

This report will be made public on 22 March 2024

Report Number **C/23/102**

From: Councillor Jim Martin
Date: 22 March 2024
Status: Non-Key Decision
Corporate Director: Ewan Green, Director of Place

SUBJECT: RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND GRANT SCHEME

SUMMARY:

This report sets out applications recommended for approval for the Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme and seeks confirmation for the grant award.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Leader is asked to agree to the recommendations of the Decision Panel on grant awards, as set out below, because agreement is needed on these applications to the Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To receive and note Report C/23/102.**
- 2. To approve the recommended grant applications to the Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme as summarised this report.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Funding for the Rural England Prosperity Fund grant scheme has been provided by UK central Government as part of the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The scheme was opened to applications during October 2023.

2. RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND GRANT SCHEME

- 2.1. The Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme is set up to support specific activities that address specific challenges faced in rural areas. These include lower productivity rates, poorer connectivity rates and poorer access to key areas. This sits within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment priorities for supporting local business and supporting community and place.
- 2.2. The Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme provides non-repayable grants up to a maximum of £30,000.
- 2.3. Grants awarded can cover up to 75% of a total project cost for businesses, and up to 90% of a total project cost for charities or community groups. The remaining sum will come from the company's own resources, including bank loans, or other suitable grant schemes if applicable.
- 2.4. Applications are only eligible to apply for funding if their proposed project will take place in a location classed as rural. This is confirmed by using DEFRA's Magic Map website.
- 2.5. The grant scheme was launched in October 2023 and grant applications will be accepted at any time until the closure of the scheme. The scheme is expected to run until either 31st March 2025 or until funds have been allocated.
- 2.6. Applications received are assessed in the first instance by the Economic Development Team. Final decisions on individual applications are made by the Leader of the Council, in collaboration with the Lead Cabinet Member of the District Economy, Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment, and a ward member determined by the location or proposed location of the business.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GREEN BUSINESS GRANT

- 3.1 The table below lists applications recommended for approval by the Decision Panel. Reasons for the recommendations are also summarised.

Name of Applicant	Purpose of Grant	Town/ Area	Recommend Green Business Grant award (up to)	Recommendations of the Decision Panel £	Conditions of grant award including
Newchurch Village Hall Trust	Solar PV system and storage batteries	Newchurch, Romney Marsh	90%	£15,108.75	
St Mary in the Marsh project	Building of new community village hall	St Mary in the Marsh	35%	£30,000	
EAV Net (EAV Networks Ltd)	Expansion of wireless broadband network	New Romney	70%	£24,638	

4. LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's comments (NM)

There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations in this report. However, any grants that are made available to third parties by FHDC will need to be legally documented and the legal team can assist with this.

4.2 Finance Officer's comments (RH)

For financial year 2023-24 £142,686 has been allocated for grants. The exact sum for year 2024-25 is yet to be determined.

4.3 Equality Comment (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer:-

Jade Smyth, Senior Economic Development Specialist
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 Email: jade.smyth@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme guidelines:
<https://folkestone.works/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>