

Response ID ANON-QPA8-9PXX-K

Submitted to Submit an investment plan to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in England
Submitted on 2022-08-01 12:06:58

Investment priorities

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East Midlands

Your location: East Midlands

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Select the lead authority:
North Kesteven

Your details

Full Name

First name and surname:
Alan Gray

Email address

Email address:
alan_gray@n-kesteven.gov.uk

Phone number

Phone number:
01529308170

Organisation

Organisation:
North Kesteven District Council

Local challenges and opportunities

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority ?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

Most of this Investment Plan is focused on the Communities and Place priority and is focussed on making improvements to Sleaford, North Kesteven's primary settlement and particularly its' town centre. This approach is justified because Sleaford's sustainability, reputation and status are of defining importance to the District as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

North Kesteven can be divided into three zones, scattered rural communities set in 100,000 ha of largely arable farmland, the Lincoln fringe, a necklace of

larger settlements pendant to the south of the City of Lincoln (and home to roughly half the population), and the historic town of Sleaford and its traditional rural hinterland. The District is prosperous with low unemployment, a thriving manufacturing base in the south of Lincoln and a modern agri-food sector dominated by large estates and farming businesses. In common with many other smaller towns in the UK, despite being comparatively well-connected to the highways network and retaining its role as the political capital of the district and parliamentary constituency, Sleaford has struggled to maintain its historic status as the population it served became more affluent and less reliant on the town for services. The town's role as an agricultural hub declined with the loss of its weekly livestock market on which many retailers and the traditional market relied for footfall, while the growth of Lincoln has provided a greater attraction to those living and working in the Greater Lincoln Area.

Far from being the 'jewel in the crown' of the district, Sleaford is seen locally and more widely as a backwater, though which pleasant enough, lags behind other nearby towns with an inferior retail and leisure offer and a tired and dilapidated centre dominated by congestion and lacking amenity. The last 20 years have not been kind to Sleaford and recent growth seems only to have served to highlight the town's deficiencies while its assets remain neglected or uncelebrated. The pandemic may have reinforced some prejudices about Sleaford, but it has also uncovered resilience, re-energised a community determined to pull together to find solutions to common challenges and 're-boot' the town. Restoring pride in Sleaford is not just a crusade for residents but the greatest challenge facing the District as a whole.

The key challenges facing Sleaford's town centre are connected. Some may be historic and others of comparatively recent gestation following the pandemic and accelerated changes in retailing and consumer shopping habits, but their combined impact on the economy, environment and wellbeing of residents is most clearly expressed in three key metrics – leakage, footfall and dwell time. By any analysis of these measures, Sleaford town centre is failing to deliver for the majority of its' residents and consequently restoring pride in place is a fundamental issue addressed by all the projects in this Investment Plan.

Some won't use the town if they perceive that there is little or nothing worth buying, seeing or doing but others will be deterred or use the town less frequently if the experience is difficult, stressful, disappointing or even unpleasant. What's wrong with the town centre, or what it lacks has been reinforced by the collective experience of three successive lockdowns, while Welcome Back Fund (WBF) activity reminded the community of what it has and provided a glimpse of what might be possible with enthusiasm, commitment and investment as the town recovers and people begin to look forward.

This Investment Plan seeks to capture this momentum and leveraging the opportunities identified by previous studies and consultations (notably the Sleaford Masterplan refresh 2021) revive and re-imagine Sleaford town centre in line with the 'multifunctional' model.

We know from public consultations and a range of other consumer and place research that residents use town centres for a variety of reasons, economic, recreational, social and educational and therefore no single intervention can address all these needs. There are deficiencies in the current provision which can be improved, gaps that can be filled and attributes which can be leveraged to make Sleaford a more distinctive, attractive and relevant place, but critically the ownership and delivery of these projects must lie with the community that stands to benefit from the changes they promise if success is to be sustainable.

In accordance with the above, the Investment Plan identifies 5 key challenges:

Challenge 1: The town centre economy

Despite a strong track record of housing and economic growth the town centre has stagnated, failing to keep pace with the aspirations of an increasingly affluent and mobile population. Newer residents have simply failed to engage with the town while the indigenous population has registered its dissatisfaction by finding what it needs elsewhere.

Since 1981 population has effectively doubled from 12,000 to 17,671 by 2011 with a further rise to more than 20,000 anticipated by 2021 (recently released census data shows population in North Kesteven up by 9.5% against the national average of 6.6%). Traditionally Sleaford serves a large rural hinterland with many smaller settlements within 5 miles of the town increasing the town's catchment to over 45,000, including RAF College Cranwell.

There has been significant housing (11% growth) over the last 20 years with a further 3,800 houses allocated for the town in the revised Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) by 2040. Similarly, the town has experienced consistent employment growth over the last 20 years and this is set to continue with the latest 36ha of commercial land at Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park (one of three strategic allocations in the District) being brought forward this year - reflecting Sleaford's role as a principle employment centre in the CLLP. However, this growth has failed to deliver any uplift in footfall in the town centre and recent Masterplan consultations confirm this disinterest is due to the limited appeal of the town's retail and leisure offer. Research also shows that Sleaford suffers from very high leakage rates for non-food goods of up to 80%. The growth of on-line shopping and home delivery services, accelerated by the pandemic, has compounded the trend of diminishing salience for the town centre, impacting footfall yet further. Research including Sleaford Transport Study 2022 (STS) and Sleaford Visioning 2014 (SV) has shown that the average visit to the town centre lasts just 30 minutes.

Sleaford lacks the larger units once demanded by modern retail formats and the retail vacancy rate of 7.9% is below the national average of 11.2%. However, the absence of big-name brands on Sleaford's high street places even more importance on the resilience and vitality of local independent retailers which make up nearly 80% of the offer, nearly twice the national average of 40%. The independent sector is more volatile and has higher business churn and the growth of on-line shopping, accelerated by the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on independents (which according to Springboard town centre footfall is still 14% below 2019 levels and only recovered to 63% of pre-Covid levels in the periods between the three national lockdowns) which are typically undercapitalised so that any interruption to cashflow creates an existential crisis. There is an urgent need identified during the pandemic by Covid business grant applications and subsequent business support delivered via WBF programmes for Sleaford's independents to modernise, become more aware of the opportunities presented by digital platforms and social media, while also working together to formalise a distinctive 'shop local' offer that can be promoted to residents and showcased at events and festivals.

The impact of declining footfall and national lockdowns on the town's traditional market have been all but terminal. A long-standing trend of fewer customers and fewer traders have created a perfect storm and the market is no longer an attraction but a symbol of the town's decline. The market needs a thriving multifunctional centre with improved facilities and amenity to create the footfall it requires to be sustainable.

Sleaford has a very limited non-retail offer. While there is a popular leisure centre with a swimming pool close to the town centre, there is little else in the way of leisure facilities and amenity, particularly for young people and families. The town has no public open space in the centre, no green spaces and no civic centre. Market Place the town's historic civic plaza and home of the market is mostly used as a car park. Successive Masterplans and other consultations have shown that a cinema would be by far the most popular addition to the towns amenities and despite the issues faced by the sector due to social distancing measures during the pandemic, cinema's broad appeal across all ages makes it an attractive option not least because it offers a significant boost to local businesses active in the evening and night-time economy.

Challenge 2: Access

Making it easier to access services and amenities will encourage the frequency and duration of visits to the town centre. Currently access is compromised by the relatively compact spatial characteristics of the central area, a railway level crossing at the southern gateway to the high street and a one-way system meaning congestion is severe at peak times. According to the recent STS 85% of residents have access to at least one car while the rural hinterland has no choice but to visit the town by car given that access to and the frequency of public transport is limited. Sleaford also has two high performing academies and four primary schools meaning well over 3,000 pupils travel to and from the centre every day which combined with commuter and other local traffic makes access for pedestrians and cyclists difficult if not dangerous. Sleaford's network of side streets, arcades, alleys and ginnels which criss-cross Southgate (the high street) add character and interest but most are obscure, shabby, poorly lit, lacking identity, signage or way-marking. The general street scene is tired while the lack of clear signage, waymarking or the provision of quiet and safer spaces away from traffic make the town hard to negotiate and unattractive in which to linger.

Challenge 3. Environment:

A key part of the enjoyment in visiting any town is its environment. While Sleaford's centre is architecturally attractive, many streets, shops and buildings are neglected, poorly maintained and in need of repair. The dominance of the private car and the lack of public transport results in congestion and poor air quality while the safety of pedestrians and cyclists is a concern. The lack of green and public spaces away from traffic have a negative impact on the town centre experience while carbon emissions remain unacceptably high.

Challenge 4: Wellbeing

The wider societal impacts associated with the pandemic such as anxiety, depression, loneliness and economic hardship find direct expression in personal and community relationships with place. Sleaford's low footfall and short dwell times are symptoms of continuing alienation and disengagement. Town centres have an important role to play in recovery, providing the services, amenities and opportunities individuals, families and society needs to recover from the impacts of Covid-19 lockdowns and in the wider 'levelling-up' agenda as positive relationships with place are intrinsic to wellbeing.

Recent community consultations show there is a need to reduce the negative health and wellbeing impacts associated with poor access and congestion while the introduction of green and blue spaces contribute to positive mental health outcomes and have a direct impact on the quality of life. A sense of shared ownership, community and local pride feed our sense of self-worth and belonging.

Challenge 5: Inclusion

A sense of inclusion and belonging is intrinsic to the experience of place. Sleaford has an active community and voluntary sector, engaging civic society with the wider community of residents and businesses. Mobilising this shared endeavour is critical to the success of this Investment Plan. The pandemic re-energised Sleaford's sense of community and this spirit and determination to support the town through a difficult period was evidenced by the wholehearted engagement by business and all parts of the community in WBF activities and events. With additional targeted support, local groups will be able to turn their ideas and enthusiasm into sustainable activities and events that help define a sense of place and belonging.

The town centre lacks the amenities young people expect and the sense of disengagement from community and place is more pronounced among the digital generations who currently use the town centre for education but little else. There are few family-orientated attractions, venues, restaurants or other facilities that might tempt residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to enjoy the town at weekends, after school, work or in the evening. The night-time economy is limited to pubs and takeaways.

History and heritage also play an important role in understanding and relating to place. The past belongs to all and Sleaford has a rich and interesting history both in terms of its' built and natural environment and number of distinctive assets many of which are sadly neglected, underutilised or uncelebrated.

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible:

In response to the 5 principal challenges identified in the previous question, this Investment Plan identifies a number of opportunities to tackle these Communities & Place challenges:

Opportunities for Challenge 1: The town centre economy

1. Market Place Regeneration

Regeneration of Market Place as the public open space in the heart of the town centre. Delivery of preferred public realm design concept to revive this historic space and restore civic pride improving the setting for the Grade I St Denys' Church (14thC) and the war memorial. Encourage footfall and dwell time and facilitate additional café and restaurant outdoor seating. The project will include shared surface vehicular access for church requirements and removing general car parking (excluding blue badge parking). Market Place is the prime town square for Sleaford but it is not currently fulfilling its potential due to its daily use as a car park & the conflict of market place users e.g. cars, pedestrians and the market. This asset is owned by North Kesteven District Council and a scheme has already been developed.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2022), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

2. Slea Corridor and East West Leisure Link

Sleaford's river (the Slea from which the town gets its name) runs through the centre of the town but this asset has been ignored by development and is largely hidden from public view. The opportunity exists to create a unique attraction for the town with a car free attractive waterside environment that will promote Sleaford's heritage and renew pride in place. Using a riverside pathway as a conduit for pedestrians and cyclists it will be possible to improve permeability to other parts of the town centre and connect the heart of the town to existing riverside walks and the proposed urban extension and amenities in the west and to the east out into open countryside beyond medieval Cogglesford Watermill via a towpath following the historic Sleaford Navigation as far as Haverholme Lock (5 miles). While some parts of this route are reasonably well developed the project in its entirety requires further feasibility study including the exploration of options to facilitate the sympathetic redevelopment and regeneration of adjacent sites for potential commercial, leisure and cultural attractions.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011) Sleaford Visioning (2014) Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

3. Advice Centre & Money's Yard (Cinema feasibility)

Consultations have repeatedly shown that a cinema remains the single most desired cultural leisure attraction for the town among residents of all ages. The Council has been working on a cinema project with various stakeholders and partners for some time and but for the pandemic, which hit the industry hard (particularly the independent sector), delivery might already be underway. The opportunity remains live to deliver a cinema and the council is still working with potential operators while evaluating suitable sites for development. A central location is critical in order to capture the wider economic benefits cinema offers other town centre businesses in terms of increased footfall and dwell time. The proposed feasibility study will assess the viability and delivery options for a 3-screen cinema on land (owned by the Council) currently occupied by Money's Yard Car Park, the Advice Services Building and 25B Southgate. The study will produce designs up to RIBA Stage 3, a requirement to advance the project as a future funding bid for Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan 2011, Sleaford Visioning (2014), NEF Place Study (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

4. New Hotel & Conference Venue

Sleaford has a shortage of hotel accommodation. Previous studies, the latest in 2018, have demonstrated demand and supply issues, larger businesses based in the town are increasingly citing a lack of suitable accommodation for visiting clients. There is an opportunity to reassess and test the market to develop a hotel proposition for Sleaford to actively promote the town as a specific destination for hotel investors/developers.

Evidence: Sleaford Hotel Study (2018) Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

5. Events

The successful new RiverLight Festival delivered as part of WBF activity has highlighted the important role that events of all kinds from street markets to Armed Forces Day play in the vitality of the town centre. The opportunity exists to build on the success of RiverLight, support the enhancement of established events, create new ones and formalise a calendar that engages the whole community in a variety of experiential activities that have positive impacts on footfall, dwell time and perceptions of the town as a thriving, active place. The project seeks to resource a reprise RiverLight and support businesses and the community in the management staging and promotion of an annual programme of events.

Evidence: RiverLight Festival Evaluation (2022): Social Media responses to RiverLight (2022) Masterplan Refresh Public consultation (2021). Sleaford Visioning (2014)

6. Social Media training for independent retailers

Evidence from the delivery of the Covid business grants, WBF support activities and nationally published data such as the Maybe platform show that there is an urgent need for independent retailers to embrace Social Media in order to harness its power in support of their businesses. As part of the council's wider offer of support to local businesses the opportunity to provide specific training to town centre retailers should not be missed.

Evidence: Maybe (www.maybetech.com), WBF Retail Adviser Analysis (2021)

7. Shopfront & Buildings Scheme

Following the success of a Sleaford Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) 2015 - 2019 with Historic England (HE) in delivering improvements across the town centre there is an opportunity to address unmet demand for further improvements to shopfront and buildings in the town centre. The town's Conservation Area Management Plan continues to highlight the need for investment to improve quality of premises in the interests of heritage while attractive shop-frontages are good indicators of pride and prosperity. Investment in the improving the appearance of premises is good for business and given that post pandemic capital is in short supply, funding support is critical.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2021), PSiCA Delivery 2015 - 2019

8. Sleaford Trip Boat

In order to promote the long-term ambition of the Sleaford Navigation Trust to reinstate the Slea Navigation an opportunity has been identified for the purchase of a trip boat. The vessel would highlight the potential benefits of making the river beyond the town navigable and promote community engagement with the project as well creating an attraction on the river for residents and visitors. Passengers would be ferried between The Hub and

Cogglesford Mill, requiring the construction of landing stages at either end.

Evidence: Sleaford Navigation Trust (www.sleafordnavigation.co.uk)

9. Footfall analytics and monitoring

Town centres are constantly changing and evolving, this has been accelerated in recent times as a result of the pandemic, understanding this change overtime is crucial for a place to respond accordingly. Monitoring how the town centre operates is fundamental to delivering relevant interventions and assessing the impact of those interventions. This can be achieved with a project which collects data collected from mobile phones. The data will allow us not only to monitor footfall within the town centre but also record dwell time, breakdown of visitors from catchments, density areas, visitor satisfaction, inverse catchment (where people travel when they leave), commuter data and visitor frequency. This data can be used and shared to support businesses and the community and assist in the on-going review of progress towards key plan objectives.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh 2021.

Opportunities for Challenge 2: Access

1. Market Place Regeneration

Market Place is the largest public open space in the centre. Making it more accessible to pedestrians and less dominated by car parking will not only make it a more pleasant place to linger but also improve pedestrian access and permeability to Northgate and Southgate and historic St Deny's church. This asset is owned by North Kesteven Council and a scheme has already been developed.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

2. Slea Corridor and East West Leisure Link

Sleaford's neglected river runs through the centre of the town and presents the opportunity to create 'place defining' attraction while enhancing access to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists from east to west. Such a conduit will improve permeability to and from Southgate (the high street) Market Place via a footbridge over the river from Money's Yard and join the heart of the town to existing riverside walks in the west (Rauceby Banks) and eastwards towards The Hub, Eastgate Green and the leisure centre beyond Cogglesford Watermill via a towpath following the course of the historic Sleaford Navigation into open countryside. This project will undertake a feasibility study to explore this opportunity in detail.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011) Sleaford Visioning (2014) Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

3. Active Travel Hubs

In order to reduce congestion and its negative impacts on those wishing to access the town there is an opportunity to participate in an existing scheme run by Lincolnshire County Council, extending its reach to pilot a project Sleaford. The project could create a series of mobility hubs featuring shared bikes/e-bikes and/or scooters/e-scooters to encourage sustainable and active travel.

Evidence: Sleaford Transport Strategy (2022), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh 2021.

4. Improving Sleaford Station

A feasibility is required to explore an enhanced environment around Sleaford Station to provide a more fitting gateway to the town centre. The station forecourt public realm scheme upgrade is a major opportunity to create a new plaza and gateway space. This should be a high quality and distinctive urban space that responds to the heritage context and creates a sense of arrival, acting as a gateway space to the town centre. It should incorporate and improve current interchange provisions, including with micro-mobility options, and upgrade access to the station building itself. There is also the opportunity to create a new footbridge connecting all platforms and enhancement to bus stops on Station Road. Redevelopment of site adjacent to Sleaford Station,

Evidence: Sleaford Transport Strategy (2022), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020)

5. Street scene improvements

Studies have consistently shown that there is a need to improve the quality of the public realm in the two main pedestrian streets in the town centre to make them safer and more attractive to pedestrians. What is proposed is a concept design & feasibility study for Southgate and Carre Street to include costed schemes followed by consultation & approvals. The design will be based on principles set out in streetscape design manual, with high quality approach to public realm supporting distinctive identity and heritage of these important streets, improving access, encouraging footfall and dwell time.

- Southgate is Sleaford's main high street, but its public realm does not reflect its importance nor contribute to the overall place quality or identity. Physical constraints put pedestrians near high volumes of traffic making it an uncomfortable & unpleasant environment.

- Carre Street is the secondary north-south route for pedestrians, but the route southbound for all vehicles travelling through the town centre. It features important and attractive heritage buildings, and there are several attractions along or just off it including Navigation House, The Hub, art galleries, and pubs. However, the pedestrian space is narrower than Southgate and uncomfortable to walk along. Moreover, the public realm is underwhelming in terms of quality.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

6. Ginnels improvements

Sleaford's network of ginnels, the town's variously unnamed and named historic paths, passages, mews and connecting yards are an integral and yet uncelebrated part of the town's character. There is an opportunity to revive these historic features and improve access to the ginnels themselves and thereby links to other parts of the centre. Some can be improved with a relatively light touch while others require more intensive refurbishment. The project would involve the development of a delivery plan for improvements and the implementation of those that could be delivered in the timescale and budget of UKSPF

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

7. Nags Head Passage

Nags Head Passage is a key ginnel connecting Southgate (the High Street) with Sleaford Station, the Castle site and residential development to the west of the town. However, this route is currently underused due to concerns around safety and perception of crime. There is an opportunity to improve the

appearance of Nags Head passage, consider personal security issues and therefore promote the route as a direct connection. There is the further potential to link this path with wider footpath improvements linking King Edward Street for pedestrians and cycles and connect to Sleaford Station. Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

8. Expansion of Town Trail

Community engagement through the Riverlight Festival has shown a widespread desire for community collaboration in arts and cultural projects. North Kesteven continues to be an area of low engagement in arts and culture, an area identified in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Levelling Up for Culture priority places. The existing 'When in Sleaford' Arts and Heritage Trail is a valued community asset and anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a clear opportunity to expand the heritage trail with additional places, trail markers, and interpretation panels at key destinations. Prior interest has also been registered to expand the trail by stakeholders including several schools. Community engagement sessions will be delivered to review insight/research and agree focus areas and the trail's new assets co-produced by artists and participants.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

9. Sleaford Castle Exhibition Space

Sleaford Castle has significant history and importance. However, the Castle site on the edge of the centre is an unrealised asset. This green space is currently largely unconnected to the town and there is nothing that tells residents and visitors its story or how to access it. This project will provide a dedicated Castle exhibition space within a premises in the town centre that includes digital and physical exhibits and serve as the starting point for a visit to the Castle.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2022), Sleaford Castle Heritage Group

10. Highlighting Handley Monument

Handley Monument (celebrating one of the town's former MPs - Henry Handley 1797 - 1846) stands prominently in the middle of Southgate and although it is a key focal point when entering the town, the immediate area around the monument is difficult to enjoy despite the presence of maintained planters. An unnecessary highways sign distracts from the attractiveness of the monument and at night the area is unlit. A recent trial of pop-up street furniture in the location was successful. There is an opportunity to redesign public space to improve the setting of monument, incorporating bespoke paving, feature lighting and seating as well interpretation explaining the importance of the monument in local history.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2022)

11. Monument Gardens

Monument Gardens is located at the entrance to Southgate. The space is currently difficult to access and unutilised although it is well maintained. Sleaford Museum, located in the garden, has attracted 16,047 visitors since it opened in 2015. There is an opportunity to make more of the area and create a more attractive entrance to the town centre and a stronger sense of arrival, while also improving connections to the wider public realm and linking to the nearby Handley Monument and Southgate shopping area.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021) Sleaford Museum - <https://sleafordmuseum.org.uk/>

12. Signage replacement

There is currently an ongoing signage replacement project within Sleaford including the town centre, but additional resource is required to deliver the comprehensive signage required to improve wayfinding and highlighting of visitor attraction within the centre.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021) Sleaford Transport Strategy (2022), Sleaford Signage Strategy (2018)

Opportunities for Challenge 3. Environment:

1. Slea Corridor East West Leisure Link

This feasibility project presents the opportunity explore the creation a number of blue and green spaces in the heart of the town. These spaces will provide anyone using the town centre with attractive and relaxing environments in which to spend time or meet family and friends away from traffic. Reclaiming and re-discovering the towns river will reconnect residents with a seminal part of its heritage and restore pride in the history of the town and its famous navigation.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011) Sleaford Visioning (2014) Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

2. Monument Gardens

The regeneration of this garden area and its setting at the southern entrance to the town centre will have positive impact on perceptions of the town and celebrate a little-known part of its history.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021) Sleaford Museum - <https://sleafordmuseum.org.uk/>

3. Market Place Regeneration

The regeneration of a signature public/civic space easier to access and enjoy for pedestrians and surrounded by historic buildings including the war memorial and church will create a physical manifestation of the town's renewed sense of pride and growing confidence.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

4. Shopfront & Buildings Scheme

Improvements to run-down shop and building frontages in the town will improve the built environment and support a growing sense of pride in place.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2021), PSICA Delivery 2015 - 2019

5. Active Travel Hubs

Active travel hubs (cycling & micro transport) have the potential to make a positive contribution to reducing congestion and therefore help make the town centre a more pleasant and less stressful place to be.

Evidence: Sleaford Transport Strategy (2022), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh 2021.

6. Streetscene Improvements

Improving the quality of the public realm on Sleaford's two main shopping streets, Southgate & Carre Street, will have a significant impact on the town centre environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

7. Ginnels improvements

The condition of Sleaford 'ginnels' might generally be said to epitomise the general air of shabbiness and neglect in the town centre. Refurbishing them and making them attractive will help challenge negative perceptions of the town centre

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

Opportunities for Challenge 4 - Wellbeing.

1. Slea Corridor East West Leisure Link

This feasibility project presents the opportunity to explore the creation of a number of blue and green spaces in the heart of the town. These spaces will provide anyone using the town centre with the opportunity to spend time or meet family and friends in attractive environments away from traffic and the hustle and bustle of the town. Reclaiming and re-discovering the town's river will reconnect residents with a seminal part of its heritage and restore pride in the history of the town and its Navigation

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011) Sleaford Visioning (2014) Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

2. Monument Gardens

Improving access to and the setting of this prominent space at the southern entrance to the town centre will have positive impact on perceptions of the town and celebrate a little-known part of its history.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021) Sleaford Museum - <https://sleafordmuseum.org.uk/>

3. Market Place Regeneration

The regeneration of this signature public/civic space will make it easier to enjoy. Surrounded by historic buildings including the war memorial and church, the project will create a physical manifestation of the town's renewed sense of pride and growing confidence.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

4. Shopfront & Buildings Scheme

Improvements to run-down shop and building frontages in the town will improve the built environment and support a growing sense of pride in place.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2021), PSICA Delivery 2015 - 2019

5. Active Travel Hubs

The provision of active travel hubs will make a positive contribution to reducing congestion with its associated negative impacts on health, safety and wellbeing while the increasing use of micro transport can have positive impacts on health.

Evidence: Sleaford Transport Strategy (2022), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

6. Streetscene Improvements

Improving the public realm in Sleaford's major shopping streets (Southgate & Carre Street) and making them more attractive and safer for pedestrians will make the experience of using the town centre much less stressful.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021), Sleaford Design Guide (2020), Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

7. Nags Head Passage

Making Nags Head passage safer to use will improve the environment for pedestrians.

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021).

8. Ginnels Improvements

Refurbishing Sleaford's network of ginnels will make them safer to use and reveal an aspect of the hidden history of the town

Evidence: Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Masterplan Refresh (2021)

Opportunities for Challenge 5 - Inclusion

1. 'Commonplace' Consultation Project

This digital platform will provide residents, businesses, and visitors with the opportunity to engage, collaborate and be involved in shaping and decision making for the local area. It provides a voice for all in determining priorities and the specific interventions for this Investment Plan ensuring UKSPF monies are targeted on those areas felt to be most important to the local community

2. YMCA Youth Engagement Programme

The pandemic had a disproportionate effect on the health and wellbeing of young people (Royal College of Psychologists). YMCA research in 2020 showed 75% young feeling lonelier during pandemic, 42% more worried about their mental health, more than half concerned about family relationships. YMCA Lincs seeing increased need for 1-2-1 and small group referrals from our youth team 300 interventions in 2021-22.

The vision is to inspire young people to be central to the building of inclusive and safe neighbourhoods, providing opportunities to actively engage in participatory programmes that give agency to them to make positive change; Making their community a place in which their proud to live and that is relevant to their lives.

The project will provide:

- trained, expert youth workers to engage young people across the district.
- work with partners to develop relevant activities and small group/1-2-1 sessions to engage vulnerable/at risk/disengaged young people in positive

activities.

• opportunities to learn [answer truncated to 25000 characters]

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

The local challenges in the Supporting Local Business priority for North Kesteven are district-wide. The pandemic and the numerous Covid grant programmes brought the structural issues typical of a local economy dominated by a large number of small and micro businesses (including the self-employed) into sharp focus.

The Council is unusual in already providing (since 2012) direct face-to-face business advice and support via the services of a retained business advisor focussed on supporting small businesses and start-ups. NKDC's economic development team also offers a range of support to business which includes a managed commercial property portfolio of over 100 smaller industrial units, property search and pre-planning advice, a discretionary rates scheme supporting growth as well as general signposting to national or regional sources of advice and support. The team offers a complete relationship management service to its larger and faster growing business customers and inward investors, while the council has recently invested in the acquisition and development of a major strategic commercial and industrial site, the 36ha Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park on the edge of Sleaford.

These services compliment those offered by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) and UKSPF offers the opportunity to build a closer partnership with the GLLEP's Growth Hub and work with other districts in the County to ensure that all Lincolnshire businesses have access to high quality support and advice while also addressing specific local need and improving the service already offered to businesses in North Kesteven.

In North Kesteven the majority (up to 88%) of businesses in the district employ less than 10 people. While this makes the economy resilient and dynamic, many businesses suffer from the problems and barriers to growth often associated with enterprises of this type such as under-capitalisation, lack of business acumen and experience and more generally the sales, marketing, people and financial management skills required to turn successful micro businesses and start-ups into classic SMEs.

Evidence: Innovation Lincolnshire (2010) NKDC Economic Prospectus (2013) Local Economic Needs Assessment (2015), DWP State of the District reports (2022) NOMIS - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>, GLLEP Local Industrial Strategy Evidence Base - <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/evidence-base/>

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible:

Working with the GLLEP and district partners, The Council plans to address the Supporting Local Business challenges in its Investment Plan by:

1. Supporting Small & Micro Business

- Small Grant Scheme to address the issue of chronic undercapitalisation and support growth. There is an opportunity to provide additional funding to augment the council's existing scheme. It is anticipated that up to 20 small and micro businesses a year could be supported to make investments.
- Mentoring Programme: A lack of core business skills such as financial planning, marketing or product development can often stifle potential and even lead to business failure. Working closely with small and micro businesses providing the on-going bespoke support they might need is resource and time intensive. There is an opportunity to improve the service currently offered by the District's retained advisor by adding additional advisor support to provide mentoring where appropriate. Mentoring might also identify the need for more focussed skills training. Based on the level of current interventions we estimate 10 businesses a year could be supported in this way.
- Social media training: Covid grant support and WBF business support activity have identified a clear need for social media training among small businesses. This training would be provided by a specialist and reach approximately 50 businesses
- Reducing carbon footprint for small businesses: There is an opportunity to provide advice and support to tackle rising energy bills and reduce emissions in the small business community. Using the growth Hub's reach and economies of scale we believe up to 25 businesses a year could be supported to

reduce their carbon footprint.

2. All businesses

• Key Sector Support: There is an opportunity to work with the GLLEP Growth Hub to provide high quality specialist advice and support for businesses operating in key sectors of the local economy, specifically, Agri-food, Manufacturing, Visitor Economy, Digital Services and Defence/Aerospace. We would expect interventions by specialists to be intensive and of longer duration and therefore a small number of businesses would be supported (5-10) though the impact of this type of intervention will be more significant in the longer term.

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

The key challenge under the People & Skills UKSPF priority for North Kesteven is addressing economic inactivity, this is a district wide challenge. There is a greater need post-Covid to provide support to those 'economically inactive' in Sleaford and the District, tackling barriers to seeking or obtaining employment or actively engaging in local communities through volunteering. After Covid this diverse group (including the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, NEET's (Not in Education, Employment or Training), the over 50's, those who lack basic skills or suffer from long term health issues or a disability) have more complex needs, particularly around mental and physical health, social isolation, and financial exclusion.

The MOVE project, delivered through a partnership of 20 third sector organisations across the county since 2016 and supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF), as part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) funding stream, has been notably successful in addressing this issue locally. More than 80 residents of the District have received support from MOVE and 50% subsequently moved into employment or education, with many more gaining qualifications and work experience, or benefitting from improvements to mental health, wellbeing and reduced isolation. This project will cease delivery to participants in December 2022 due to the end of European Funding.

Evidence: MOVE Project data for North Kesteven.

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the People and Skills investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible:

There is an opportunity to build on the local success of the current MOVE programme and create a successor project in North Kesteven, both in Sleaford and as outreach to those living in rural areas struggling to access services. MOVE's holistic approach to support, working with participants to identify and tackle underlying barriers to work, offers the flexibility & personalisation that is not currently available through mainstream provision, increasing the chances of sustained, life-changing impact. The ethos of the project is to provide participants with a 'toolkit' of resources to help them build resilience in the face of setbacks, to embark on a pathway of lifelong learning and to raise their aspirations.

Interventions

Interventions: Communities and Place

Does your investment plan meet the Communities and Place investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Communities and Place

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Increased footfall, Increased visitor numbers, Improved perception of facilities/amenities, Increased users of facilities/amenities, Increased use of cycleways or paths, Improved perception of safety, Improved engagement numbers, Improved perception of events, Volunteering numbers as a result of support, Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies

Interventions: Communities and Place

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. You can select as many as you like.

E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs., E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces. , E4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer. , E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'. , E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities. , E7: Support for active travel enhancements in the local area. , E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places. , E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups. , E12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration. , E14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.

Interventions: Communities and Place

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: Communities and Place

Have you already identified any projects which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Communities and Place

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

As outlined in the opportunities section, there are a range of projects proposed under the Communities and Place priority including:

- Market Place Public Realm
- River Slea & East West Leisure Link Feasibility
- Monument Gardens and Highlighting Sleaford Museum
- Handley Monument
- Shop Front and Building Scheme
- Ginnels Improvement
- Castlefield site Feasibility & Exhibition
- Streetscape Improvements Feasibility
- Improving Sleaford Station Feasibility
- New Hotel & Conference Feasibility
- Advice Services - Moneys Yard - Cinema Feasibility
- Sleaford Heritage Trail Additions
- Signage
- Sleaford Trip Boat
- Nag's Head Passage Improvements
- Events
- Active Travel Hubs

All of the above projects are based within Sleaford.

Additional projects identified under the Communities and Place priority include:

- YMCA - Mind, Body & Spirit
- YMCA - Employability & Skills
- YMCA - Youth Engagement Programme

These projects span the whole of North Kesteven District

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

Yes

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed project constitute a subsidy/State Aid and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.:

There are activities/interventions within this Investment Plan that could be regarded as subsidies e.g. grant schemes etc. However, when these projects are developed, and eligibility/selection criteria produced we will ensure that the guidance on subsidies is followed to ensure that the subsidies are permitted. Relevant due diligence checks will be undertaken on the levels of subsidies and self-declaration will be incorporated into any grant agreement etc. We have track record of this for other projects and work areas e.g. PSiCA shop front grant scheme and Covid 19 business grants etc.

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Does your investment plan meet the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Increased number of businesses supported

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. You can select as many as you like.

E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Have you already identified any projects which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

As outlined in the opportunities section, there are a range of projects proposed under the Supporting Local Business priority including:

1. Supporting Small & Micro Business

- Small Grant Scheme
- Mentoring Programme
- Social Media training
- Reducing carbon footprint for small businesses

2. All businesses

- Key Sector Support:

These projects span the whole of North Kesteven District

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed project constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.:

There are activities/interventions within this Investment Plan that could be regarded as subsidies e.g. grant schemes etc. However, when these projects are developed, and eligibility/selection criteria produced we will ensure that the guidance on subsidies is followed to ensure that the subsidies are

permitted. Relevant due diligence checks will be undertaken on the levels of subsidies and self-declaration will be incorporated into any grant agreement etc. We have track record of this for other projects and work areas e.g. PSiCA shop front grant scheme and Covid 19 business grants etc.

Interventions: People and Skills

Does your investment plan meet the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support, Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support, Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF, Number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL), Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services, Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support, Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services, Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months, Number of people in education/training, Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision, Number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace, Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support, Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions

Interventions: People and Skills

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. Select all that apply.

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. This provision can include project promoting the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building future financial resilience and wellbeing. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. Expected cohorts include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people not in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex/offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence). *via Multiply., E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills** provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. **where not being met through Department for Work and Pensions provision., E35: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing. , E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online. , E41: Funding to support local digital skills.

Interventions: People and Skills

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: People and Skills

Have you already identified any projects for 2024-2025 which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe these projects for 2024-25, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects for 2024-25, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

There is one project proposed for the People and Skills priority for North Kesteven:

- VCS - Move Project

This is a North Kesteven District wide project

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy/State Aid and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted. :

The activities planned under this element of the Investment Plan are focused on individuals and do not involve direct financial support

Interventions: People and Skills

Have you identified a local voluntary and community provision at risk as part of this intervention?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe the local voluntary and community provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it.

Describe the local voluntary provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it. :

The VCS Move Project is funded until December 2022 utilising in part European Funding. As this ceases this financial year the delivery of this programme is at risk.

Provide the European Social Fund Project Name(s) and Project Reference(s) for this voluntary and community provision at risk

Provide the European Social Fund Project Name(s) and Project Reference(s) for this voluntary and community provision at risk:

Greater Lincolnshire Move Project which is funded by Building Better Opportunities (jointly funded by National Lottery Community Fund - NLCF and European Social Fund - ESF).

Project ID is 1028 1572

Outline Ref is GLinc/1/1

Interventions: People and Skills

When do you intend to fund these projects? Select all that apply.

2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe these projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

VCS Move Project which aims to help people into paid work via a variety of interventions. The project is North Kesteven wide

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted. :

Projects under this aspect of the Investment Plan are focused on individuals and do not provide direct financial support

Approach to delivery and governance

Stakeholder engagement and support

Have you engaged with any of the following as part of your investment plan? Select all that apply.

Public sector organisations, Private sector organisations, Civil society organisations

If so, describe how you have engaged with these organisations. Give examples where possible.

If so, describe how you have engaged with these organisations. Give examples where possible. :

North Kesteven District Council has a long standing, good track record of working with a wide variety of stakeholders & partners on strategy development, project identification and delivery. For example, the original Sleaford Masterplan in 2011 was developed and delivery overseen by a public, private and community/voluntary partnership, the Sleaford Regeneration Group.

In response to the UKSPF opportunity specific engagement has taken place with a wide-ranging group of public, private, voluntary/community sector organisations to clarify the challenges and opportunities for the area and to identify and shape projects for delivery. Engagement has included:

- Partnership/Stakeholder Group workshops/meetings - two specific workshop events were organised to bring together key representatives from a variety of public, private and voluntary sector partners. This range of partners was specifically brought together for the UKSPF opportunity. The first workshop, held in mid-May 22, assisted in clarifying the key challenges and opportunities for the locality and began to discuss high level solutions to address. The second workshop session, held at end June 22, explored a range of project ideas and refined and endorsed interventions for the Investment Plan submission
- 1-2-1 meetings – in addition to the interim partnership group above, specific 1-2-1 meetings have also taken place with key stakeholders, delivery partners and other interested parties to inform the Investment Plan. These 1-2-1 sessions have included public sector partners such as the County and Town Councils, private sector partners such as businesses and developers and voluntary/community agencies such as VCS, YMCA (former Community Council for Lincolnshire) etc.
- Liaison with neighbouring authorities and other representative organisations such as Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) on Central Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire & Greater Lincolnshire wide issues to ensure coordination and alignment of activities where appropriate
- Engagement Portal (Commonplace) - in response to the UKSPF a purpose-built engagement portal has been set up to engage and collaborate with the widest possible number of stakeholders including residents, business and visitors. This portal will enable engagement overtime on the key issues and opportunities to address. This tool will enable an extensive audience to input, shape and be involved in delivery of the investment plan proposals.

Stakeholder engagement and support

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up.

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up.:

The governance structure for the North Kesteven UKSPF can be summarised as:

- NKDC Executive Board - has delegated the decision making, authorisation & delivery of the Investment Plan to a Leadership Team
- NKDC Leadership Team - a team consisting of the Leader, Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer has been set up to develop & oversee the delivery of the Investment Plan. This group has liaised directly with the Local MP on the Investment Plan
- Partnership/Stakeholder Group - an interim stakeholder group consisting of Public, Private & Voluntary/Community sector organisation was convened in response to the UKSPF opportunity. Two workshop sessions have been held with this collective group to input into and progress the Investment Plan. This group will form the basis of a formally constituted Local Partnership Group for the delivery of the Investment Plan going forwards, the local MP will be invited to be a member of this group.

Have all the MPs covering your lead authority been invited to join the local partnership group?

Yes

Stakeholder engagement and support

Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?

No

Project selection

Are you intending to select projects in any way other than by competition for funding?

No

Working with other places: Communities and Place

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority?

No

Working with other places: Supporting Local Business

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

No

Working with other places: People and Skills

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

No

Public sector equality duty

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan?

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan ?:

NKDC take equality and specifically the public sector equality duty very seriously recognising the need to have due regards to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

NKDC has an equality and diversity policy that demonstrates our commitment to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Ensure that equality and diversity is considered in decision-making, service delivery and employment

Specifically the following equality objectives are supported by the authority:

- Know the diversity of our community and understand its need
- Show leadership and commitment in promoting equality and challenging inequality
- Work in partnership with public, private, voluntary and community organisations to reduce the equality gaps and improve lives
- Actively engage our community to participate in decision making processes to improve the services we provide
- Provide services that meet the needs of the diversity of the community and are accessible to all
- Have a workforce where everyone is treated equally with dignity and respect, with an ongoing commitment by the Council to regularly report and review our gender pay gap

We aim to ensure that all of our customers are treated equally and enjoy equal access to our services. No one will be treated less favourably than anyone else because of their sex, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or socio-economic status.

We try to ensure that information about our services is accessible to all and can produce documents in alternative formats, such as, large print, Braille, audio tape, electronic formats or in an alternative language.

In relation to the designing of the Investment Plan we have purposely adopted an evidenced based approach to the challenges and opportunities for our area as NKDC has a wealth of strategies, studies, reports and data that have been developed and compiled compliantly with the equalities legislations and with a strong focus on engagement and consultation. Given this, we have confidence that these sources of information are robust and represent accurately the issues within our locality. In addition, we have and continue to engage widely on the specific opportunity surrounding the UKSPF to understand the needs, wants and priorities of our communities. This engagement has included partnership/stakeholder meetings set up to inform the process that have involved significant representation from a wide variety of public, private and community/voluntary organisations. 1-2-1 meetings have also taken place with key organisations such as the County Council and the Town Council to ensure the information they have from their electorate is informing the process. Finally, a purpose-built digital platform, Commonplace, has recently been procured to ensure that NKDC can quickly and efficiently reach, engage, and collaborate with its widest possible audience including local residents, business owners and visitors in order to truly understand their local priorities and aspirations for the area. The Investment Plan as it stands currently is very high level and the information and data obtained via this portal, along with the other sources referenced, will continue to shape the detail and specifics of the Investment Plan as we move forward.

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects?

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects ?:

NKDC are committed to ensure a fair and equitable process in implementing the Investment Plan and in the selection and delivery of the projects. There are various mechanisms that will be adopted to ensure compliance with our equality duty:

- Engagement - The engagement processes outlined earlier in the Investment Plan, including the Commonplace platform, will continue to provide invaluable insight into the type of interventions and specific projects that our communities feel are of most benefit locally and this will continue to guide the detail of Investment Plan delivery.
- Procurement – NKDC & any specific UKSPF procurement procedures will be followed to ensure a fully compliant procurement process with access to opportunities for all. The procurement process from the development of project/tender briefs, the selection criteria through to advertising the opportunities and evaluating the submissions will be clear transparent and inclusive.
- Competition – similar with the above, but for specific projects e.g. grant schemes etc., all processes from the development of the project, the selection criteria through to advertising the opportunities and evaluating the submissions will be clear transparent and inclusive.
- Communications & Marketing – ensuring full awareness of the opportunities around UKSPF is important and a full spectrum of communication and marketing channels, digital and non-digital, will be adopted to ensure these messages reach the widest audience.
- Accessibility – in its widest sense we will ensure all meetings, documents, websites etc are fully accessible to all whether that be physical or online

Risks

Have you identified any key risks that could affect delivery, for example lack of staff or expertise?

Yes

Risks

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them:

- Staff capacity & capability - NKDC has directly assessed the inhouse staff resources available to deliver the UKSPF Investment Plan. This has resulted in the identification of a post required to coordinate and manage programme delivery, which has been included in the costings (via the 4% fund management allocation). Specific projects will have multi-disciplinary teams, with relevant skills and experience, involving NKDC employees alongside partner resources from other public, private or voluntary sector agencies. Finally, some projects will be delivered directly by delivery partners or via external consultants and/or contractors.
- Consultant availability - NKDC are conscious that as a result of UKSPF as well as the government programmes e.g. LUF, Town Deals etc. the demand for consultancy services will be high. Given this, brief/tender documents are prioritised for early development with flexibility in the programme for consultant lead in time for delivery. Projects also have the ability to be amalgamated and/or sub divided accordingly to ensure full market reach and optimisation
- Financial Risk - at present NKDC are acutely aware of the market volatility in relation to costs and delivery lead in times. Given this, contingencies have been factored into the assumed budget costs to allow for potential cost increases and the delivery programme has allowed for lead in times and flexibility has been factored into the Investment Plan if project plans change. Value Engineering could also be factored into some projects if required to ensure delivery within timescales and budgets
- Delays to Investment Plan approval - NKDC acknowledge the government intention to approve Investment Plans by October. However, flexibility around the approval timescale has been factored into the delivery programme in the event that formal approval of the plan is delayed. Sufficient time for planning and project development has been allowed to ensure that delays in approval will not impact on the overall delivery of the plan as a whole.
- Political/Stakeholder support diminishes - to mitigate this extensive engagement has taken place in the development of the Investment Plan and ongoing engagement is integral to the delivery of the Investment Plan proposals. Marketing & Communication plans will be developed into delivery ensuring all partners are informed of plans, progress and impacts. The Investment Plan envisages a number of delivery partners being involved in implementation and therefore there is widespread ownership of the plan alongside contractual obligations
- Delivery Partner performance - early engagement has taken place with potential Delivery Partners in the development of this high-level Investment Plan including conversation on capacity, capability and timescale. All Delivery Partners will commit to delivery via either a MoU, SLA or other contractual agreement and this will be developed in consultation with each partner with the appropriate due diligence checks. The Investment Plan has also built-in flexibility on all projects to accommodate change and development should circumstances change over the timescale of UKSPF.

Risks

Have you identified any key fraud risks that could affect UKSPF delivery?

Yes

Risks

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them. :

NKDC is aware of the seriousness of fraud and the fact that it is an ever increasing threat. As a Council we are committed to a culture of operating with the highest standards of openness, probity, honesty, integrity and accountability. As an organisation we have a Counter Fraud, Corruption, Bribery and Money Laundering Strategy and there are robust processes and procedures for dealing with fraud in place.

However, specifically for this UKSPF Investment Plan the following risk has been identified:

- Grants – grant schemes are proposed to be delivered utilising UKSPF monies and fraudulent applications and claims are a risk. However, NKDC has a substantial track record in the administration and delivery of business related grant schemes such as PSiCA, Covid grants and have various procedures in place to minimise the risk of fraud. These include, but are not limited to, annual fraud training for all staff, due diligence measures to check applicants' eligibility & compliance with programme e.g. specialist counter-fraud tools such as Spotlight and references etc. and internal authorisation processes that involve several individuals and departments to ensure no individual has approval powers that could be abused.

Capacity and capability

Team resource

How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?

How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?:

4

Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.

Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.:

Within NKDC an internal UKSPF delivery team structure has been put in place to develop the UKSPF Investment Plan and this will evolve as we move into delivery. The internal team consists of a significant number of officers that we estimate would equate to 4 FTE members of staff resourcing the programme. The internal team is multi-disciplinary with expertise and experience from across the whole organisation including Economic Development,

Finance, Property Services, Communities, Communications and Planning.

Seniority ranges across the internal delivery team but is led by:

- Director or Economy & Place (Programme Sponsor) who directly reports to Chief Executive & Leader
- Reps from Senior Management Team
- Team Leads from across the authority
- Various staff members based on specific expertise, experience for delivery & knowledge

During the development of the Investment Plan and specifically the Resource Plan a new FTE post has been identified as necessary to aid in the coordination and delivery of the UKSPF programme, this will be funded from the 4% administration allowance within the UKSPF fund.

Additionally, wider partners & external consultants/contractors will also assist on resource delivery

Team experience and capability

How would you describe your team's current experience of delivering funding and managing growth funds?

Some experience

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for procurement?

Strong capability

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for procurement?

Some capacity

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for subsidies?

Some capability

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for subsidies?

Some capacity

Capacity and capability: Communities and Place

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the Communities and Place interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

- Different levels of experience across the delivery team from some members having extensive experience of funding & project delivery to relatively junior staff with limited exposure to date
- NKDC is a small local authority in a very large rural county with a lack of critical mass, scale and delivery infrastructure/organisations and partners to implement large scale projects

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

- £20K & up to 4% allowance of UKSPF to assist with fund administration will help
- Sharing of best practice, project ideas, issues, and solutions etc. through webinars, forums, learning sessions on themes etc. as per Welcome Back Fund (WBF) would be useful to ensure local/individual solutions/approaches are not required for every intervention. Help upskill and provide confidence to less experienced members of the team
- Identification of consultancy frameworks to be utilised may speed up the procurement process and remove the research time associated

Capacity and capability: Communities and Place

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

Some capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

- NKDC is a small authority with a strong track record in delivering funding & projects but we have a small team. However, as outlined above, we have resources allocated from across the organisation to mitigate the impact of delivery UKSPF & ensuring relevant skills and expertise are applied
- Investment Plan is based on a partnership approach with some projects expected to be delivered by NKDC directly whereas others would be outsourced to delivery partners or tenders for external partner delivery.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

- Additional resource

Capacity and capability: Supporting Local Business

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the Supporting Local Business interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

- Business support has been a key delivery component of NKDC for many years and therefore as an authority we have strong capability & track record, albeit limited capacity
- Investment Plan is based on a partnership approach to extending NKDC's current Business Support offer & this would be with partners with proven track record

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

- Increased capacity would de-risk this element of delivery

Capacity and capability: Supporting Local Business

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

Some capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

- Track record of Business Support delivery but limited to a very small number of staff members so capacity is an issue & a risk if staff turnover were to effect this area

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

- Increased resource & training to spread expertise across a wider number of staff members

Capacity and capability: People and Skills

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the People and Skills interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

There are no key capability challenges, subject to the People and Skills element of this Investment Plan being approved. The 3rd sector providers locally have a proven track record of successfully delivering the People and Skills interventions proposed.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

N/A - robust 3rd sector providers locally

Capacity and capability: People and Skills

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

There are no key capacity challenges, subject to the People and Skills element of this Investment Plan being approved. The 3rd sector providers locally have a proven track record of successfully delivering the detailed People and Skills interventions.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

N/A - strong local 3rd sector delivery partners

Support to deliver UKSPF

All lead authorities can use up to 4% of their UKSPF allocation to support the delivery of their chosen interventions, but by exception, lead authorities will be able to use more than 4%. Are you planning on using more than 4%?

No

If so, explain why you wish to use more than 4%.

If so, explain why you wish to use more than 4%.:

Approvals

Do you have approval from your Chief Executive Officer for this investment plan?

Yes

Do you have approval from your Section 151 Officer for this investment plan?

Yes

Do you have approval from the leader of your lead authority for this investment plan?

Yes

If you do not have approval from any of these people, explain why this is

If you do not have approval from any of these people, explain why this is: :

Additional documents

Have you completed and uploaded the two spreadsheets to the SharePoint folder as requested?

Yes

Edit your answers

Next steps