

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

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meeting date: TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2024  
title: RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF)  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING  
principal author: HASSAN DITTA

## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Committee on the full applications received into the Rural England Prosperity Fund grant scheme.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
- Residents, their health and wellbeing
    - Working with Town and Parish Council we will bring together our villages and town so that everyone can achieve their full potential
    - Maximise opportunities for residents to be physically and mentally active
  - Valuing our Place and our Environment
    - Provide and support the installation of low carbon energy
  - Building a strong economy
    - Encourage economic development

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 3 September 2022 the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) was launched. This fund is complementary to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and is a top-up to the UKSPF available to eligible local authorities in England.
- 2.2 The Council successfully submitted an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan which has resulted in the award of £433,680 capital funding which is to be invested in rural capital projects with £75,000 available year 1 of the funding (2023/24) and a further £358,680 available in year 2 (the current financial year 2024/25.)
- 2.3 The following interventions were approved at Policy & Finance Committee on 8 November 2022 which formed the basis for the addendum and steered the proposed spend for REPF;

### **“SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES PRIORITY**

***Funding (capital grants) for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation. This includes:***

- *community businesses*
- *cooperatives and social enterprises*
- *research and development sites*

*This intervention corresponds to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) intervention E26.*

***Funding (capital grants) for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as:***

- *local attractions*
- *trails*
- *tourism products more generally”*

This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E17.

**“COMMUNITY AND PLACE PRIORITY**

***Funding (capital grants) for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities. This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E15.***

***Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups. This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E11.***

***Funding (capital grants) for creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces. This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3.***

***Funding (capital grants) for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer. This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E4.”***

- 2.4 At Policy and Finance Committee on 12 September 2023, it was agreed to allocate up to £50,000 for electric vehicle charging points on the Council’s car parks at Sabden, Slaidburn, Dunsop Bridge, Chipping and Ribchester. The proposed grant criteria was approved allowing the expression of interest window to open.
- 2.5 At Policy and Finance Committee on 7 November 2023, Committee agreed to limit applications to one per parish area to be decided on a first come first serve basis. Committee also took the decision to limit applications to one project per application. Due to high levels of demand for this funding, the decision of one application per parish area was updated to allow two applications per parish area at Policy and Finance Committee on 18 June 2024.
- 2.6 A total of £413,093 of grant funding has been allocated from the REPF budget to date including £50,000 ringfenced for electric vehicle charging points on the Council’s car parks. This leaves an unallocated amount of £20,587 which must be allocated and defrayed by 31 March 2025. Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of all projects supported to date and the progress of each project.

### **3 Full Applications**

- 3.1 The UKSPF working group met on 11 July 2024 to discuss using unallocated UKSPF finds to support additional REPF projects as demand has exceeded the amount of funding available. If the working group recommendation is agreed, then the projects below can be considered for grant funding.
- 3.2 If all the projects below are approved, £263,318 of UKSPF money will be needed to support the projects below.

3.3 The current REPF criteria states applications will be considered on a first come first serve basis. The applications below are for Committee consideration and listed in submission date order.

#### 4 Wilpshire Wanderers Football Club

4.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.

4.2 An application for £48,000 of grant funding has been submitted by Wilpshire Wanderers Football Club.

4.3 The project is to convert two disused tennis courts into additional playing fields that the football club can use. The football club is currently at capacity with their existing playing fields and to enable the club to continue to grow and allow additional children to partake, they are seeking to expand their pitches.

4.4 A breakdown of cost is provided in the table below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Creation of football pitches	£58,000	Converting disused tennis courts into additional playing fields consisting of ground preparation, draining and installation of top layer.
<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>£58,000</b>	

4.5 The applicant has raised £10,000 in match funding having secured a £5,000 grant from Ribble Valley Borough Council’s Recreation and Culture grant scheme and have raised an additional £5,000 funding from the community. They have the support of Salmesbury Memorial Hall Charity to complete the project. The charity owns the land and the football club has a ten year rolling lease with the Charity.

#### 5 Chipping and District Memorial Hall

5.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E11 – Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

5.2 An application has been submitted for £23,304 grant funding to install a full solar panel system and battery pack at Chipping and District Memorial Hall

5.3 A breakdown of the project cost is provided below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Solar panels and batteries	£29,130	44 solar panel system and 6 x 5.3k batteries with 3 phase inverter
<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>£29,130</b>	

5.4 The project is to install 44 solar panels on the roof of the building and associated inverters and energy storage batteries to enable the collection, use and storage of solar energy. The environmental benefit of this project will be an annual carbon dioxide

reduction of approximately 6-8 tonnes which will be a significant contributor towards net zero. Planning permission has been submitted for the project and the Hall expect to obtain planning permission for the project in September.

- 5.5 Chipping and District Memorial Hall will provide 20% match funding amounting to £5,826 of grant funding.

## 6 Mellor Parish Council

- 6.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
- 6.2 The application received from Mellor Parish Council is for the grant amount of £41,803. A breakdown of the project costs is provided in the table below.

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Playground equipment	£47,803	Supply and fit playground equipment
<b>Total Project Estimate</b>	<b>£47,803</b>	

- 6.3 The total project cost for is £47,803. The parish council will be providing £6,000 match funding from their own resources.
- 6.4 The project is to enhance the play area in the village and create a safe space for children of all ages and abilities as well as provided a safe space for children with disabilities by having an accessible play area. The project will replace some of the current equipment in the play area with new specialist swings, climbing walls and frames and small equipment pieces.

## 7 Wilpshire Parish Council

- 7.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
- 7.2 The application received from Wilpshire Parish Council is for the grant amount of £20,918. A breakdown of the project costs is provided in the table below.

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Playground equipment	£20,918	Supply and fit playground equipment
<b>Total Project Estimate</b>	<b>£20,918</b>	

- 7.3 The total project cost for is £20,918. The application is for 100% grant funding.
- 7.4 The project is to enhance the play area in the village by adding a new climbing frame and soft surfacing in the area around the climbing frame. The project will provide a much-needed modern piece of equipment adding to the two wooden trails that have been purchased by the parish previously.

## 8 Rimmington Recreation Association (amended application)

- 8.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
- 8.2 Rimmington Recreation Association were approved a grant of £22,740 at Policy and Finance Committee on 9 April 2024. The Parish Council since submitted an amended application requesting an additional £8,000 of grant funding which was approved at Policy and Finance Committee on 13 June 2024 bringing the total grant allocation to £37,740. The Association contacted the contractors to start the work, and the price of the work has increased again. They are therefore requesting an additional £9,060 of REPF funding to cover this increase in price.
- 8.3 A breakdown of the project cost is provided below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Resurface astro turf	£49,800	Remove existing surface and relay with new tournament MF surface.
<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>£49,800</b>	

- 8.4 To ensure the project is deliverable, the total amount of grant funding being requested is £46,800 and RRA will provide £3,000 funding towards the project. RRA have provided three new quotes showing and will procure the services of the cheapest quote. A start date of September has been agreed with the contractor with the contact value of £49,800 subject to the approval of additional grant funding.

## 9 Grindleton and Sawley Parish Councils

- 9.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E15 – Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.
- 9.2 The application received from B4RN for Grindleton and Sawley for the maximum £50,000 grant funding.
- 9.3 The project is to deliver high speed full fibre broadband to every property in the area. A full breakdown of costs is provided below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Network Installation	£397,188	Contractor installation work including civil and street work costs
Ducting and fibre materials	£155,760	Materials for network installation
Network equipment	£38,940	Cabinet and associated costs, backhaul equipment, customer switch equipment
Engineering	£186,912	Fibre blowing and installation, project management and supporting departments
Connection costs	£88,000	Property installed equipment and cost of installation

<b>Total Project Estimate</b>	<b>£866,800</b>	
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- 9.4 Given the specialist nature of the project, only one estimate has been provided by B4RN. B4RN is a preapproved provider for the Government Gigabit Voucher Scheme and the company has been through a value for money test as part of their approval as a provider for the government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme.
- 9.5 The project team now have most of the wayleaves in place and have 183 requests for connection. The project team have secured £492,500 worth of funding from the Government's Gigabit scheme. They have also raised £103,900 of private investment from local residents and businesses. With the support of the grant, the project team can deliver on phase 1 of the project before well in advance of the cutoff of March 2025 for this funding. The grant will be used to cover part of the cost of the initial network installation and would therefore meet the timescales of the grant funding.

## 10 West Bradford Village Hall

- 10.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E11 – Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.
- 10.2 An application has been submitted for £20,223 grant funding to create a new disabled access to the village hall.
- 10.3 A breakdown of the project cost is provided below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Disabled access	£20,233	Creation of disabled access to the rear of the building with installation of two patio doors.
<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>£20,233</b>	

- 10.4 The village hall provides a vital community space where residents and visitors come together. The hall is used by many local groups and also used by the Lancashire Army cadets and the NHS for blood donors. The project will allow better use of the village hall, especially for the dementia respite group by enabling full disabled access out onto the open grounds of the village hall.
- 10.5 The application is for 100% grant funding.

## 11 Langho Football Club

- 11.1 This project corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
- 11.2 An application for £50,000 grant funding has been submitted by Langho Football Club.
- 11.3 The project is to install additional drainage on the pitches at the club as the ground has become more prone to flooding now that it is ten years old. Given the turf has to be removed, the top layer will also be replaced with a new 3g pitch and new energy efficient lighting will be installed.
- 11.4 A breakdown of cost is provided in the table below;

	<b>COST</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
3G Pitch	£80,104	Installation of drainage and top 3g pitch
LED Lighting	£6,120	LED floodlights
<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>£86,224</b>	

11.5 Langho FC was established on 1972 with one team and has grown to 3 men's teams, a ladies team and 26 under 18 girls and boys teams. The grounds are well used for training and matches and can also be booked by residents.

11.6 The club will provide match funding of £36,224.

## 12 RISK ASSESSMENT

12.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – REPF will provide Ribble Valley Borough Council with £433,680 funding which will be spent on this programme. Grants will be paid out retrospectively (unless otherwise agreed in writing with Ribble Valley Borough Council) once it has been confirmed the scheme receiving the grant funding meets the criteria of the funding providers. Ongoing monitoring will ensure outputs and outcomes are recorded. The same process will be applied to funding is approved from the Council's UKPSF allocation.
- Committee should note that none of the Council's 2023/24 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) had been utilised which is £75,000. On 18th March DHLUC confirmed that the same approach to managing underspends applies to REPF as it does for UKSPF allocations. However, DHLUC also confirmed on 18th March that these allocations will be treated separately, and local authorities should treat the five threshold bands in the guidance separately for their UKSPF and REPF spend. None of the Council's 2023/24 REPF allocation has been spent to date as whilst the contract for the rural charging points has been let, they have not yet been installed. As such all the REPF funding will need to be claimed in arrears. DHLUC have confirmed that where spend at the end of 2024-25 requires a payment to local authorities, this will be made after March 2025, once final reports have been submitted and considered.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Suitable agreements and assurances will be put in place in respect of administering the scheme.
- Political – N/A
- Reputation – N/A
- Equality and Diversity – work in relation to this report supports the Council's aim in delivering a sustainable local economy to the benefit of all its community.

## 13 RECOMMEND THAT COMMITTEE

13.1 Confirm which scheme Committee would like to support with the remaining £20,587 of REPF funding from the list below.

	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Grant Funding</b>
1.	Wilpshire Wanderers FC	Converting disused tennis courts into	£48,000

		additional playing fields	
2.	Chipping and District Memorial Hall	Solar panels and battery storage	£23,304
3.	Mellor Parish Council	Supply and fit playground equipment	£41,803
4.	Wilpshire Parish Council	Supply and fit playground equipment	£20,918
5.	Rimmington Recreation Association	Remove existing surface and relay with new tournament MF surface.	Approve an additional <b>£9,060</b> grant funding bringing the total grant amount to £46,800. (£37,740 from REPF and £9,060 from UKSPF.)
6.	Grindleton and Sawley Parish Councils	Gigabit Internet Scheme	£50,000
7.	West Bradford Village Hall	Creation of disabled access to the rear of the building with installation of two patio doors.	£20,233
8.	Langho Football Club	Drainage, 3G pitch and lighting	£50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£263,318</b>

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#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Hassan Ditta, extension 4424



## APPENDIX 1 – Approved REPF Grants

Approved	Total Allocation			£433,680
1	Ribble Valley BC	Ev charging points		£50,000
2	Ribchester Parish Council Knowle Green	B4RN	Project ongoing	£50,000
3	Sabden Parish Council	Playground	Expecting invoices	£9,929
4	Salesbury Memorial Hall Charity	Access road	Project ongoing	£47,362
5	Hurst Green Football Club	Solar panels	Grant agreement	£35,000
6	Chipping - Brabin's Endowed School	Footpath	Project completed	£24,908
7	Wiswell Parish Council	Coronation Garderns	Grant agreement	£13,536
8	Rimmington Recreation Association	3G pitch	Project to start	£37,740
9	B4RN for Bolton-by-Bowland and Paythorn	B4RN	Project ongoing	£50,000
10	Ramsgreave Parish Council	Composting toilet	Expecting invoices	£8,482
11	Aighton Bailey and Chaigley War Memorial Hall	Car park	Project ongoing	£43,680
12	Grindleton	Solar panels	Planning submitted	£30,188
13	Sabden Village Hall	Green car park	Grant agreement	£12,268
	<b>Total Approved</b>			<b>£413,093</b>
	<b>Unallocated amount</b>			<b>£20,587</b>