



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CLIMATE CHANGE,
BIODIVERSITY AND CARBON REDUCTION**

MONDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2024

Report of the Executive Director - Place

The Green Entrepreneurs Fund

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider and review progress on the delivery of the Green Entrepreneurs Fund, including an update on the grants awarded and assessment of outcomes.

2. Information and Analysis

- 2.1 The Green Entrepreneurs Fund (GEF) was launched in March 2021 by Derbyshire County Council; the University of Derby was procured to act as the key delivery partner and managing the day-to-day operations of the programme.
- 2.2 On 11 February 2021, Cabinet approved an allocation of £2m to implement the GEF (Minute No. 27/21 refers) which will help businesses and communities fund innovation and support 'green recovery' on the back of COVID. The allocation also includes the cost of support being provided by the University of Derby to help deliver the programme through a service level agreement (SLA).
- 2.3 The GEF is a combination of revenue funding and capital funding; it started in April 2021 and is due to conclude this year on 31 March 2024. The scheme has been developed in collaboration with the University of Derby and supports businesses and other organisations to realise green growth through the programme's three strands.

2.4 The three strands are:

- Demonstrator projects - £1.2 million to support a small number of high-quality projects e.g. green, alternative energy, clean fuel, etc. Up to £200,000 available per project supported by a grant intervention rate up to 40%.
- Small grants - £500,000 available for grants between £6,000 - £20,000 with an intervention rate up to 40% (based on a minimum project spend of £15,000). Funding can support projects where the organisation is on a net-zero pathway.
- Skills and re-training - £100,000 available to support individuals (aged 19+) to gain skills required within the green economy (not supported by other funding streams). A maximum of £1,500 is available per person.

2.5 The fund is open to individuals, small to medium enterprises (SMEs,) partnerships, charities, formally constituted social enterprises and community partnerships based in the Derbyshire boundaries (excluding the Derby City Council boundaries) that meet the criteria of any of the three strands.

2.6 The planned outputs for the GEF were originally set as follows, although it should be noted that at the time the outputs were set, the grant scheme represented a new approach to business support; the take up levels within each strand were therefore largely unknown/untested:

- Demonstrator fund - 4 to 6 projects supported.
- Small Grant Fund – 25 businesses supported with 6 to be new start businesses less than 12 months old.
- Scholarship Fund - 67 Individuals supported.
- Combined estimated CO₂ saving of 1,544,089kg

2.7 At the start of the GEF programme, indicative allocations of funding were set for each of the three strands – and this is shown below in the second column. The actual award/ committed spend against that profile is shown in columns 6 and 7. It is clear that some strands have been more popular than others and initial allocations of funding (second column) haven't necessarily matched the demand from businesses:

2.8 Such is the success of the programme that only £137,306 remains unallocated from the original £2m.

Funding strand	Allocation	Pipeline - invited to submit full application	In Appraisal/for Board consideration	In Appraisal - scheme of delegation	Awarded to date (including due diligence)	Total - if all awarded	Funding available
Small Grants	£500,000	£66,755		£13,645	£645,805	£726,205	-£226,205
Demonstrator Grants	£1,200,000	£0	£0		£897,863	£897,863	£302,137
Scholarship Grants	£100,000	£0	£0		£38,626	£38,626	£61,374
Total	£1,800,000	£66,755	£0	£13,645	£1,582,294	£1,662,694	£137,306
							£137,306

2.9 A more detailed presentation will be provided to Scrutiny Committee at its meeting and will include information on:

- the type of businesses expressing interest in the scheme;
- the type of projects supported;
- the outputs being achieved; and
- contributions to tackling climate change.

3. Consultation

3.1 The GEF was developed in response to an identified need from local businesses and communities during the Covid-19 global pandemic and as an approach, was endorsed through the Derbyshire Economic Recovery Board. No specific public consultation was undertaken in developing the programme but the original need for support was identified through other areas of engagement with local businesses as part of the COVID recovery architecture.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Not relevant to this update report. Alternative options for business support were considered as part of the COVID Recovery Strategy - some of which (e.g. business start-up grant programme) were also initiated and remain in place.

5. Implications

5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

6. Background Papers

6.1 None identified.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

8. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- a) Notes progress on the delivery of the Green Entrepreneurs Fund, including an update on the grants awarded and assessment of outcomes presented at the Committee meeting.

9. Reason for Recommendation

- 9.1 To ensure the Committee has the appropriate information to understand the progress made through the GEF in tackling climate change.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The GEF is approaching the planned end and the balance of the original £2m reflects the time left within the programme. There is currently approximately £137,000 left in the GEF programme and it is anticipated this will be spent before the original March 2024 completion timescale.

Legal

- 2.1 None directly associated with this report. The expert input of Derby University in providing technical assessment of products and project proposals is covered by a signed Service Level Agreement (SLA) that sets out key deliverables and performance targets.

Human Resources

- 3.1 None directly associated with this report.

Information Technology

- 4.1 None directly associated with this report.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Not directly associated with this report. Individual project proposals present information on needs assessment and impact.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 The Green Entrepreneurs Programme is a key priority of the Council's Place Directorate and helps deliver the following Corporate Plan priority of: 'A Prosperous and Green Derbyshire'.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental, Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 Driving environmental sustainability is at the core of the GEF scheme and a key criterion for grant funding.