPF funding is available to invest in communities and places in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025, of which £11.2m is revenue and £4.1m is capital.

The funding will support projects and activities in three programme areas.

Communities and Place	Communities and Place	Communities and Place
Regeneration of our Places	Investing in improving our towns, high streets and rural centres, and growing our local culture and tourism sector including events and festivals, marketing, and our existing Culture and Creative Zones (CCZs).	£8.4m
Community Partnerships and Programmes	Creating Local Community Partnerships in each local authority area to identify priorities and deliver long-term place investment plans, The focus will be on supporting community groups to build capacity in urban and rural communities to deliver change and promote inclusive growth.	£5.9m
Energy Efficiency and Lower Energy Costs	Providing a one-stop-shop for energy efficiency and retrofit advice and support, helping households to reduce energy costs and emissions.	£1.0m

Rural Growth & Stewardship - Rural Asset Multiplier Pilots (RAMPs)

In February 2023, Cabinet endorsed the concept of RAMPs as innovative place-based pilots that will seek to improve the balance between stewardship and rural growth within their areas in a way that multiplies the environmental, social and economic benefits. The initial two pilots are proposed as follows:

- North Northumberland Coast RAMP – targeted on the area of the Coast AONB, this RAMP will focus on better managing the challenges and opportunities of the seasonal influx of visitors (for trips, holidays, and second home residences) to improve the sustainability of local communities, reduce the area’s carbon footprint, and better protect the inherent value of the coastal landscapes, habitats, and species.
- Bridging the North to South Tyne River RAMP – targeted on the southwestern part of the National Park bounded by Bellingham and Haltwhistle, this RAMP will focus on unlocking the natural capital potential of an extensive, unspoilt area of countryside whilst sensitively promoting access for educational, health and well-being purposes.

The Business Case for the project is currently in development, with delivery expected to start in September.

Inclusive Economic Growth in Northumberland

At the interface between two of the Council’s priorities: economic growth and reducing inequalities the County Council takes a leading role in managing the employability support infrastructure across the County, working in partnership with the NTCA, Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS), business and others, to provide support to individuals to re-engage with volunteering, skills, training and work. This includes facilitating the Northumberland Employment and Skills Partnership and Employability Network (in partnership with the VCS). The key purpose of the infrastructure is to implement effective delivery in Northumberland of the North of Tyne Employability Plan’s four key priorities:

- Provide employment support for the most disadvantaged
- Develop local community-led and place-based approaches
- Support people with long-term health conditions, through the development of integrated employment programmes
- Create good quality jobs

Inclusive Economy Community Partnership

As part of the County Council’s activity in this area and in response to a North of Tyne project specification the Council has been working with partners to develop an Inclusive Economy Community Partnership (IECP), which will have a specific focus on achieving the Levelling Up mission of restoring a sense of community and local pride and belonging, as well as create the infrastructure for the delivery of wider UKSPF funds. Working with local VCSE sector infrastructure organisations and employability and inclusion stakeholders, the

Community Partnership will support some of our most deprived communities to develop local solutions to identified needs and opportunities and will build on successful partnerships, including those previously in receipt of EU funds.

The North of Tyne delivery plan requires the IECP to plan and fund activity that meets two key objectives under the theme:

- Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places
- Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

As set out by NTCA the IECP will target support to a contiguous area of the most deprived communities, defined as the 10%-20% most deprived in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. In Northumberland this is proposed to cover most of Wansbeck and Blyth constituencies.

Inclusive Economy Community Partnership Area: Wards with LSOAs in 10-12% most deprived IMD :

Amble	Ashington Central	Bedlington Central
Bedlington East	College	Cowpen
Croft	Hirst	Isabella
Kitty Brewster	Newbiggin Central and East	Plessey
Seaton with Newbiggin West	Sleekburn	Stakeford
Wensleydale	Newsham	Lynemouth

The IECP will act on stakeholder understanding of their communities, and local intelligence, to identify where investment is needed. Grant funding will be allocated for delivery to:

- Support active community engagement and decision-making, focus on the delivery of volunteering, social action, capacity building, and engagement and consider impact of activities on equalities and the environment.
- Demonstrate activity to add value and align with other UKSPF themes, Adult Education Budget activities, Multiply, and other funds, and add value to other place-based investments.
- Identify activities relating to the main objectives based on evidence and consultation with local communities and key stakeholders.
- Balance long-term strategic objectives with the need to achieve UKSPF funding and output targets by March 2025.

Northumberland has a well-established VCS delivery infrastructure and good partnership arrangements, in the main established through the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Bridge Northumberland programme which has effectively delivered support to residents who are unemployed or economically inactive. The infrastructure will be well placed to meet the UKSPF aims and ensure capacity for the sector to deliver is retained.

NCC has received £0.05m to support the development of the IECF from January to June 2023; this resource has supported capacity within NCC, to manage the establishment of the partnership and establish governance arrangements for delivery, as well as the VSC, through Northumberland CVA, as the VCS Lead Infrastructure Organisation for Employability and Inclusion, to support the engagement of the sector in the development of the Partnership.

On approval of the NCC IECF Business Case the Partnership will have access to an additional £1.5m to allocate to local VCS projects between June 2023 and March 2025. The budget is split between £1.1m revenue and £0.4m capital.

The Partnership will lead the identification of projects which support the project objectives and are eligible for UKSPF grant funds; a Grant Funding Panel, made up of IECF members, will be established to ensure appropriate awarding of grants, and NCC as Accountable Body will subsequently monitor and report on use and impact of the funds. Grants will support activity such as funding for local volunteering groups; support for people to develop volunteering and/or social action projects locally; funding for community spaces, to improve facilities to allow delivery of inclusive growth activities.

Timescales

- Consultation with stakeholder – April - June 2023
- Development of project – May - June 2023
- Business Case submitted to NTCA by June 2023
- Recruitment – June - July
- Delivery to start in July

Ashington High Street Innovation Programme

The Ashington Regeneration Programme is a placemaking ‘whole town’ suite of emerging investments which will contribute to the economic growth of the town whilst seeking to address inequality and promote inclusion. As part of the overall £30m portfolio for the transformation of Ashington town centre, and building on the North of Tyne High Street Innovation Programme (HSIP), the County Council was invited to submit an updated Delivery Plan to bid for additional budget (£576,898) available from UKSPF to extend the HSIP programme to March 2025.

In addition to three existing workstreams funded by NTCA (Public Realm and Connectivity; Accelerate Ashington Business Support and Animating Ashington event programme) the UKSPF funds has allowed a fourth workstream to be added to the programme – Ashington Regeneration Plan –focused on the development of a detailed Town Centre Regeneration Plan.

Alnwick Winter Trail Culture & Tourism

Growth in businesses in our key sectors, including culture and tourism, creating new high-quality jobs, supporting innovation, and boosting productivity is a key investment priority

for North of Tyne and the County Council. Growing our local culture and tourism sector including events, festivals and destination marketing is built into the UKSPF Investment Plan. As part of this the County Council and Visit Northumberland will seek £0.01m to deliver the Alnwick Winter Trails programme.

The Alnwick Winter Trails programme will build on the success of The Alnwick Garden's Christmas Light Trail and anticipated increase in visitors to the new Lilidorie attraction in winter 2023, to provide an engaging and entertaining winter experience for visitors.

Over a period of five weeks, from the end of November to the beginning of January, Alnwick Christmas Light Trail has become a popular visitor experience, drawing in over 48,000 visitors to the Garden. The Winter Trail programme will augment this visitor offer by providing reason for visitors to explore further into Alnwick town centre and engage with businesses in the town

There will likely be further opportunities to support culture and tourism projects in the County, and we will continue to work with colleagues in Visit Northumberland and regional Destination Management Organisations to take these forward in the coming months.

Supporting Local Business

UKSPF funding will be invested in activities to support businesses in the North of Tyne area to succeed and grow, through innovation and R&D, specialist advice and support, access to finance, and targeted support for businesses in key sectors, rural areas, and local communities.

A total of £18.3m UKSPF funding is available to invest in support for local businesses in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025, of which £13.8m is revenue and £4.5m is capital. The funding will support projects and activities in three programme areas.

Programme Areas	Activities	Total UKSPF Available
Raise innovation levels to boost productivity in key sectors	Connecting businesses with collaborative innovation opportunities with universities, Catapults, and major investment projects; accelerating innovation in key sectors; encouraging SMEs to become innovation active; and signposting businesses to innovation advice and investment.	£5.1m
Start-ups, social enterprises, and rural businesses	Business start-up support; social enterprise growth support; investing in incubators and co-working spaces; support for rural business growth; and	£4.3m

	place-based enterprise support targeting communities and high streets.	
Drive business growth and improve energy efficiency	Business growth accelerators and scale-up support; access to finance; supporting growth of business clusters and supply chains in key sectors; signposting to business growth advice and investment; and energy efficiency and carbon reduction advice and support for businesses.	£8.9m

Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)

Subject to an earlier report and endorsed by Cabinet in February 2023, £4.8m, made up of UKSPF (£2.85m) and NTCA Investment Fund (£1.96m) resource, will fund the creation of a new service, that builds upon our recent experience of similar initiatives to deliver business diagnostic and brokerage services to all small and micro businesses across the county. The Service will also deliver an enhanced rural growth and resilience support service and a rural capital Grant Investment Fund, as well as providing a bespoke, countywide farming business advisory service via the National Park Authority.

Alongside the Northumberland Small Business Service the County Council will also support, via £0.15m of UKSPF, the continuation of the successful **Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) North East** project, delivered from three of the County's libraries: Berwick, Morpeth & Hexham.

The project is part of a network of 22 BIPCs across the country, co-ordinated by British Library BIPC. The project delivers free to access support to businesses, pre-starts and not-for-profit organisations and provide a 'front-door' to BIPCNE services and other locally delivered business and pre-start support.

Despite the original project starting at the height of the covid-pandemic in January 2021 it has been operating successfully across the County, with the number of contacts from businesses and individuals seeking support increasing: Northumberland being the 2nd leading location after Newcastle in terms of enquiries. And Morpeth the second busiest BIPC Local Centre, after North Tyneside, with 68 'walk in' or telephone enquiries.

The BIPC local centres across the County will continue to work with business support partners including Advance Northumberland, and will continue to offer a complementary business support activity from the three Northumberland libraries. The project will continue to be managed by the BIPC NE Team.

People and Skills

UKSPF funding will be invested in activities supporting local residents to secure jobs, stay in work, and progress their careers through skills development. This will include: one-to-one support to help economically inactive people overcome barriers to work, such as lack of basic skills or health problems; supporting people to stay in work by helping with

childcare or improving their skills; and helping people currently in work to update their skills so they can do jobs in the growing 'green economy'.

A total of £11.6m UKSPF revenue funding is available to invest in People and Skills activities in the North of Tyne area up to March 2025. The funding will support projects and activities in three programme areas.

Programme Areas	Activities	Total UKSPF Available
Employment support for out-of-work residents	Encouraging economically inactive people with barriers to work to use employment support; intensive one-to-one support to help people overcome barriers to getting a job (e.g. childcare, health problems, debt, homelessness); other support (e.g. basic skills, work placements, volunteering).	£9.4m
In-Work Support	Innovative approaches to help people stay in work and improve their future prospects and earnings, including skills development, support with caring responsibilities, and support for people on low earnings to progress their careers.	£1.2m
Skills to Progress In Work (Green Skills Training)	Training and awareness raising for people to develop 'green skills' needed to take up jobs in growing low carbon industries and make the transition from high carbon to low carbon jobs.	£1.0m

Multiply

In addition to the 3 key strands of UKSPF Multiply was added by Government as an additional strand of funding and activity. The importance of literacy and numeracy in economic and social inclusion of individuals, and for the economy as a whole is well recognised, however the UK falls below the OECD average for numeracy rates. In response, the Department for Education (DfE) dedicated funds from UKSPF to be directed to improving numeracy rates through Multiply.

The aim is to help people improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work through a range of deliverers and options tailored to specific needs of

areas, cohorts and sectors. The main target group is adults aged 19 and above who have not previously attained a GCSE Grade 4/C or higher maths qualification.

Skills - Multiply Delivery in Northumberland

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) has been allocated £4.1m to commission a range of Multiply provision. NTCA has consulted local authorities and other stakeholders and identified year 2 (2023-24) priorities as:

- Unemployed/Economically Inactive people with numeracy below Level 2 who want to improve skills with numbers or and use on everyday tasks.
- Parents/carers who need numeracy to help management of a home and activities with children.
- Employees in insecure employment or have low pay, and maths skills could support progression or specific maths for their workplace.
- Interventions delivered with Multiply funding need to be additional and differentiated from those fully funded through the AEB legal entitlement and must not displace other provision.

Through collaborative commissioner – deliverer arrangement working across the Economy and Regeneration Service and Northumberland Skills, NCC has been awarded £187,944 to deliver 288 outcomes to residents in 2023/24 under the themes:

- Making my money go further
- Managing my money and finances, and
- Maths in my workplace.