

Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills

I will be reporting as follows for Full Council on 16 February 2023:

1. By Councillor Hannaford as follows:

Outline some key future projects in Devon to access more levelling up funding, and other economic development opportunities to promote skills, jobs, and prosperity in Devon.

2. By Councillor Hannaford as follows:

Coastal Communities Funding, what treasury mechanisms are in place to replicate this initiative, to effectively ensure Devon's coastal communities continue to access regeneration funding.

Responses

1. Levelling Up Funding and Future Opportunities

This funding was announced in 2020, to provide investment in communities that will create new jobs, drive economic growth, help restore people's pride in the places where they live, and spread opportunity more equally. Themes include improving transport links, community regeneration and restoring local heritage sites. Local Authorities can bid for the funding, with County Councils with transport powers able to submit one transport-related bid.

In the recent Round Two announcements Devon partners have secured funding of £45.1 million for the following three projects:

- Exmouth Dinan Way Extension
- West Devon Transport Hub and
- Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre

The County Council led the Exmouth bid and will be delivering this and the West Devon Transport Hub, working with colleagues at West Devon Borough Council. The Economy Team are working with Torridge District Council, the Freeport and others to support the exciting Appledore scheme

Future Levelling Up funding bids – we are anticipating Round Three of the fund to be announced later in 2023 and we have a pipeline of opportunities being developed by District partners who we are engaging with.

Other Economic Development Opportunities

The Levelling Up White Paper set out clear ambitions to address disparities, focusing on regenerating places, upskilling people, improving productivity, boosting economic growth, encouraging innovation and creating jobs.

The UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) is one funding source to support the delivery of these ambitions, managed by District Councils. One element of the fund has been allocated to upper tier authorities to deliver the national Multiply Programme. Our allocation is £3m, which supports everyday maths skills for people across Devon without GCSE's. This is being delivered through the Economy Service.

In 2022 the Council worked with the District Councils to pull together an Investment Zones bid, which identifies a strong set of projects across the County to support jobs, housing and prosperity should further funding be made available.

The Plymouth and South Devon Freeport, provides £25m seed capital, to deliver employment infrastructure in South Devon. The Freeport tax and customs benefits are designed to generate new inward investment leading to over 3500 new jobs in the Freeport area.

The Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone also continues to invest retained business rates in economic growth and jobs in the East of Exeter area, including at Skypark and Exeter Science Park. The latest investment, the Long Lane widening scheme which supports further employment provision which is opening later this month.

Specifically on Skills we have been successful in a bid to the Department for Education's Skills Bootcamp programme and have secured a £3.5m technical skills programme that will deliver around 1,500 Level 3-6 skills opportunities across the economy. This investment can provide a fast-track route into key areas of the economy, such as engineering, digital, agri-tech, health and other careers and will support 16-week quick courses allowing employers and potential employees to be matched with a relevant training opportunity.

The HotSW LEP's Digital Programme offered funding to support digital skills, and the Council was successful in a £1.5m bid to deliver digital and leadership skills for business.

Working with partners, the Council is currently planning to launch an extended employment programme later in March, which will seek to support those who have a longer-term barrier or health related barrier to work or training. Funding from the Council is leveraging additional funds from Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions. Working across the entire County, the programme will include a range of tailored support for young people in our corporate care, those with a SEND need and, more widely, those adults with a wider barrier to work (working closely with Job Centre Plus). As part of this provision, the authority will also be integrating its approach to traineeships into this approach, working closely with Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions.

Support for Devon's key growth sectors such as agri-tech continues and the Future Farming Resilience Programme provides support for whole farm planning, resilience, accessing finance and innovation. Options to draw in further funds under the district council led UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Funds are being explored, with the County Council proposing to extend work with the farming and food sector and offering general business support, enhancing the Growth Hub.

The 'Made in Devon' scheme is an excellent opportunity for Devon businesses to gain recognition for their local credentials and their quality and compliance through Buy with Confidence providing promotional opportunities to its members. Over the next 12 months the intention is for this scheme to become self-financing, drawing in funding from businesses in support for promotion and marketing campaigns.

Opportunities to support low carbon and working with our land based sector are being pursued, with proposals being developed with the Co-op Foundation Carbon Innovation Fund for £200k and also the Innovate UK NetZero Living Fast Followers Programme for up to £300k. These will be a blend of business support, skills and training as well as supporting our ambitions set out in the Devon Carbon Plan.

2. Coastal Communities funding

This was ceased at the time of Levelling Up funding coming into place. District Councils and Unitaries can choose to support coastal areas within the scope of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Several of the Investment Plans produced by District Councils do have measures to support the regeneration of their coastal and rural communities.

Councillor Rufus Gilbert

Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills

