

You have already submitted your UKSPF investment plan. Here, we would like you to provide any additional information about specific rural challenges, market failures, and opportunities for rural businesses or rural communities in your area that you would like us to consider.

Stroud District is a largely rural one, served by the main town centres of Stroud, Dursley, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, and Wotton-Under-Edge and formed of a number of smaller parishes and villages.

A large proportion of Stroud's residents are affluent, however, there is a higher level of deprivation in some LSOAs around areas. Stroud District is home to the second largest population in the County, and with the noted decline in working age population combined with a predicted increase in the older population, there is a need to prioritise that communities have access to support across all abilities and ages. With a declining budget for support services, these communities are turning to the Voluntary and Community Sector and adding to the pressures these organisations face.

Whilst Stroud's economy has seen growth in its Gross Value Added (GVA), this has not been linear and is lagging behind the increases seen across other rural locations. Stroud districts GVA per hour has consistently been lower in the years 2004 – 2019, ONS sub regional productivity release, July 2021, falling behind other rural locations across the county and not yet fully recovering. This impacts on the innovation, productivity and overall economic outputs of the area, with support needed for businesses to make improvements to the overall economic benefits of the district.

Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural business investment priority (2023-2024). Select as many options as you wish from the menu:

- **Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas**
- **Capital grant funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation**
- **Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy**

Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural business investment priority (2024 - 2025). Select as many options as you wish from the menu:

- **Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas**
- **Capital grant funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation**
- **Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy**

Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural business challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words)

Stroud District's business base is predominately made up for micro (less than 10 employees) businesses, with a higher closure than start up rate of businesses. Being able to support enterprises within the District to both start, and increase their productivity and growth rates through the whole range of opportunities available through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. This will enable us to deliver support as required by industry and to all sectors as well the priority sectors outlined within the Districts Economic Development Strategy.

Small scale investment into micro and small enterprises within our rural areas will offer businesses access to capital grants that may not have previously considered approaching their Local Authorities for support. It will increase their confidence in their abilities to do business as well as having a positive impact in our communities.

The District has a strong social enterprise base, who are dedicated to making positive changes within their communities. Social enterprises are severely impacted by a lack of funding, and sometimes the expertise to access funding opportunities. Offering accessible capital grants will encourage innovation within the social enterprises and increase the impacts received by all communities, from access to wellbeing support to the increased confidence to improve the positions they're currently in.

Stroud District is sometimes referred to as the forgotten Cotswolds, with excellent tourism locations and businesses who require access to better promotion methods which would enable increased visitor footfall, duration and spend. Offering this sector access to capital grants to support increase footfall whilst customers are less inclined to spend will help increase their footfall and aim to have a positive impact on their profit margins.

Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added.

To be completed.

Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural communities' investment priority (2023-2024). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

- Capital grant funding for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities
- **Capital grant funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups**
- **Capital grant funding for creation and improvements to local rural green spaces**
- **Capital grant funding for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer**
- **Capital grant funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities**
- Capital grant funding for active travel enhancements in the local area
- **Capital grant funding for rural circular economy projects**
- **Capital grant funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places**

Please choose the interventions you wish to use under the rural communities investment priority (2024-2025). Select as many options as you wish from the menu.

Capital grant funding for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities

Capital grant funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

Capital grant funding for creation and improvements to local rural green spaces

Capital grant funding for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer

Capital grant funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

Capital grant funding for active travel enhancements in the local area

Capital grant funding for rural circular economy projects

Capital grant funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

Please explain how the interventions selected will address local rural communities challenges, market failures, and opportunities (max 300 words)

Capital grant opportunities across the range of community needs is essential for continuing to support essential services to continue and be improved. A number of services provided through community organisations are underfunded and oversubscribed and deliver essential support within their areas. By enabling capital grants to be available across all areas of support as determined by the Rural England Prosperity Fund this offers access to funding to the broadest spectrum of community support provision as possible. Furthermore, this ensures that the communities are able to identify their own priorities and market failures before applying for the appropriate grant funding criteria.

Where interventions have not been chosen, this is because there are other funding packages available to businesses and communities to access funding on these specific areas and it allows the widest spread of support via the District Council.

Please rank the interventions selected in order of expected value added.

To be completed.

Please select what outcomes the interventions selected in the rural business investment priority are expected to achieve:

Jobs created

Jobs safeguarded

Number of new businesses created

Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes

Number of businesses with improved productivity

Number of businesses experiencing growth

Number of businesses increasing their export capability

Number of businesses increasing their turnover

Please select what outcomes the interventions selected in the rural communities investment priority are expected to achieve

Jobs created

Jobs safeguarded

Increased users of facilities or amenities

Improved perception of facilities or amenities

Number of new businesses created

Increased footfall

Increased visitor numbers

Increased use of cycleways or paths

Improved engagement numbers

Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support

Improved perception of events

Improved perception of local facilities or amenities

Number of community-led programmes as a result of support

Volunteering numbers as a result of support

Please set out the indicative spend profile of your REPF allocation, additional to that of your UKSPF investment plan. Please detail the indicative budgets at investment priority level and at intervention level, for the 2 years of the fund. Including if REPF money will be used to complement UKSPF funded projects. (300 words max)

The REPF allocation will be spent across the two financial years as follows:

2023 – 24: £100,000

2024 – 25: £300,000

The split across the investment priorities has not been determined to ensure the money can be used to support the widest range of projects and local priorities. As such we anticipate there will be an even split across rural business interventions and rural community interventions. This will be monitored throughout the funding period, as will the spread of funding take up across the district, seeking to see a fair distribution of funds across the rural parish locations.

The REPF will seek to support new projects, in addition to those that will be supported by the UK Shared Prosperity, offering a greater reach of the funding and greater returns as the funding will offer to support businesses and communities who were not successful through the UKSPF.

Please set out how you intend to select projects to support, detailing including how you will ensure they deliver value for money, including additionality. Please set out how you will determine that projects cannot be funded by private finance. (500 words max)

Projects will be selected through an open grants scheme. Each project will need to complete a grant application which will be assessed by an Officer grants panel against the following criteria before being shortlisted and recommendations for approval:

- Does the project deliver one or more of the interventions for business and or community support?
- Does the project meet one or more of the agreed outputs?
- Does the project meet one or more of the agreed outcomes?
- Evidence of how the project offers additionality to what is currently on offer?
- What postcodes does the project support?
- Does the project offer good value for money through the interventions, outputs, outcomes and postcodes supported?
- Does the project meet the timescales of spend and will be completed in one of the following years: 2023-24 or 2024-25?
- Confirmation that the project is capital spend.
- Confirmation and explanation to why the project required investment from REPF and cannot access private funding.
- Projects will need to evidence they have gone out for quotes to ensure best value for money
- Projects will need to evidence spend as outlined on the application form to ensure projects are funded as outlined in the application form.

Have you identified opportunities to work with other places on specific interventions and/or projects for the rural business interventions?

No

Further to your UKSPF Investment Plan engagement, have you engaged or consulted with rural stakeholders, or expanded your UKSPF local partnership group, to inform the information you have submitted above? If yes, please give details. You should also use this section to tell us about planned future engagement with rural stakeholders.

To date, engagement has taken place with Rural community organisations, such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Gloucestershire Rural Partnership Community Council (GRCC). Engagement has also taken place with Higher and further education organisations, local Growth Hub and neighbouring local authorities and the local Area of Outstanding National Beauty organisation.

At the date of writing this, meetings are still to take place with the District Parishes and Community organisations.

Each meeting ensured an understanding of the requirements and needs of the local areas and ensured that the funding would have maximum reach.

Describe the engagement you have undertaken with your Rural Advisory Group and any other local rural stakeholders to inform your investment plan and what support you have from them (500 words max)

When meeting with each stakeholder there has been opportunities to find out how their priorities can be supported through the Rural England Prosperity Funding. This has offered space to confirm the priorities of the funding will complement the needs of the different rural localities and stakeholders.

When presenting to different stakeholders, the offer of a grant programme and the prioritisation of interventions that do not currently have funding methods available to them has been explained. The method of a grant programme has been well received as has ensuring no double funding opportunities to maximise the funding available.

As a replacement for previous LEADER funding, stakeholders are keen to see the investment continues to support the correct type of businesses and communities, ie, rural businesses that are land based. Feedback has been received as to how previous funding opportunities have been received by different sectors and the best reach for the funding – ie, good value for money and higher outputs delivered, which will help shape the grant programme.