

Teignbridge District Council

Committee name

Meeting date

Part i

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26

Purpose of Report

To approve the development and implementation of the Teignbridge District Council Projects Proposal for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26 Investment Plan.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) To approve the implementation of the Teignbridge District Council Projects Proposal for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26 Investment Plan that reflects the interventions identified in Section 3 of this report; and
- (2) Delegate authority to the Director of Place, to implement the Teignbridge District Council Projects Proposal for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26 Investment Plan upon it being approved by Government.

Financial Implications

Please see Section 3.3 to 3.5.

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Financial Officer & Director of Corporate Services

Email: martin.flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

Please see Section 3.6.

Paul Woodhead, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Email: paul.woodhead@teignbridge.gov.uk

Risk Assessment

Please see Section 3.10 to 3.14.

Louisa Brinton, Economic Development Officer Town Centres

Email: louisa.brinton@teignbridge.gov.uk

Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

Please see Section 3.8 to 3.9.
William Elliott, Climate Change Officer
Email: william.elliott@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Louisa Brinton, Economic Development Officer Town Centres
Email: louisa.brinton@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Member

Executive Member for Economy, Estates and Major Projects, Cllr David Palethorpe
Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Linda Goodman-Bradbury

Appendices/Background Papers

- Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan
- Appendix 3 – DTCCA REPF 2025-26 Grant Proposal
- Appendix 4 – Statistical Report for Projects Delivered through REPF 2023-25 and UKSPF 2022-25
- Appendix 5 – REPF 2025-26 Outputs and Outcomes
- Appendix 6 - Acronyms

Background Papers

[Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\): prospectus 2025-26](#) A £33m complementary fund to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26.

[Rural England Prosperity Fund: Allocations 2025 to 2026](#)

[Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\): prospectus 2023-25](#) A £110m complementary fund to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022-25.

[Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) Full Council Approval, 29th November, 2022](#)
Full Council approval for the REPF 2023-25 Investment Plan projects.

[One Teignbridge](#): Teignbridge District Council approved strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26 is a transitional grant scheme, representing a further allocation of £33 million across the UK to fund capital projects for businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas. Previously, REPF 2023-25 (and the associated UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2022-25) have been provided directly to district councils. However, the REPF 2025-26 (and associated UKSPF 2025-26) is being provided to the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA).

- 1.2 The funding continues to be based on 2 main themes of '**Communities and Place**' and '**Business Support**', to 'improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities across the UK'. Delivery is from May 2025 with spend by 31 March 2026 and must support one of 3 of the national missions:

Mission 1: Kickstart economic growth
Mission 4: Break down barriers to opportunity
Mission 5: Build an NHS fit for the future

- 1.3 The DTCCA has an indicative allocation of £1,826,589 capital and Central Government has provided suggested sub-division allocations to district councils thereafter. DTCCA will work with Devon County Council (DCC), who are the Accountable Body.

- 1.4 No additional funds have been provided to support associated administration costs.

- 1.5 The indicative allocation to Teignbridge District Council is £195,067 capital.

- 1.6 REPF 2025-26 was announced in early April 2025, with the DTCCA being provided with the deadline to submit an Investment Plan to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 30 April 2025. DTCCA and DCC consulted with District Councils on 11 April 2025 and provided a deadline to submit potential Project Proposals by 17 April 2025. Due to the timescales, it was appreciated that formal sign off for the Project Proposal would follow thereafter (see Appendix 2).

- 1.7 DTCCA's default position is to run a centralised capital grant scheme of between £3,000 and £50,000, with up to a 60% intervention rate for businesses and 100% for community organisations (see Appendix 3). The proposal included that district allocations would follow Government indicative amounts, however, the DTCCA have contacted Government to request if the funding allocations could be further split to provide Exeter and Torbay, who are currently exempt from the fund, with allocations.

- 1.8 Currently Exeter and Torbay do not meet the criteria for REPF, namely:

- 1.8.1 Projects must be in a rural area. For Rural Fund purposes, rural areas are:

towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside

market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services

2. Background

- 2.1 The proposed Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan was developed in conjunction with the Director for Place and Executive Members for Economy, Estates and Major Projects and Neighbourhood Services to ensure that the DTCCA deadline was achieved and to help ensure as far as practical, that the allocated spend remains within Teignbridge (see Appendix 2). The proposal has been based on lessons learnt through REPF 2023-25 (and UKSPF 2022-25) projects delivery.

- 2.2 Appendix 4 provides a statistical report for the projects delivered through the REPF 2023-25 (and UKSPF 2022-25 grant schemes). 21 rural businesses, community buildings and organisations are now saving money on energy costs, reducing carbon

emissions, enjoying improved accessibility to active travel routes and a new rural accessible community transport buses scheme to serve the rural hinterland. However, bringing forward several smaller value grant applications has a significant administrative and staff capacity implication, with no additional funding provided to cover such costs.

2.3 Spending allocation and profile for REPF 2023-25 below and you will note the following:

- 2.3.1 The Teignbridge REPF 2023-25 Investment Plan included the Rural Broadband scheme, although originally approved by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), as the scheme detailed evolved, authorisation was subsequently withdrawn. Year one spend was not achieved, but monies carried forward and reallocated to an alternative project.
- 2.3.2 Overspend for the Rural Transport and Connectivity project was due to the fund being oversubscribed and monies were reallocated from Rural Communities Fund underspend.
- 2.3.3 Underspend within the Rural Communities Fund was due to lack of demand and spend by grant recipients coming in below the Grant Funding Agreement allocations.

Rural England Prosperity Fund	Overall Allocation	Spend	Spend	Total Spend
	£	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	£
Rural Communities Fund (RGBG)	300,000.00	0	367,017.43	367,017.43
Rural Transport and Connectivity Fund	200,000.00	0	209,697.34	209,697.34
Rural Broadband (reallocated to Rural Communities Fund)	*150,000.00	0	0	0
Admin	0	0	0	0
Totals:	**650,332.00	0	576,714.77	576,714.77

* Rural Broadband monies reallocated to Rural Communities Fund (Rural Green Business Grant)

** Overall allocation amount, individual project amounts have been rounded.

2.4 Teignbridge Projects Proposal UKSPF 2025-26 Investment Plan aims to deliver a larger value grants scheme, as flexibly designed as possible within the REPF parameters, which will have the potential for significant impactful results, whilst lessening the associated administrative and staff capacity implications (see Appendix 2):

2.4.1 The proposed project would comprise of a singular Teignbridge competitive scheme for grants between £30,000 and £75,000, which would achieve at least one of the following outputs:

- Green & blue spaces created/improved
- Amenities & facilities created/improved
- Footpaths/cycle path created/improved
- Tourism, cultural or heritage asset created/improved
- Energy efficiency improvements

2.4.2. You must use funding on capital projects. This means you must spend grants on lasting assets such as a building or equipment.

3. Main Implications

- 3.1 Central Government has provided a technical guidance note on how this funding should be spent. Projects will be prioritised in line with the funding parameters, deliverability against the 31 March 2026 spend deadline and the Council's strategic priorities, guided by the One Teignbridge Council Strategy.
- 3.2 All grant awards must achieve at least one of the related REPF outputs and outcomes to qualify (See Appendix 3).

Financial Implications

- 3.3 If the Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan is approved, funding will be provided to Teignbridge to directly deliver schemes. On that basis, the Investment Plan should be cost neutral.
- 3.4 However, there will be more work needed to convert the Investment Plan into operational schemes that are benefitting communities and businesses, alongside monitoring requirements associated with reporting expenditure of the fund and its outcomes to the Government, this work will be managed and undertaken by the Economic Development Teams existing staff resources.

- 3.5 There are no additional resources required over and above existing budgets.

Legal Implications

- 3.6 There are no legal implications per se arising from this report.

Equality

- 3.7 An equality impact assessment has been prepared and is included at Appendix 1. Consideration has been given to prioritising projects that will not discriminate against groups with protected characteristics and increase opportunities for all.

Environmental / Climate Change Impact

- 3.8 The overall approach to recommending Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 has been to respond to national and local strategies, as well as evidence and feedback from local stakeholders and partners. The climate emergency has been a consideration, and this is proposed through the interventions.
- 3.9 The recognised outputs established provides the opportunity for applicants to bring forward projects to help them reduce energy and emissions.

Risk Assessment

- 3.10 The risk to Teignbridge is minimal as the funding award is based on facilitating spend of Government monies (with any underspend being repaid). On this basis, it would present more of a missed opportunity, than a financial risk if the schemes did not come forward.
- 3.11 Any grants awarded by Teignbridge to applicants will be paid in arrears, as previously, to ensure that Teignbridge is not financially liable should projects not fully complete. The risk to applicants is that they would either not in a position to bid for funding or would be unable to make payments in advance of reclaiming the funds from Teignbridge.

- 3.12 There is a requirement for us to comply with all Government guidance related to this fund and ensure all necessary permissions and agreements are in place between all parties in a timely manner, including all monies being spent by the end of March 2026. The risk here is that we do not meet these targets.
- 3.13 DTCCA will have full financial responsibility for the Projects Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan, with a Funding Agreement to be implemented with Teignbridge, reflecting Government MOU terms and Grant Determination letter. Teignbridge will be required to provide cumulative 6 monthly monitoring and reporting to DCC with a staged payment allocation approach (likely to be based on a 50 per cent award basis) and awaiting further detail from MHCLG. The risk is that we do not meet the targets.
- 3.14 However, should Members decide not to support the Teignbridge Projects Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan and look for alternative projects, the risk there would be an impact on available resource, a reduced opportunity for project development, for successful grant applicants/partners to spend grant monies or deliver services within the 31 March 2026 deadline. Alternatively, the DTCCA may choose to redistribute Teignbridge's allocation, or run its proposed default grant scheme.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1. Government has stated that this scheme is a 'transitional one-year fund' (to allow longer-term grant schemes to be developed), which should build on the successes and lessons learnt from the REPF 2023-25 and UKSPF 2022-25 funds. The restrictive timescales involved prevented wider consultation (although consultation was part of the original fund development) and the recommended approach to project selection has been based on knowledge gained to date.
- 4.2. The grant project proposed has been designed to provide flexibility, within the parameters of REPF. There are no additional revenue monies available to deliver the fund, for example, through third party assessment. Relatively large grant awards are therefore proposed to help deliver impactful schemes, whilst mindful of the associated administration, with grant application assessment being on a scoring matrix basis.
- 4.3. An alternative would be to not endorse the Teignbridge District Council Projects Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan. If that course of action was followed, Teignbridge would not necessarily receive any, or all of the REPF funding from DTCCA, or have a sound basis for partnership working going forward.

5. Conclusion

- 1.1. The Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan will help to benefit Teignbridge businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas. With approval from Executive, delegation will be put in place to deliver the interventions that have been identified at Appendix 2 to develop the Teignbridge Projects Proposal for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-26 Investment Plan and implement the projects accordingly.

Appendices Attached:

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Teignbridge Project Proposal REPF 2025-26 Investment Plan

Appendix 3 – DTCCA REPF 2025-26 Grant Proposal

Appendix 4 – Statistical Report for Projects Delivered through REPF 2023-25 and
UKSPF 2022-25

Appendix 5 – REPF 2025-26 Outputs and Outcomes

Appendix 6 - Acronyms