

Background

To help prepare for national recovery following Covid-19, and in response to European Structural Funds being phased out in 2023, the Government announced plans last year for a new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), worth around £1.5 billion per year and due to launch in 2022 as part of the Government's levelling-up agenda.

As a precursor to UKSPF, in May 2021 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) launched its **UK Community Renewal Fund** (UKCRF), a £220m fund planned to run across 2021/22 to support innovation and new ideas, invest in pilots that draw on local insights, and help build communities where people want to live, work and visit – all helping places prepare for the introduction of UKSPF next year.

The UKCRF programme is new in that it is being managed directly between UK Government and Local Government, rather than via Local Enterprise Partnerships as with previous funding schemes. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was designated as a lead authority, responsible for issuing the initial invitation and receiving bids, selecting the bids to be sent to the Government for consideration, and then issuing grants and managing the performance of successful projects.

East Sussex projects

ESCC received a total of 32 project bids by the deadline of 30 Apr 2021. The bids were assessed by an *independent* consultant, and shortlisted to 11 projects believed to best meet the Government's UKCRF criteria. This list of projects was presented to TES at a specially convened meeting on 14 Jun 2021, alongside ESCC approving the list and then submitted those 11 projects to the Government on 18 Jun 2021.

The announcement of successful projects was eventually made by the Government on 3 Nov 2021. East Sussex received a total funding award of **£2,518,187** for the following 5 projects:

- Sustainable Wine and Cultural Tourism
- Hastings 2066 – An Augmented Town and its Digital Twin
- Innovation Masters Programme
- Minding the Gaps
- VCSE Futureproofing Initiative (Building Community Connections)

Summary information on each of the projects is given below.

Next steps

ESCC colleagues are currently working with project leads to reconfirm all of the projects' outputs (due to the Government's announcement coming several months later than expected). However, because of that delay, the delivery deadline has been extended from 31 Mar 2022 to 30 Jun 2022. In parallel, ESCC is working with project promoters on their delivery and financial profiles, whilst waiting for Government to release the Funding Grant Agreement which will form the basis of the back-to-back agreements between ESCC and each of the project promoters.

For any further queries please contact Zoe England, UKCRF Project Coordinator, via the dedicated mailbox: communityrenewalfund@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Summary information on the successful UKCRF projects in East Sussex

Sustainable Wine and Cultural Tourism		UKCRF award: £705,000
Investment priority:	Business	
Delivery areas:	Lewes (100%)	
Lead applicant:	Lewes DC	
A high-impact tourism campaign to create a global brand for wine and cultural tourism alongside pilot activity and research that will develop and inform future investment. The project will use Lewes district as a pilot for how Sussex can take its place in global wine tourism.		High level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity • innovation plans developed as a result • increase in visitor numbers as a result

Hastings 2066 – An Augmented Town and its Digital Twin		UKCRF award: £636,173
Investment priority:	Employment	
Delivery areas:	Hastings (100%)	
Lead applicant:	Napster Group PLC	
Led by commercial VR/AR specialists, using technology to drive a cultural recovery within a key cultural hub: The Observer Building. The building will host a learning environment for East Sussex College; community facility for VR/AR businesses; local technology training facility; incubator for digital start-ups/businesses; support for local festivals; digitally enhanced visitor attraction.	High level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovation plans developed • businesses introducing new products to the market • new businesses created • organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity • increase in footfall • increase in visitor numbers • jobs – employment increase in supported business 	

Innovation Masters Programme		UKCRF award: £529,287
Investment priority:	Business	
Delivery areas:	Hastings (25%), Lewes (25%), Wealden (20%), Rother (15%), Eastbourne (15%)	
Lead applicant:	Sussex Innovation (in partnership with University of Sussex)	
The programme will improve the productivity of East Sussex's economy by showing businesses how to develop innovation potential and facilitating the raising of investment capital resulting in improvements to their economic performance. It will focus on improving micro and SME productivity through links to higher education and specialised providers.	High level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • businesses introducing new products to the market • businesses introducing new products to the firm • jobs safeguarded • organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity 	

Minding the Gaps		UKCRF award: £547,627
Investment priority:	Employment	
Delivery areas:	Hastings (42%), Lewes (34%), Rother (12%), Wealden (12%)	
Lead applicant:	Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA) – a partnership between SCDA, East Sussex College Group (ESCG), 3VA, and Hastings Advice & Representation Centre (HARC)	
A pioneering partnership project offering flexible, individually tailored employment-related support for those furthest from the labour market who lack confidence and motivation by delivering skills and employment, identifying gaps in provision, and paying to overcome the barriers to secure sector-based qualifications enabling individuals to get work or educational support.	High level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people in education/training • people gaining a qualification • people engaged in job-searching • people engaged in life skills support following interventions • economically inactive individuals engaging with benefits system 	

VCSE Future Proofing Initiative (Building Community Connections)		UKCRF award: £100,100
Investment priority:	Community	
Delivery areas:	Hastings (100%)	
Lead applicant:	Hastings Voluntary Action	
Reforming service delivery and community involvement by creating a whole system approach to volunteering and service access, resulting in a borough-wide model for volunteering, increasing accredited training, creating a comprehensive workforce offer, a joined-up system to access funding alongside digital, and organisational solutions to respond to individuals' needs.	High level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovation plans developed • organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity • people engaged in life skills support following interventions • people in education/training 	