

**Report to:** Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board

**Report Author:** Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director (Blackpool Council)

**Date of Meeting:** 25 March 2021

## LEVELLING UP AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To summarise the main provisions of the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund announced in the March 2021 Budget.

### 2.0 Recommendation:

2.1 To note the report and to discuss the approaches to be taken by the Fylde Coast Local Authorities in relation to these funding opportunities.

### 3.0 Background

3.1 As part of the Budget the Chancellor announced a broad package of complementary UK-wide interventions including:

- **The UK Levelling Up Fund**, which will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. The Fund will be jointly managed by HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Transport. This is a new approach to investing in local growth – ending siloes in Whitehall that make it difficult to take a holistic approach to the needs of local areas  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-prospectus>  
**(see summary in Appendix 6a)**
- The **UK Community Renewal Fund**, which will provide local areas across the UK with access to £220 million of additional funding as they prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund due to launch in 2022. It is targeted to help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need in a manner distinct but complementary to the Levelling Up Fund, through investment in skills, enterprise and employment.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>  
**(see summary in Appendix 6b)**

- The **UK Community Ownership Fund**, which will empower communities to protect vital community assets in their area by providing funding to take ownership over them, in support of the social wellbeing of local communities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund/community-ownership-fund>
- The **Plan for Jobs**, which builds on Department for Work and Pension's Jobcentre Plus network, offering tailored support to help people find work, including through Youth Hubs, Restart, and Kickstart. The Plan for Jobs will support longer term recovery from the unprecedented economic impact of Covid-19.
- The **Freeports programme**, establishing national hubs for global trade and investment in every nation of the UK, promoting regeneration and job creation and creating hotbeds for innovation that will intensify the economic impact of our ports and generate increased economic activity in areas in need of regeneration across the UK.
- The **UK Infrastructure Bank**, which will provide financing support to local authority and private sector infrastructure projects to help meet UK Government objectives on climate change and regional economic growth. It will also establish an advisory function to help with the development and delivery of projects.
- **The Towns Fund**, providing £3.6 billion to drive the economic regeneration of deprived towns and deliver long-term economic and productivity growth, by renewing and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves user experience, and ensures future sustainability.

### 3.2 Levelling Up Fund - Key Issues to consider

Clarity is still required on the detail of all the conditions associated with these funds and further information is to be sent soon by way of what is required in any submission.

Some of the key issues to consider include:

- The number of bids for which each authority qualifies
- The potential for cross-boundary bids
- The role of Local MPs. The prospectus states that the number of bids that a local authority can make will relate to the number of MPs in their area. Accordingly, local authorities can submit one bid for every MP whose constituency lies wholly within their boundary. Where an MP's constituency crosses multiple local authorities, one local authority should take responsibility as the lead bidder and local areas should work together to designate that lead bidder.

Blackpool has 2 MPs:

- Blackpool South (wholly within Blackpool) – Scott Benton
- Blackpool North and Cleveleys (in Blackpool and Wyre) – Paul Maynard

Wyre has 3 MPs

- Lancaster and Fleetwood (in Wyre and Lancaster) – Cat Smith
- Blackpool North and Cleveleys - (in Blackpool and Wyre) – Paul Maynard
- Wyre and Preston North (in Wyre and Preston) – Ben Wallace

Fylde has 1 MP

- Fylde (within Fylde and Preston) – Mark Menzies

As Transport Authority Lancashire County Council for (Fylde and Wyre) or Blackpool) also potentially qualify for a £20-£50m for a cross-boundary transport project

### **3.3 COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND**

Blackpool and Lancashire County Council are the relevant lead authorities for the purposes of inviting bids.

Arrangements for inviting bids for these funds need to be set up to enable them to be appraised and prioritised by the lead authority for submission by 18 June 2021.

Further guidance is awaited from Government but these revenue funds provide the opportunity to innovate and undertake pilot schemes.

Clarity is required on a number of issues including the fact the guidance states that “the Government encourages applicants to maximize impact and deliverability though larger projects of £500,000+ where this is possible. With potentially only 8 months to fully defray all revenue spend this is likely to be very difficult to achieve. Clarity is also required on whether Councils can bid for projects they will lead themselves or projects in which it can be a partner.