



**Northern Ireland Investment Fund Mapping  
Exercise:  
UK Shared Prosperity Fund  
Final Report  
for  
SOLACE NI**

**November 2022**



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# 1 Introduction

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## Overview

1.1 This report presents the findings of an investment mapping exercise conducted by ekosgen on behalf of SOLACE NI. The purpose of the review and this report is threefold:

- to provide a high level overview of a range of sources of investment currently available to local authorities in Northern Ireland (specified by the client to be included in this study);
- to map and identify any potential areas of synergy or potential overlap across the funds' funding themes and potential local authority led projects through reference to an investment mapping tool; and
- to inform users of the content and future use of the investment mapping tool.

1.2 It should be noted that this report is intended to accompany the excel based Investment Mapping Tool the main output of this study and be used alongside it, rather than as a standalone document

1.3 The study scope did not include developing a funding or investment strategy for SOLACE NI. Nor is it intended as a gap analysis or as an assessment or critique of current funding disbursement mechanisms in NI.

## Aim and approach

1.4 The methodology adopted for this study can be separated into three distinct but cohesive stages. The **first stage** involved a briefing and discussion upon inception with SOLACE NI representatives to agree study objectives and scope. The **second stage** of desk-based research involved the profiling of the range of different Northern Irish investment funding sources currently being implemented or that have recently been announced, with particular focus on the themes and priority areas of each investment fund and whether these funding sources are likely to fund capital or revenue-led projects. These funding streams are then mapped against the UK Shared Prosperity Fund's (UKSPF) intervention list for Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>, taking these interventions (aligned to each of the three UKSPF investment priorities of "Communities and Place", "Supporting Local Business" and "People and Skills") to be the core aims and objectives of the Fund for local authorities in Northern Ireland to consider potential fit with their and partners' prospective projects.

1.5 This mapping exercise was checked against each of the Northern Ireland local authorities' Local Community Plans to ensure the aims of the investment funds were consistent with what the Community Plans aim to achieve. The **third stage** involved the synthesising of the information gathered in the second stage and developing this report to present areas of funding opportunity, collaboration and strategic fit for projects designed by local authorities in Northern Ireland.

1.6 The aims of this project are to:

- provide SOLACE NI members with a clear understanding of the strategic alignment of specified investment funds in Northern Ireland;
- inform SOLACE NI members of the timeframes within these funds including engagement sessions, fund opening submission dates, fund award and fund closing dates; and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-interventions-outputs-and-indicators/interventions-list-for-northern-ireland>

- where possible, outline the range of different projects, both council and partnership led, that are currently within the pipeline in Northern Ireland delivered through these investment funding vehicles.

1.7 The aim of this report is to inform SOLACE NI members of the wider funding landscape in Northern Ireland, and the funds that potential projects could draw on. The mapping tool that has been developed as part of this project is a “live” tool designed to be adapted and updated as new project information and investment funding streams become available. It can be used at an individual organisation level but equally at partnership level, for example, at SOLACE NI or City or Growth Deal levels. It will require regular review and updating to ensure that it remains current and useful, contributing to maximising the draw down and effectiveness of the various funding streams.

## Report structure

1.8 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides the strategic context for the range of different investment themes being analysed, focusing on the funding landscape as well as the wider context of the need for investment funding streams in Northern Ireland given the context of the rising cost of living and the need for a higher degree of local government collaboration.
- **Chapter 3** presents an overview of the main active investment funds in Northern Ireland from UK, Republic of Ireland and international sources. A more detailed version can be found at **Appendix A**.
- **Chapter 4** outlines the main themes found within the Local Community Plans for each of the 11 local authorities in Northern Ireland, and comments on the role of the Community Planning process in accessing new investment funds.
- **Chapter 5** details the methodology that was used to develop the mapping tool, as well as guidance on how, why, and when it can be used.
- **Chapter 6** outlines the next steps resulting from this report.

## 2 Strategic Context

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### Introduction

2.1 This chapter provides the strategic context for the project, covering the historical and present situation with regards to the funding landscape in Northern Ireland, as well as further insight into the rationale for wider co-operation of public sector bodies in the region.

### Northern Ireland Funding Landscape

#### Historical Context

2.2 The Northern Irish Executive has been in receipt of funds from the UK Government for devolved activity public services since the devolution of powers came into effect in 1999. This funding has been allocated on the basis of the Barnett Formula, which calculates devolved budgets by using the previous year's budget as a starting point, and then adjusting it based on increases or decreases in comparable spending per person in England.<sup>2</sup>

2.3 The Barnett Formula aims to provide each UK administration with the same pounds-per-person change in funding as the equivalent UK Government spending. Through this mechanism, the Northern Ireland Executive receives funding of £121 per person for every £100 the UK Government is spending on equivalent English public services. It should be noted that the total funding allocation for Northern Ireland, as per the Autumn 2021 Budget is to be £15 billion per year, the highest ever in real terms.<sup>3</sup>

2.4 This funding is then allocated firstly across NI governmental departments, with the Department for Communities then allocating some of its budget to local authorities through Local Government and Housing Regulation Division Government grants. Local government also obtains income from rates, fees and charges for certain services and loans. Other NI government departments pay specific grants to councils which help with the financing of certain revenue and capital expenditure.<sup>4</sup>

2.5 In addition to support from the UK Government, further funding sources for Northern Ireland have included the EU Commission. In particular, various iterations of PEACE, a cross-border cooperation programme funded primarily through the European Commission that aims to ensure cohesion across communities involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, has played a major role in funding in Northern Ireland. PEACE is recognised as an essential component in funding, and as such has been approved for its fifth iteration (with significantly more match funding provided from the UK Government as a result of Brexit), PEACE PLUS.

2.6 Other major funding streams that have been active in recent years that have had significant input from the EU include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which in its most recent funding period (2014-2020) placed a heavy emphasis on improving competitiveness in SMEs, enhancing research and innovation, transition towards a low carbon economy and general improvements to economic growth in Northern Ireland.

2.7 ERDF funding has also supported other programmes such as INTERREG, which has supported cross-border co-operation in terms of the six border counties of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and part of Western Scotland. The most recent funding programme (INTERREG VA, 2014-2020) focused on four

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<sup>2</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7386/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-15-billion-per-year-for-northern-ireland>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/funding>

core objectives: Research & Innovation for cross-border enterprise development; Environmental initiatives; Sustainable Transport projects; and Health & Social Care projects.<sup>5</sup>

2.8 Funding from the European Social Fund has also been prominent in Northern Ireland with the 2014-2020 programme contributing some 210 million Euros to activities to “*combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and to increase the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce.*” Fund priorities are: Access to Employment, Social inclusion and Skills for Growth. Delivery and programme expenditure runs until 2023.<sup>6</sup>

## Present Day

2.9 With the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union coming into effect in January 2020, it was acknowledged that there would be significant funding gaps present in Northern Ireland whenever EU funding programmes finished. There was a commitment to continue the aforementioned PEACE programme beyond PEACE IV, with PEACE PLUS now receiving majority funding contributions from the UK Government, with match funding contributions from the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the European Commission. In total, there is anticipated to be €1.1 billion allocated to the PEACE PLUS Programme.<sup>7</sup>

2.10 The UK Government has also announced several regional City and Growth Deals across Northern Ireland. City and Growth deals are bespoke packages of funding and decision-making powers negotiated between central government and local authorities. They are aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and speed up inclusive economic growth.

2.11 The combined funding for these City and Growth Deals from the Northern Ireland Executive and UK government will total £1.2bn<sup>8</sup>, which will be complemented by the private sector and other sources of funding. The Deals that have been announced for Northern Ireland include the Belfast City Region Deal, the Derry-Londonderry and Strabane Region City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund, the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal and the Mid-South West Growth Deal. The Northern Ireland Executive have also created the City & Growth Deal Complementary Fund providing up to £100m for complementary projects where partners can demonstrate a viable capital project which is complementary to city and growth deal proposals. Development of the fund recognised the need to respond to the impact of the pandemic, enabling proposals to be developed in the short to medium term. Following an application process in 2021, over 50% of the overall fund (£52.1m) was allocated across five projects, while the second tranche of funding has been ringfenced for projects that are complementary to the Deals that had not been as far progressed as those in the first tranche.<sup>9</sup>

2.12 The UK Government are presently following a policy of “levelling up” the whole of the UK to ensure geographical equity across all of its constituent regions in terms of opportunity, infrastructure and living standards.<sup>10</sup> As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland can utilise a wide range of investment funds that have arisen as a result of this policy focus.

2.13 Of these funding programmes, the Community Renewal Fund, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and the Levelling Up Fund are of most significance. The Community Renewal Fund acted as a precursor to the UKSPF, focusing on investment themes of skills and employability, community and place, and local business. Organisations in Northern Ireland were in receipt of £12.4 million of funding

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.seupb.eu/iva-overview>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/esf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_4489](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4489)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.investni.com/international-business/why-northern-ireland/city-deals>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/Written%20Ministerial%20Statement%20-%20Executive%20Budget%202022-25%20-%20Final%20accessible.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1095544/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095544/Executive_Summary.pdf)



for 31 projects across the Community Renewal Fund.<sup>11</sup> The fund opened in March 2021 and closed in March 2022.

2.14 The UKSPF has been established to improve the places people live in, and support individuals and businesses across the United Kingdom. Its core investment priorities are focused around 3 main themes: community and place; supporting local business; and developing people and skills. This Fund was launched in April 2022 and is scheduled to close in March 2025. For Northern Ireland, the fund represents £127m over three years, comprised of; £19 million in 2022/23, £33 million in 2023/4, and £74 million in 2024/5.<sup>12</sup> The total fund includes £22 million allocated to local Multiply adult numeracy programmes, expenditure on which is controlled centrally.

2.15 The Levelling Up Fund is the flagship fund for the levelling up agenda, set up in order to minimise the productivity gap between all regions in the UK, and to “level up” all regions, ensuring that there is equity in opportunity and public service provision. There are 12 cohesive missions that are required in order to meet a successful funding programme by its end in 2030<sup>13</sup>, including increasing R&D, pay, employment and productivity, transport connectivity, digital connectivity, pride of place, health and wellbeing and reducing crime.

2.16 The Irish Government has also committed to providing funding that will assist Northern Ireland until 2025. The Shared Island Initiative is a collaboration between the Office of the Taoiseach, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government that has been designed to address strategic challenges faced on the island of Ireland, further develop the all-island economy and foster a comprehensive programme of research to build consensus around a shared future across the island. Announced in Budget 2021, the Irish Government has committed €500 million in capital funding between 2021 and 2025 for investment in collaborative North/South projects.

## Future Funding Landscape

2.17 The Northern Ireland Executive have drafted the Investment Strategy up to 2050 and, following consideration of all responses to the public consultation process that ended in April 2022, a full analysis report will be prepared for Executive consideration.<sup>14</sup> It is the aim of the Executive to produce rolling 10-year investment plans that will define and prioritise the individual programmes and projects needed to deliver on the five key investment themes expressed within the strategic framework.

2.18 These five key themes are as follows: Decarbonisation of the NI economy and society; Strengthening of NI's essential public services; Enhancing communities and place; Building a strong, connected and competitive region; and maximising the benefits from new technology and innovation.

2.19 The draft Investment Strategy refers to the involvement of Community Planning Partnerships (further explored in Chapter 4) when prioritising projects for investment. In order to ensure a proposed investment is inclusive and equitable, project leaders are encouraged to develop the project through co-design and stakeholder engagement. Project leaders should also consider the possibility of co-delivery, through mechanisms such as central and local government partnerships or community partnerships.

2.20 In addition to the above investment funding landscape, it should be noted that a recent development is the new Labour Market Partnerships<sup>15</sup> found within each of the Local Authority areas of Northern Ireland which present an opportunity for more joined up, collaborative working in the area of employability and thus may present future opportunities to access investment funds.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-successful-bids>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nicva.org/article/latest-on-the-uk-shared-prosperity-ni-programme-update-from-dept-for-levelling-up>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-levelling-up-plan-that-will-transform-uk>

<sup>14</sup> <https://isni.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Infrastructure-2050-draft-Investment-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-labour-market-partnerships-screening\\_0.pdf](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-labour-market-partnerships-screening_0.pdf)

2.21 It is also worth noting that funding has already been provided to devolved governments to support rural communities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as part of the agreed replacement to the Common Agricultural Policy funds. The UK Government is incorporating England's share of funding to support rural economies into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to better streamline and simplify the spending landscape; this is not the case in Northern Ireland. This also applies to local placed based funds, for example, the Future High Street Fund in England, for which the NI Executive received in the region of £20 million. This was incorporated into the overall NI Executive budget settlement.

2.22 During the course of the research it has been suggested that SOLACE should consider how it can influence and work with the Northern Ireland Executive, for example, the Department for the Economy and the Department of Finance, to ensure that future funding allocations are made available to local government and can be used to reflect local priorities. Whilst this was raised in the research, developing it further was out of scope of the commission.

## Wider Context – Cost of Living, Inflation, Public Sector Budgets

2.23 Given the change in the funding landscape in Northern Ireland, it is important to be cognisant of the wider context. The UK monthly inflation rate has been increasing steadily since October 2021,<sup>16</sup> reaching a 40-year high of 10.1% in July 2022 before falling slightly to 9.9% in August<sup>17</sup>, and predictions indicate that inflation will peak at 11% in October and continue to remain above 10% over the coming months.<sup>18</sup> Consumer price inflation is forecast to reach 14% before the end of 2022<sup>19</sup> with a decline of around 2.5% in average real disposable income in 2022<sup>20</sup> and unemployment forecast to rise to 5.5% by 2024.<sup>21</sup>

2.24 With prices of goods and services increasing faster than income, the UK is facing a cost-of-living crisis. Around nine in ten adults in the UK have reported an increase in their cost of living, with the most common factors being food (94%), electricity bills (82%), and fuel (77%).<sup>22</sup> The Bank of England has forecast living standards to fall by 3.7% over 2022 and 2023.<sup>23</sup> There is serious concern about the impact of this crisis on poverty and its impact on people living in or facing poverty.

2.25 In Northern Ireland, consumer confidence is low as a result of inflation. The Danske Bank Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) decreased sharply from 117 in Q1 2022 to 103 in Q2 2022, marking the 4th consecutive quarter of declining sentiment.<sup>24</sup> The Ulster Bank Purchasing Managers' Index recorded a fall in private sector output from 42.9 in June to 41.9 in July, falling for the third consecutive month.<sup>25</sup> Businesses attributed this to a reduction in demand caused by inflation, which remained elevated despite showing signs of easing, reportedly driven up by fuel prices and wage increases.<sup>26</sup>

2.26 Northern Ireland, like other regions of the UK are currently experiencing a challenging labour market, i.e. low levels of labour market growth, an ageing population and a reduction in migrant labour

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7q7/mm23>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/august2022>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/will-inflation-in-the-uk-keep-rising>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2022/09/bcc-economic-forecast-new-pm-must-act-as-uk-economy-set-for-recession-before-year-end>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/03/inflation-will-soar-to-astronomical-levels-over-next-year-thinktank-warns>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/04/bank-of-england-raises-interest-rates-to-1-point-75-per-cent-in-biggest-hike-in-27-years>

<sup>22</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/articles/whatactionsarepeopletakingbecauseoftherisingcostofliving/2022-08-05>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/slower-for-longer/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://danskebank.co.uk/business/economic-analysis/consumer-confidence-index/consumer-confidence-index-2022-q2>

<sup>25</sup> <https://ulstereconomix.com/2022/08/15/sharper-fall-in-activity-as-price-pressures-hit-demand/#more-15950>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/August-2022-Monthly-Economic-Update.pdf>

as a result of Brexit. It is in this context that many project investments to date and those in the planning pipeline are seeking to achieve job creation targets which will become increasingly harder to reach.

2.27 With these factors in mind, it will be important for local government in NI to co-operate across and seek complementarity within the range of funds that are available in order to make best use of the opportunities presented. The range of investment funds identified have a set of common themes such as Community and Place, investments in People and Skills, Tourism and Regeneration activity, and Enabling Infrastructure.

2.28 Local government should be cognisant of the range of various opportunities that can be availed of, and decision-makers should actively look to co-operate where there are projects that could have the potential for strategic alignment. For example, for Growth Deal projects that are capital build activity, it may be possible for Growth Deal partners to avail of the predominantly revenue-led UKSPF if the Growth Deal project fits within the Intervention List's missions. Alignment between existing and new funding must be considered.

## 3 Overview of Active Funds

### Introduction

3.1 The following presents a high-level summary of the active (and soon to be active) funds in Northern Ireland, with regards to the key themes and objectives of the funds, the timeframes that these funds are operating to, and the anticipated spend of each respective fund, where available. A more detailed summary of these funds can be found at **Appendix A**.

### UK Government Funding Sources

3.2 Table 3.1 provides a high-level summary of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund.

**Table 3.1: UK Government Funding Sources**

Funding Source	Timeframes	Anticipated Spend (NI)	Investment Themes / Priorities
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	April 2022 – March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core: £104.95m</li> <li>Multiply: £22m</li> <li><b>Total: £127m<sup>27</sup></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and Place</li> <li>Supporting Local Business</li> <li>People and Skills</li> </ul>
Levelling Up Fund	March 2021 – April 2025	£144m (3% of total budget) <sup>28</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport investment</li> <li>Regeneration and Town Centre investment</li> <li>Cultural investment</li> </ul>
Community Renewal Fund	March 2021 – March 2022	£12.4m <sup>29</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills and employability</li> <li>Local business</li> <li>Community and Place</li> </ul>

### City and Growth Deals

3.3 Table 3.2 details the timeframes, anticipated spend and core investment themes of the Belfast City Region Deal, the Derry-Londonderry and Strabane City Region Deal, the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal and the Mid-South West Growth Deal.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nicva.org/article/latest-on-the-uk-shared-prosperity-ni-programme-update-from-dept-for-levelling-up>

<sup>28</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1073342/LUF\\_Webinar\\_Slides\\_-\\_Northern\\_Ireland.odp](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073342/LUF_Webinar_Slides_-_Northern_Ireland.odp)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-successful-bids>

**Table 3.2: City Region and Growth Deals Summary**

Funding Source	Timeframes	Anticipated Spend (NI)	Investment Themes / Priorities
Belfast City Region Deal (BRCD)	December 2021 – December 2036	£850m <sup>30</sup> NB. £100m Complementary Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation and Digital</li> <li>• Tourism and Regeneration</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Employability and Skills</li> </ul>
Derry-Londonderry and Strabane City Region Deal (DSCRD)	February 2021 – January 2032 (end of Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan targets)	£140m <sup>31</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation and Digital</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Tourism and Regeneration</li> <li>• Employability and Skills</li> </ul>
Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal (CCGGD)	January 2020 – December 2030 (end of Community Plan)	£72m <sup>32</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Tourism and Regeneration</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Employability and Skills</li> <li>• Digital Connectivity</li> <li>• Energy and the Green Economy</li> </ul>
Mid-South West Growth Deal (MSWGD)	January 2020 – December 2030 (end of FODC and ABC Council Community plans)	£252m <sup>33</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future Proofing the Skills Base</li> <li>• Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Boosting Innovation and Digital Capacity</li> <li>• Building the Visitor and Tourist Economy</li> </ul>

3.4 Whilst Employability and Skills is a priority across all Deals they do not have revenue budget available, making it crucial that capital investment via the Deals is complemented with revenue investment sourced from other investment funds.

3.5 It should also be noted that the City and Growth Deals are also being supplemented by supplementary funds. These include the **Inclusive Futures Fund** for DSCRD and the **City and Growth Deal Complementary Fund** for BRCD, CCGGD and MSWGD.

3.6 The Inclusive Futures Fund is a £110m fund, comprised of £55m from UK Government and £55m from the NI Executive, to supplement funding for projects in the DDCRD that focus on: long-term social and physical deprivation; pathways to employment; and the economic potential of the local university and innovation assets, making the local area more accessible and attractive to live, visit, study and invest in.

3.7 The City and Growth Deal Complementary Fund as mentioned earlier is a £100m supplementary fund for capital projects that are complementary to the City and Growth Deal proposals in the remaining City/Growth deals in Northern Ireland; the fund is administered by the NI Executive.

## International / Cross-border Funding Sources

3.8 Table 3.3 provides a summary of the timeframes, anticipated spend and core investment themes across the Republic of Ireland's Shared Island Fund and the SEUPB-implemented PEACE PLUS funding programme.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Belfast-Region-City-Deal-December-2021>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.derrystرابane.com/citydeal>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/news/mayor-welcomes-funding-announcement-for-causeway-coast-and-glens>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.fermanaghomagham.com/article/additional-growth-deal-funding-welcomed-by-mid-south-west/>

**Table 3.3: International and Cross-border Funding Agreements**

Funding Source	Timeframes	Anticipated Spend (NI)	Investment Themes / Priorities
Shared Island Fund	October 2020 – December 2025	£500m <sup>34</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-border infrastructure initiatives</li> <li>• Greater all-island connectivity and North West / Border connectivity</li> <li>• North/South Research and Innovation</li> <li>• North/South Health Links</li> <li>• Collaborative environmental approaches</li> <li>• All-island economic development</li> </ul>
PEACE PLUS	January 2021 – December 2027	£1.1bn <sup>35</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peaceful and Thriving Communities</li> <li>• Economic Regeneration and Transformation</li> <li>• Young People</li> <li>• Healthy and Inclusive Communities</li> <li>• Sustainable and Better Connected Future</li> <li>• Embedding Partnership and Collaboration</li> </ul>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c3417-shared-island/>

<sup>35</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_4489](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4489)

## 4 Community Planning

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### Introduction

4.1 In April 2015, the reform of Local Government in Northern Ireland resulted in the creation of 11 new councils<sup>36</sup>. These councils were given responsibility to lead the community planning process for their district. Community plans identify long-term priorities for improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of districts and their residents.

4.2 Community Planning Partnerships have been established in each district comprising the council, statutory bodies, agencies, and the community and voluntary sector. The partners develop and implement a shared plan for promoting the well-being of an area, improving community cohesion and the quality of life for all citizens.

4.3 The Statutory Partners involved in the Community Planning Process are as follows: Education and Library Boards; Health and Social Care Trusts; Public Health Agency; the Health and Social Care Board; Police Service of Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; Invest Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Tourist Board; Sports Council for Northern Ireland; Libraries NI; and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

4.4 The Community Plans that have been published are similar in format and structure. They all identify core thematic desired outcomes for the region to the end of their plan date (all of which were published in 2017, with end dates ranging from 2027 to 2035), as well as key performance indicators to measure progress.

4.5 With regards to the themes surrounding the Plans' desired outcomes, the following are common across all (or at least most) of the Councils' Community Plans:

- Good health and wellbeing;
- Security and safety;
- Economic prosperity;
- Skilled and educated workforces;
- Regional/community connectivity; and
- Environmental sustainability.

4.6 These themes are considered within the range of investment priorities across active investment funds researched in Chapter 3 and detailed at Appendix A.

4.7 While the overarching themes are similar, it should be noted that the performance of each region is monitored individually, within their own framework of key performance indicators to measure progress against these themes.

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<sup>36</sup> The 11 councils established in 2015 are: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; Ards and North Down Borough Council; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Belfast City Council; Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council; Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; Mid Ulster District Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

## Community Planning Process

4.8 Community Plans are central to strategic place-based planning for all local authorities in Northern Ireland. SOLACE and partners recognise the value of Northern Ireland's Community Plans (and the planning process) as multi-partner plans for local areas involving local, central, and other relevant partners as described above. UKSPF priorities and allocations present a funding opportunity to link back to the needs and issues outlined in these Plans. Community Planning Partnerships are the key mechanism for deciding local priorities and driving specific activity that contributes to the foundations of productivity. There is a need for genuine place-based policy to inform allocations and investment on a broader scale.

4.9 At the heart of the community planning process is collaboration and working in partnership to identify an area's economic development priorities. Community Planning has a central role to play in driving 'joined up' project development in order to access the maximum funding available through various investment funds. For example, Year 1 of the UKSPF Northern Ireland allocation will demand a spend of some £19 million between October 2022 and March 2023. This will be challenging, however, there is potential for spending priorities and activity in the current Community Plans to be scaled up by accessing this funding.

4.10 It is also important to recognise the need for alignment between regional and local priorities, and priorities in urban and rural areas. Investment funds should be considered, bearing in mind the requirement for flexibility to respond to local need identified in Community Plans, and clusters of need, for example geographical clusters of local authorities, and/or thematic or sectoral clusters. Where individual local authorities may be too small or lack capacity to apply for project funding this will help to ensure that all areas are able to draw down their full allocation (as far as possible in a competitive environment) of all investment funds and address issues in their area and at the same time, contribute to objectives at both Northern Ireland and UK levels.

4.11 UKSPF funding, in particular, must align with, be able to support, and be supported by other strategic priorities and sources of finance such as Peace Fund and Growth/City Deals. There is a need to ensure existing funding and budgets are prioritised correctly and are being used most effectively thus ensuring the greatest impact.

## Complementary structures

4.12 As mentioned earlier the recently established **labour market partnerships**, in their capacity for scoping local labour market supply and demand, may also prove useful in identifying and shaping priority interventions with regards to skills development and training for each local authority area. These Partnerships have been established to improve employment outcomes and enhance the skills levels of local residents. They bring together regional government departments, local skills providers, and business representatives with the aim of developing innovative approaches that can improve outcomes for target groups across the Local Authority area, and also help local companies secure the talent pipeline that they need to grow their business.

4.13 **City & Growth Deal Investment** is a strategic investment opportunity for Northern Ireland, focusing upon delivering major capital investments which will seek to boost the economy, building upon areas of competitive strength. Potential exists through future funding and alignment of existing funding to further capitalise on this investment. The capital nature of city and growth deal funding highlights a clear opportunity to bolster and enhance the impact of this investment by attracting complementary revenue funding, as well as leveraging further capital investment to increase the scale and impact of the current investment programme. Across the city and growth deals common areas of priority exist around sustainability, employability and skills and digital, as well as areas of sectoral alignment and a shared commitment to deliver inclusive economic growth. Opportunities exist to build upon the strategic economic focus both within and across deals to explore the opportunities created through future funding



opportunities and how they can be maximised to consolidate, build upon and enhance the impact of the city deal investment.

4.14 Established governance arrangements exist at a deal level providing a vehicle for partnership working, investment planning and project development. Additionally, workstreams and potential for joint working on a cross deal basis are emerging focusing upon common areas of priority.

4.15 There are a number of options available to local authorities and their partners for local, sub-regional, cross deal and regional delivery and the most appropriate delivery vehicle should be considered on a project by project basis based on the nature of the project, the interests of partners and the complementarity with other local, sub-regional and regional projects.

## 5 The Mapping Tool

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### Introduction

5.1 This section describes the mapping tool that has been created by ekosgen for SOLACE NI, for the purposes of identifying the potential for complementarity across the key investment funds currently active in Northern Ireland.

### Background / Rationale

5.2 This tool was created for the purposes of detailing the strategic fit of the UK SPF programme's Interventions List<sup>37</sup> against the investment themes, projects, and missions of other funding programmes currently active in Northern Ireland. The wider aim of this tool is to demonstrate that there are synergies that could be gained from acknowledging that investment funds in Northern Ireland have similar aims and objectives, and thus can be exploited for wider collaboration across the funds.

5.3 The tool has been designed based on an initial desk research exercise which gathered information on the range of different large-scale investment funds and investment vehicles active in Northern Ireland, namely:

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- PEACE PLUS;
- The Community Renewal Fund;
- The Levelling Up Fund;
- The Belfast City Region Deal;
- The Derry and Strabane City Deal;
- The Mid-South West Economic Engine;
- The Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal; and
- The Shared Island Fund.

5.4 The research identified that many of the projects, investment themes and fund missions that have been announced for each of the above have a high potential for strategic alignment with the SPF's Intervention List for Northern Ireland and it was discovered there may be potential synergies that could be identified for the potential streamlining of projects and/ or any potential gaps in provision across the investment themes.

5.5 Projects, missions and investment themes from the above funds were then compared against the SPF List and areas of potential complementary were highlighted for further exploration for Local Authorities or Investment Fund partners to consider the potential for collaboration and the development of a future pipeline of projects which could potentially be funded via SPF.

### How To Use The Mapping Tool

5.6 When opening the tool, there is a front worksheet that links to each of the investment funds that has been set against the UK SPF's Intervention List. When clicked on, this will take the user to the corresponding analysis page.

5.7 Each of these analysis sheets features each of the UK SPF's stated 52 interventions for Northern Ireland along the y axis, split across the three themes of *Community and Place*, *Supporting*

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-interventions-outputs-and-indicators/interventions-list-for-northern-ireland>

*Local Businesses* and *People and Skills*. These are colour coded by theme- pink for Community and Place, blue for Supporting Local Businesses and yellow for People and Skills.

5.8 Along the x axis of each analysis sheet, there are the corresponding themes, missions, or examples of current projects that are to be analysed against the SPF. Where there are areas of potential complementarity, for example between the planned greenway infrastructure improvements found within the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal and the SPF's stated intervention aim of providing support for active travel enhancements, the corresponding cell has been highlighted to indicate potential complementarity.

5.9 The highlighted cells have then been labelled to indicate whether the funding for these projects, missions or investment themes is likely to be capital-led or revenue-led, to help identify whether there is potential for the SPF to be utilised to fund any aspects that the fund analysed against it would be unable to fund.

5.10 There is also a "*Timeframes Gantt Chart*" tab that refers to the dates that relate to each funding mechanism from fund opening to fund closing. These dates are expressed in months and where possible, exact dates. This Gantt Chart has been designed on the basis of publicly available information (and is linked to the source, where possible) and discussion with Belfast City Council economic development representatives and is therefore indicative in places.

5.11 The tool has been created as an example of how to map investment funds against one another for strategic alignment. The fund that has been analysed in the example has been the UK SPF, however there is therefore scope to edit this tool to analyse other funds. This can be done through setting the relevant investment fund on the y axis, and then completing the same activity described above for this funding mechanism as opposed to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

## Key Points to Note

5.12 Where possible a brief description of the projects with alignment to an SPF intervention have been highlighted on each worksheet in the mapping tool, as well as identification of whether the funding for the project is likely to be a capital-led or revenue-led. In the used case, funding for the UK SPF is between 80% and 90% revenue funding across the 3-year funding period, and so in instances where the highlighted project is capital-funded, there is a possibility for the UK SPF to be utilised for funding the revenue side of aligned projects.

5.13 The mapping tool can be used in the decision-making process of Local Authorities or wider funding partners in Northern Ireland to identify potential areas of complementarity between their projects and other investment funds. In the used case, the SPF Intervention List has been demonstrated against the other eight named investment funds or vehicles (listed above) with significant presence and potential for delivery.

5.14 As stated above, it should be noted that the tool itself is not static and can be easily replicated to analyse strategic fit beyond the UK SPF Interventions List. For example, if a regional City/Growth Deal partner is considering the potential development of a project that may have strategic alignment with the Levelling Up Fund thematic missions, they could identify which of the LUF sub-investment themes it is aligned with, whether or not the project they are aiming to fund is likely to require revenue or capital funding, and then identify whether there is the potential for utilising Levelling Up Fund funding when submitting the Outline Business Case for the potential project.

## 6 Next steps and considerations

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### Next steps

6.1 The next step for SOLACE is the timely dissemination of this report and the accompanying investment mapping tool and guidance amongst the relevant local authority departments, and to encourage and explain the potential benefits of its use internally, and within City and Growth Deal partnerships.

6.2 Similarly, consideration should be given to the sharing of the mapping tool approach as part of collaboration with existing regional partners and key local partner organisations. Utilising existing partnership structures will ensure that project development and investment and funding considerations will not take place in local authority or other silos.

6.3 The mapping tool provides an up to date 'snapshot' in time. However, it was commissioned and designed to be a "live" tool that should be adapted and updated by individual local authorities, organisations, and local partners as new project information and investment funding streams become available. Its ongoing value will only be realised if it is reviewed and updated regularly.

6.4 With this in mind SOLACE should develop a process for reviewing and updating it at NI level and across partnership structures. This will require resourcing and agreement of clear roles and responsibilities. This NI-wide 'master' mapping tool should be available to partners, but at the same time, individual partners, for example local authorities, might wish to consider a 'local' version that sits outside of the master which may give a swifter and a greater degree of flexibility for planning and decision-making.

6.5 Using the mapping tool SOLACE should review relevant investment funds and current approved/committed investments with a view to checking any changes in the funding position on a regular basis. This could be done on a quarterly basis as part of SOLACE's meeting agenda. This would inform high level decision making with the overall aim of making more effective use of available investment funds. This approach would also reinforce the need to keep the tool up to date.

6.6 Once the mapping tool is embedded within SOLACE, is being actively used by SOLACE and member authorities, and an updating process established and tested, consideration should be given to the benefits of rolling it out to incorporate or be replicated for other sectors for example the voluntary sector and Higher and Further Education. This could support wider partnership working and alignment of funds and activities.

# Appendix A: Profile of Active Funds in Northern Ireland

## Introduction

The following comprises the desk research completed on the main active funding mechanisms in Northern Ireland. As part of this research, the following investment funds, City and Growth Deals and international funds have been analysed:

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- PEACE PLUS;
- The Levelling Up Fund;
- The Belfast City Region Deal;
- The Derry and Strabane City Deal;
- The Mid-South West Economic Engine;
- The Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal;
- The Shared Island Fund; and
- The Community Renewal Fund.

A profile of each of these funding mechanisms has been created and, where possible, the following information has been provided:

- A general overview of the background to the fund and its primary focus;
- The range of investment themes or priority areas for investment for the fund;
- The type of investment it is likely to contribute to (capital-led or revenue-led projects);
- The total funding levels available and, if possible, the funding available to Northern Ireland;
- The expressed partnerships, collaboration efforts and delivery geographies of the fund;
- Any match-funding requirements, where stated; and
- Timescales for submissions of bids and any other relevant dates to be mindful of.

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund

### Background / Primary Focus

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is one of the UK government's mechanisms for delivering their Levelling Up agenda for the United Kingdom and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. All areas of the UK will receive an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula, as opposed to a competitive process. The overarching objective of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances. Recognising the acute challenges town centres and communities have faced during the pandemic, this Fund will improve the places people live in, and support individuals and businesses. It will drive noticeable improvements that matter to local communities, foster local pride in place and increase life chances including health outcomes.

### Themes / Priority Areas

The investment priority areas of the Shared Prosperity Fund focus on 3 themes:

- **Community and Place:**
  - Strengthening the social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging in communities, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.
  - It is hoped that resilient and safe neighbourhoods will be built, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

- **Supporting Local Business:**
  - Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion, through investments that build on existing industries and institutions of strength in the region, ranging from support for starting businesses to visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities.
  - Networking and collaboration will also be promoted by bringing together businesses and partners both within and across sectors in order to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth.
  - Private sector investment will also be increased in growth-enhancing activities, through targeted support for small and medium-sized businesses to undertake new-to-firm innovation, adopt productivity-enhancing, energy-efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques, and start or grow their exports.
- **People and Skills:**
  - Boosting core skills and supporting adults to progress in work, by targeting adults with no or low-level qualifications and skills in maths, upskilling the working age population, yielding personal and societal economic impact, and by encouraging innovative approaches to reducing adult learning barriers.
  - Disadvantaged people (such as the long-term unemployed and those with protected characteristics) will be supported in accessing the skills they need to progress in life and into work through funding life, and basic skills where this is not delivered through national or local employment and skills provision.
  - Local areas will be supported to fund local skills needs and supplement local adult skills provision, for example by delivering provision through a wider range of routes or enabling more intensive/innovative provision, for both qualification based and non-qualification based learning.
  - Levels of economic inactivity will be reduced, and those furthest from the labour market will be moved closer to employment, through investment in bespoke employment support tailored to local needs. Investment should facilitate the join-up of mainstream provision and local services within an area for participants, through the use of one-to-one keyworker support, improving employment outcomes for specific cohorts who face labour market barriers.

## Type of investment

For the core UKSPF funding, the split of capital and revenue investment funding amongst Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland over the first 3 years of delivery (2022/23 – 2024/25) is allocated as follows:

- 2022/23 – 89.6% revenue funding, 10.4% capital funding
- 2023/24 – 87.5% revenue funding, 12.5% capital funding
- 2024/25- 82.1% revenue funding, 17.9% capital funding

The funding that local authorities and delivery bodies receive from Multiply<sup>38</sup> is to remain constant at 100% revenue funding throughout the course of the programme.

## Funding Levels

In total, the UK Shared Prosperity fund has made available £126,854,145 in Northern Ireland, having been allocated £104,947,606 from core SPF funding, and a further £21,906,539 being made available as a result of Multiply, a programme that is earmarked for the funding of numeracy projects.

This funding will be delivered yearly, with the following anticipated spending profile:

<sup>38</sup> A £559 million programme of interventions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that is hoping to boost math and numeracy qualifications in adults which lead to better numeracy skills and ability, therefore meaning improved labour market outcomes.

- Year 1 (2022/23) – £19m;
- Year 2 (2023/24) – £33m; and
- Year 3 (2024/25) – £74m.

When considering the funding allocations to each of the 3 investment themes, the split has been recently confirmed<sup>39</sup> to be:

- Supporting Local Business – £38.3m (41%), 73% of which is to be revenue funding and 27% of which is to be capital funding;
- People and Skills – £39.6m (42%), 100% of which is to be revenue funding; and
- Communities and Place £15.46m (17%), 20% of which is to be revenue funding and 80% of which is to be capital funding.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

For the rest of the UK, local authorities are responsible for applying, managing, and delivering projects associated with the Shared Prosperity Fund. In Northern Ireland, the UK Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will manage delivery in Northern Ireland. It is envisaged that a Northern Ireland UK Shared Prosperity Plan Investment Plan will be produced in October 2022, and that funding will be administered accordingly as a result of this plan.

The UK Government is engaging with a range of stakeholders from a wide variety of local sources in Northern Ireland to draft this plan and have established a Partnership Group for managing the delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund. This Partnership Group contains representatives from local authorities (2 SOLACE NI representatives), the community and voluntary sector (1 representative from CO3 and 1 representative from NICVA), businesses (1 representative from CBI and 1 representative from the NI Chamber of Commerce), the tertiary education sector (the Vice Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast) and the social enterprise sector. It is felt that this is the most appropriate method of managing the process, and that working with local partners to ensure that delivery arrangements reflect the particular needs of the Northern Ireland economy and society.

An example of this iterative process impacting the management of the SPF in Northern Ireland is through recent discussions about the UKSPF Interventions List - the Partnership Group is intending to focus on 15 of these interventions as key priorities of investment, as opposed to the full 52 interventions stated from the outset (and which are contained in the mapping tool accompanying this report). When this intervention list is finalised, the mapping tool can be updated to reduce to these interventions, thereby simplifying analysis.

## Match-funding Requirements

Match funding will not be required to unlock an area's allocation. This provides flexibility, reduces bureaucracy, and empowers lead local authorities to tailor their approach to local circumstances. The sourcing of match funding/leverage will not be a factor in the assessment of each place's investment plan, however for Northern Irish projects, project applicants and delivery partners will be asked to state if they have match funding as part of their application. This will be considered as part of the value for money assessment of interventions and as part of State Aid assessment.

## Timescales and routes to market

The Shared Prosperity Fund has been able to support investment in interventions that started from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, provided they fit within the relevant interventions toolkit and all Fund requirements set out above. The window for developing an investment plan in the rest of the UK was open from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022, and the anticipated date for investment plans to be approved and payments to project applicants are expected to happen in October 2022. For Northern Ireland, as a result of the more

<sup>39</sup> SPF NI Partnership Group

extensive and collaborative consultation approach taken and due to delays in launching the Investment Plan, the DLUHC has shifted the timescales for Northern Ireland. In anticipation of the DLUHC Investment Plan being finalised in November, calls are anticipated to open in December 2022. Funding has been confirmed for three financial years (2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25) providing a predictable baseline element of local growth funding. All interventions should end by March 2025 or have a break clause allowing for closure by March 2025 if required.

Unlike Scotland, England, and Wales, the DLUHC are considering 3 different “routes to market” for accessing funding in Northern Ireland. These are as follows:

- Commissioning councils to deliver specific programmes, e.g., the existing Business Start Up regional programme
- Open calls for project funding applications
- The appointment of a third party to run a grant programme (e.g., NICVA or CO3 for the communities and place aspect of the funding programme), who then would call for applications and award small grants to organisations for project delivery

## PEACE Plus

### Background / Primary Focus

PEACE Plus is the most recent iteration of the European Union’s funding programme that supports projects that are designed to support peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland and the bordering counties of the Republic of Ireland. This programme is running from 2021 to 2027. In previous iterations, these projects have been delivered under PEACE I, II III and IV, as well as funding from INTERREG programmes. The Programme’s purpose is to continue to take the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration in the region and secondly, to promote social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life.

### Themes / Priority Areas

For PEACE Plus, the themes within which the funding programme is split into is broadly similar to previous iterations of the PEACE Programme, focusing on economic and social prosperity. There are six key thematic areas of the PEACE Plus Programme, each with their own sub thematic Investment Areas and designated funding allocations which are detailed in the Funding Levels section below. The themes are as follows:

1. Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities;
2. Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation;
3. Empowering and Investing in Our Young People;
4. Healthy and Inclusive Communities;
5. Supporting a Sustainable and Better-Connected Future; and
6. Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration.

### Type of investment

The investment that is delivered through the PEACE Programme is a mixture of capital and revenue funding, that is delivered in the form of a grant. It is not anticipated that projects are to return any funding to the SEUPB, and organisations applying for funding can receive up to 100% of project costs. The revenue and funding split is dependent on the investment area (for example, there is a heavy emphasis on capital-led projects for Sub Investment Theme 1.4: Reimagining Communities while Sub Investment Theme 4.3: Victims and Survivors will likely fund mostly revenue-led projects).



## Funding Levels

In total, there is over €1 billion (€1.07 billion) allocated to projects within the PEACE Plus Programme to be delivered from 2021 to 2027. As stated above, each theme has been allocated a designated amount of money and, within the theme, there are targeted investment areas. These are as follows in table A1.1:

**Table A1.1: PEACE Plus Investment Areas and Funding Allocations**

Investment Area	Funding Allocation (€)
<b>Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities (€250m)</b>	
1.1 Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans	€110m
1.2 Empowering Communities	€30m
1.3 Building Positive Relations	€35m
1.4 Reimagining Communities	€75m
<b>Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation (€170m)</b>	
2.1 SME Development and Transition	€25m
2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund	€65m
2.3 Programme Areas Skills Development	€50m
2.4 Small Towns and Villages	€30m
<b>Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People (€123m)</b>	
3.1 Shared Learning Together Education Programme	€51.3m
3.2 PEACE Plus Youth Programme	€47m
3.3 Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing	€25m
<b>Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities (€172m)</b>	
4.1 Collaborative Health and Social Care	€97m
4.2 Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion	€50m
4.3 Victims and Survivors	€25m
<b>Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future (€303m)</b>	
5.1 Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience	€40m
5.2 Marine and Coastal Management	€24.8m
5.3 Water Quality and Catchment Management	€21m
5.4 Water Quality Improvement Programme	€32m
5.5 Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme	€20m
5.6 Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity	€165m
<b>Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration (€52m)</b>	
6.1 Strategic Planning and Engagement	€32m
6.2 Maintaining and Forging Relationships Between Citizens	€20m

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

The overall programme is delivered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), who are working in partnership with the UK, Irish and Northern Irish governments to deliver projects. It is anticipated that, as in previous PEACE iterations, that organisations will apply for funding that will meet the thematic criteria and will then be delivered by these organisations.

The Programme area includes Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, namely the counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, and Sligo. This is known as the core Programme area.

However, cross border collaboration is not strictly limited to the administrative borders of the Programme, but instead has a flexible geography depending on the topic concerned. This is called a functional area and allows for organisations and institutions that are not based in the core Programme area to get involved in projects by linking with partners within the core Programme area.

## Match–funding Requirements

The European Commission and the Irish Government have jointly committed €206m to the PEACE PLUS Programme with the UK Government (including €150 million allocated from the NI Executive) providing over £730 million (€850 million) to the Programme. This will now result in a total PEACE PLUS Programme budget of approximately €1bn.

Commonly, as in previous PEACE iterations, funding will be delivered at up to 100% of project costs. However, the SEUPB are exploring arrangements where partners contribute some or all of their match-funding if they are in a position to do so.

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

The SEUPB is asking for stakeholders to register their interest in the various specific themes and investment areas by emailing them ([peaceplus@seupb.eu](mailto:peaceplus@seupb.eu)). Concept notes for the sub-investment theme 1.4: Reimagining Communities were to be submitted by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for approval.

## Levelling Up Fund

### Background / Primary Focus

The UK Government established the Levelling Up Fund in order to minimise the productivity gap between all regions in the UK, and to “level up” all regions, ensuring that there is equity in opportunity and public service provision. There is also an ambition to boost productivity, pay and jobs in the private sector and empower local communities and authorities to take decisions that will have local impacts. It is the ambition of the Levelling Up Fund to boost living standards, and, as a result, restore a sense of local pride and sense of community in areas where this has been lost.

### Themes / Priority Areas

Across the whole Levelling Up programme, there are 12 cohesive missions that are required in order to meet a successful funding programme by its end in 2030.<sup>40</sup> These missions are as follows:

1. By 2030, **pay, employment and productivity will have risen** in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
2. By 2030, **domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40%** and at least one third over the Spending Review period, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
3. By 2030, local **public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London**, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
4. By 2030, the UK will have **nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage**, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.
5. By 2030, the number of **primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased**.
6. By 2030, the number of **people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased** in every area of the UK.
7. By 2030, the **gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed**, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-levelling-up-plan-that-will-transform-uk>

8. By 2030, **well-being will have improved** in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
9. By 2030, pride in place, such as **people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen** in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
10. By 2030, **renters will have a secure path to ownership** with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.
11. By 2030, **homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen**, focused on the worst-affected areas.
12. By 2030, **every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal** with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

In the second round of funding (and as in the first), emphasis is placed on projects that are focused on delivering across three types of investment themes: local transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK's world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets.

## Type of investment

The Levelling Up Fund is a capital investment funding programme.

## Funding Levels

The total budget allocated to the Fund is £4.8 billion. As per the prospectus, total funding available for Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh applicants to the Levelling Up Fund is at least £800 million. In Round 1, a total of £50 million was allocated across 11 projects in Northern Ireland. This made up 3% of the total funding allocated across the UK in Round 1.

A capital bid can be for an individual project or a package of up to three projects, up to £20 million in grant value per bid. Large transport and culture bids of up to £50 million will be considered by exception. It is possible for applicants to apply for a joint bid to fund either a single project or up to three projects that represented a targeted and cohesive set of interventions. This funding limit is a maximum of £20 million each per applicant, up to a maximum of £60 million per joint bid.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

In Northern Ireland, the UK government will accept bids from a range of local applicants, including but not limited to businesses, universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, district councils, the Northern Ireland Executive, and other public sector bodies. The Northern Ireland Executive and its Arm's Length Bodies are only eligible to bid under the transport theme, and it is anticipated that lead applicants to cultural and regeneration themes should arise from a more local level.

As a result of this wider range of eligible organisations, it is expected applicants will demonstrate through two additional gateway criteria (including audited financial statements and providing evidence of delivering two capital infrastructure investments of similar size and scale within the last five years) that they have the capacity and capability to deliver capital projects.

## Match-funding Requirements

There are no match-funding requirements associated with the Levelling Up Fund. Applicants can, however, use funding they have applied for in conjunction with other funding from various sources to support larger projects. In the LUF's Round 2 Frequently Asked Questions, it is stated that a local contribution of 10% or higher of bid costs is encouraged. The maximum amount that will be funded from the Levelling Up Fund for any bid, excluding transport or culture bids, is £20 million.

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

Applications for the Second Round of bids opened on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022 via an online application portal, and closed at 12:00 noon on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022.

## Belfast Region City Deal

### Background / Primary Focus

The Belfast Region City Deal is a large-scale investment deal that is aimed at supporting economic recovery in the region, across 6 local authorities, placing Belfast City Council at the forefront of the deal, and aims to prepare the region for future growth.

The Deal has been designed to build upon the economic strengths of the region and will also support collective efforts to adapt to the ‘new normal’ created by Covid-19; and to deliver the required change within constrained budgets. The BRCD will deliver projects that are uniquely placed to support recovery, facilitating investment in businesses and in sectors which have the greatest potential for long term growth, driving productivity and creating and sustaining jobs.

### Themes / Priority Areas

This Deal will strengthen the region’s offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of the region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.

The following “pillars” of investment are through which the City Deal’s inclusive growth ambitions will be realised:

- **Innovation and Digital.** Achieving world leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capability - facilitating invention, commercialisation and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased well-being.
- **Tourism and Regeneration.** Boosting tourism and regenerating our region – creating world-class visitor attractions and investing in towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will provide stand out in international markets.
- **Infrastructure.** Connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure.

An underpinning pillar of the deal is **Employability & Skills**, through which partners are working collaboratively to enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support the emerging job opportunities.

### Type of investment

The Belfast City Region Deal funding is dedicated for projects that require capital funding.

### Funding Levels

Taken together, the partners are delivering a total of more than £850 million of investment. The NI Executive and UK Government are each committing up to £350 million for the City Deal, while the City Deal Partners (see below) are committing in excess of £150 million between them. It is expected that additional private sector investment will be leveraged too, leading to a deal worth over £1 billion in total.

### Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

The BRCD involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The BRCD partners comprises of six partner councils (Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council,

Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council), two universities (Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University) and four of the region's further education colleges (Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, South Eastern Regional College and Southern Regional College).

While Belfast City Council is the Accountable Body for the deal, it should be noted that there are governance arrangements that take the wider collaborative efforts into account. For example, there is a Council Panel which is made up of Council members from each of the six Councils that provides political leadership to build wider political consensus. There is an Executive Board which comprises the Chief Executives of each of the Councils, the Vice Chancellors of the two universities, the Chair of the Employability and Skills Board, a Further Education College representative, the Chair of the Digital Board, the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Deal and observers from the NI Civil Service. This Executive Board is responsible for the ongoing development and implementation of the Deal. Administrative, technical and professional support on an operational and day-to-day basis is delivered through the Programme Management Office- a team of officers that are hosted by the Lead Authority, with the Programme Director working under the direction of the Executive Board.

### Match-funding Requirements

The funding that is being provided by "Project Sponsors" (i.e. the project partner who takes ownership of the respective project within the Deal) varies greatly, and so it appears that there has been no specific match-funding requirement set- it varies by project.

### Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

The Head of Terms was signed in 2019, while the deal itself was signed in December 2021. It is anticipated that all projects delivered under the City Deal will be delivered over the course of 15 years.

## Derry and Strabane City Deal

### Background / Primary Focus

The Derry and Strabane City Deal is the largest investment package to be delivered in the Derry City and Strabane District Council area, when taken together with the Inclusive Future Fund. The role of the City Deal is to advance the priority projects and initiatives within the City and District's Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan, while the Inclusive Future Fund prioritises projects that support local young people by providing upskilling and job opportunities, tackle the causes and consequences of social deprivation and make the area more accessible and attractive live, visit, study and invest in.

### Themes / Priority Areas

The City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund is focused around the delivery of projects that feature across a collection of 4 investment themes, which are detailed below:

- **Innovation and Digital** - Investing in digital capacity building and innovation for industry and health to drive productivity and competitiveness.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Investing in personalised medicine in the community and training the future doctors of the North West.
- **Tourism and Regeneration** - Regenerating our cities and towns and further developing internationally renowned destination sites and experiences.
- **Employability and Skills** - Underpinning inclusive economic growth by connecting the projects to skills and employability pathways.

### Type of investment

These projects have a large-scale capital build element and as a result, represent capital investment. There is also a revenue-led element in the employability and skills and training pathways being designed for the City Deal.

## Funding Levels

The total investment package totals £250 million when taken together with the Inclusive Future Fund, comprising a £100 million City Deal funded through the UK Government (£50 million) and NI Executive (£50 million), a £110 million Inclusive Future Fund funded through the UK Government (£55 million) and NI Executive (£55 million), and Derry City and Strabane District Council and their partners contributing a further £40 million across the two funds.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

Derry City and Strabane District Council acts as the Lead Authority and as a result, is responsible for implementation of the Deal. The deal is delivered in partnership with delivery partners in the region, including Ulster University, Western Health and Social Care Trust, North West Regional College and the Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre (C-TRIC).

## Match-funding Requirements

There have been no match-funding requirements stipulated as part of this City Deal.

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

Before any funding is awarded, project partners are required to develop an Outline Business Case and are subject to Full Business Case approval in order to demonstrate the value for money each project brings and articulates how these projects contribute to the vision of inclusive growth established in the City Deal.

## Mid-South West Economic Engine

### Background / Primary Focus

The Mid-South West is a region of Northern Ireland that is characterised by a rural element, that has often been overlooked for investment (when compared to the more major cities and surrounding areas of Derry/Londonderry and Belfast). In 2020, the region set out their Regional Economic Strategy in the hopes of attracting investment into the area, by identifying opportunity areas as well as the challenges that need to be resolved in order to ensure their ambitions of continuous growth and prosperity in the region, and that the economy continues to be driven by a thriving private sector that includes many world-leading companies which are major innovators and global exporters.

### Themes / Priority Areas

There are 4 thematic areas that are priorities in the Mid-South West Region as part of this investment package, these are:

- **Future Proofing the Skills Base**- skills and access to labour are both a major current and future constraint to growth and competitiveness in MSW, and therefore interventions that ensure the right skills for the future are established in both scale and profile are at the heart of the Mid-South West's regional economic strategy.
- **Enabling Infrastructure**- MSW requires the appropriate infrastructure to move products to market quickly and maintain efficient supply chains. It is home to a third of NI's businesses, accounts for half of the land mass in Northern Ireland, however motorway and A roads account for 8% of the road network and a serious gap in public transport, with MSW ranked amongst the most deprived areas in NI for access to services. Investment in infrastructure will act as an enabler for the growth ambitions of the region.
- **Boosting Innovation and Digital Capacity** – supporting businesses to be more productive by helping enhance their capabilities in crucial enabling technologies such as data analytics, robotics, automation, Industry 4.0, machine learning, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, advanced materials and production techniques. Alignment between education providers and employers within the digital and technology sector to ensure people are upskilling in IT services, Advanced Electronics, Software and Communications (areas which MSW has

particular strengths). Exploration of opportunities available within health and social care given the concentration of pharmaceutical companies and health care providers in the region.

- **Building Visitor / Tourist Economy** – wider promotion of areas of natural beauty in the region to a wider audience from around the globe, in order to entice more tourists to attractions, and provision of more quality visitor accommodation. The main barriers to out-of-state tourism growth in MSW include physical accessibility of the region, information and signposting, and digital connectivity and therefore interventions will be made on this basis to attract more visitors.

## Type of investment

As with the other City and Growth Deals, there is a mixture of capital and revenue-led projects, and therefore the funding for this Deal will be a mixture of revenue and capital funding.

## Funding Levels

The total amount that has been committed to the Growth Deal funding for the Mid-South West is £252 million, comprised of a £126 million pledge from the UK Government and a £126 million pledge from the Northern Ireland Executive.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

The Mid-South West is a collaborative effort between Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster. The region itself makes up half of Northern Ireland's landmass and is home to a quarter of the province's population and a quarter of its business. Mid-South West provides 214,000 workplace jobs, 90% of which are taken up by local people, and generates one fifth of Northern Ireland's entire GVA.

## Match-funding Requirements

There is no stated need for match funding to be delivered as part of this Growth Deal in the Regional Economic Strategy. However, it is acknowledged that "the input and guidance of [the] industry/business base in MSW" has been crucial in order to secure growth in the collective economy of the region and this is likely to continue to be needed.

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

It should be noted that, while there is high-level proposals and certain projects that have been nailed down for investment (such as development of critical road infrastructure, an agri-food robotics centre and CAFRE Loughry Campus and tourism developments at the Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark), it is hoped that the opportunities expressed in the Mid-South West's Regional Economic Strategy encourage private sector investment to be leveraged on relevant projects that are yet to be fully defined, and it is noted that the Region "look forward to ongoing engagement with our industry/business base and partners in central government departments/agencies."

## Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal

### Background / Primary Focus

In May 2020, it was announced that the Causeway Coast and Glens was set to receive £72m capital funding investment package from a combination of UK Government and the NI Executive sources in their own Growth Deal after the Executive agreed to match fund the British Government's Growth Deal allocation. The Growth Deal capital fund will be used to support digital and innovation projects, while the Executive investment will focus additional funding on supporting infrastructure, tourism and regeneration along with employability and skills.

## Themes / Priority Areas

The Growth Deal Sub-Committee identified six key themes/ sectors to help grow the local economy of Causeway Coast and Glens in line with Growth Deal criteria. In total there were 28 projects that had made the long list of proposals for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to consider, split across the 6 priority areas. These were then narrowed down in order to maximise the utilisation of funding available and prioritised to 12 projects, costing £128.5 million in total. The projects, within their relevant themes, are as follows:

- Innovation;
  - Enterprise Zone Digital Innovation Hub
  - School of Veterinary Medicine at University of Ulster
  - Centre for Drug Discovery and Pharmaceutical Innovation
  - Foodovation Centre
- Tourism and Regeneration;
  - Bushmills Regeneration Programme
  - Dungiven / Benbradagh Regeneration Programme
  - Greenway Infrastructure Development
- Infrastructure;
  - Connected Causeway Traffic and Parking Infrastructure
- Employability and Skills;
  - Skills, Apprenticeships and Employability Project
- Digital Connectivity;
  - Digital Infrastructure Support Fund
  - Rural Digital Hubs
- Energy/ Green Economy
  - Girona Project

## Type of investment

Projects funded through the Growth Deal present a mix of capital and revenue-led projects, and thus there is likely to be a mix of capital and revenue funding made available through the Growth Deal.

## Funding Levels

There has been £72 million made available as a result of the NI Executive matching the UK Government's Growth Deal allocation of £36 million.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

The lead authority for the Causeway Growth deal is the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council- all projects fall within this geography. The Council will provide strategic oversight for the development of the Deal, ensuring it continues to be aligned with the vision for inclusive economic growth. The Executive Programme Board (consisting of Councillors, the Chief Exec of the Council, Ulster University's Vice Chancellor, the Chief Executives of North West Regional College and Northern Regional College, the Senior Responsible Officer and the Council's Finance Director) will drive the delivery of the 14 Strategic Outline Cases and the Deal programme in accordance with the requirements of the Heads of Terms (when drafted) and agreed governance arrangements. The Senior Responsible Officer is accountable for the programme meeting its objectives, delivering the required outcomes and realising the required benefits. The Central Programme Management Office will provide the overall day-to-day support for the CGD.

## Match-funding Requirements

It should be noted that the total for all 12 shortlisted projects is equal to £128.5 million and as a result, match funding of £56.5 million (44%) in addition to the £72 million from the NI Executive and UK Government will be required by the Council to deliver these projects.



## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

On 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021, the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Leisure and Development Committee met to discuss the prioritisation of Growth Deals projects to maximise value for money from the various investment funding opportunities presented to them. A report, prepared by Grant Thornton that considered the projects' strategic alignments, expected impact and state of readiness, was presented at this meeting as a short list of projects for investment.<sup>41</sup> Within it, Grant Thornton's recommendations included funding the 12 "Priority One" projects and potentially two of the 10 "Priority Two" projects (Mountsandel Development and Regeneration of Dunluce Castle), to progress them to Strategic Outline Case Stage for indicative completion dates to be placed on each of the projects.

## Shared Island Deal

### Background / Primary Focus

The Shared Island Fund was announced in Budget 2021, with €500m in capital funding available between 2021-25, ring-fenced for investment in collaborative North/South projects to benefit the whole island of Ireland. As part of the revised National Development Plan, the Irish Government committed to extending out the Fund until 2030 and doubled its funding allocation to €1 billion. Its purpose is to address strategic challenges faced in Ireland and aims to further develop the all-island economy with projects that will bring mutual North/South benefit, with a particular focus on the North West and border regions.

### Themes / Priority Areas

The priority areas for investment from the Shared Island Fund are as follows:

- Working with the Executive to deliver key **cross-border infrastructure initiatives**, including the A5, railways, the Ulster Canal, the Narrow Water Bridge, and cross-border greenways;
- Working with the Executive and the UK Government to achieve **greater connectivity on the island** and commit to development opportunities in the **North West and Border communities**;
- Supporting a **north/south programme of research and innovation**, including an all-island research hub;
- Deepening **north-south health links**;
- Joined up **approaches to environmental issues** on the island, including on tackling climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis; and
- Enhancing, developing and deepening all aspects of **north-south cooperation** and the **all-island economy**.

### Type of investment

When the Shared Island Fund was announced in Budget 2021, €500m in **capital** funding was ring-fenced for investment in collaborative North/South projects.

### Funding Levels

When the Shared Island Fund was first announced in the 2021 Budget, the Irish Government had allocated €500 million to projects relating to the Shared Island initiative that would be spread over the period 2021 to 2025. In the updated National Development Plan in October 2021, a further €500m has been allocated to cross-border initiatives that will run until 2030. The delivery of the initial funding rounds (2021-2025), as per the Taoiseach's answers during a debate surrounding the launch of the National Development Plan in October 2021<sup>42</sup> are as follows:

- 2021 – €50 million;

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/210420\\_LD\\_Agenda\\_Item\\_6\\_-\\_Growth\\_Deal\\_\(including\\_appendices\).pdf](https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/210420_LD_Agenda_Item_6_-_Growth_Deal_(including_appendices).pdf)

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-10-12/12/#pq-answers-11\\_12\\_13\\_14\\_15](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-10-12/12/#pq-answers-11_12_13_14_15)

- 2022 – €50 million;
- 2023 – €100 million;
- 2024 – €150 million; and
- 2025 - €150 million.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

The Shared Island Fund's administrative body sits under the Department of the Taoiseach, with a Shared Island unit dedicated to the co-ordination and driving of this initiative. The Fund is allocated to Irish Government departments for approved collaborative North/South projects that implement Programme for Government commitments and objectives relating to the shared island initiative. The cross-border projects will be delivered in partnership with the NI Executive and British Government.

## Match-funding Requirements

There have been no strict match-funding criteria established as part of this programme as ultimately it is funding projects that are established in the Irish Programme for Government. It is, however, hoped that the NI Executive and British Government will contribute, where deemed appropriate, on an ad-hoc basis. As an example of this, the Irish Government has delivered €40 million to a cross-border research programme, in which Taoiseach Micheál Martin stated it is “not the intention” for this funding to be matched by Northern Ireland, however it would be welcome if politicians in the North decide to do that.<sup>43</sup>

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

As stated above, the Shared Island Fund is funding projects that are found within the Irish Government's Programme for Government, and as such does not take funding applications. The Irish Government has undertaken a range of 10 stakeholder engagement events however, which engaged with more than 1,000 civic representatives and organisations from a wide range of communities across the island. These events began in November 2020 with a dialogue on “New generations and new voices on the Good Friday Agreement.” Other dialogue events followed various themes, such as Rural and Community Development, Sports, Tourism, Education, Health, Economic Recovery, Equality, Civil Society, and Climate Change.

## Community Renewal Fund

### Background / Primary Focus

The UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) is a £220 million, one-year pilot programme announced by the government in the March Budget. The UK government used this funding programme as a precursor to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to test delivery approaches for post-EU community and economic support funding, as well as providing additional assistance to local communities to help towards recovery from the pandemic. The intention, in running what were effectively one-year pilot programmes, was to use any lessons learned around appraisal, delivery and effectiveness to inform the government's permanent approach to replacement EU funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), launched in 2022.

### Themes / Priority Areas

Projects that were granted funding aligned with one, or delivered across several, of the following investment priorities and subsequent sub-investment themes:

- **Investment in skills (25% allocation)**
  - Work-based training
  - Retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce
  - Promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion
- **Investment for local business (23% allocation)**

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/34m-funds-boost-for-new-cross-border-programme-40618627.html>

- Supporting entrepreneurs and helping businesses with potential to create more job opportunities for current employees or take on new employees
- Encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential
- Supporting decarbonisation measures
- **Investment in communities and place (20% allocation)**
  - Feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects
  - Exploring opportunity for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development
  - Improving green spaces and preserving important local assets
  - Promoting rural connectivity
- **Supporting people into employment (32% allocation)**
  - Supporting people to engage with local services which support them on their journey towards employment
  - Identifying and addressing any potential barriers these individuals may face in gaining employment or moving closer to the labour market
  - Raising aspirations, supporting individuals to access Plan for Jobs employment support, jobs and find sustainable employment
  - Supporting people to gain the basic skills they need to develop their potential for sustainable work
  - Testing what works in helping people move towards work

## Type of investment

The Community Renewal Fund had a stated 90% allocation towards revenue-led projects, with the remaining 10% allocated to funding the capital-led aspect of projects.

## Funding Levels

The total amount of funding made available through the Community Renewal Fund across the UK was £220 million. In Northern Ireland, £12.4 million (6% of the overall funding) was delivered across 31 projects. The largest single grant award was £1.8 million, and the smallest single grant award was just below £59,000.

## Partnerships, Collaboration and Delivery Geographies

Any legally constituted organisation delivering an appropriate service was eligible to submit a bid. In Northern Ireland, applicants applied directly to the UK government. Successful bids ranged from projects for Local Authorities, to universities, to individual charity and business organisations, to umbrella organisations that represent a wide range of small businesses.

## Match-funding Requirements

The UK government encouraged applicants in NI to maximise the leverage of other funding. This was to enable enhanced alignment with other provision and efficient delivery which increases value for money. This was expressed in the selection criteria, which took the overall funding package required for each project, including any match funding, into account.

## Timescale for next bidding rounds and other types of submissions

The timelines for the Community Renewal Fund involved a launch in March 2021, with applicants in Northern Ireland having to submit their bids to UK Government for appraisal and assessment by 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Projects that were successful were expected to be announced in late July 2021, however due to the significant level of interest the assessment process was delayed until November 2021 and therefore funding began to flow to projects in Northern Ireland from this point onwards. The Community Renewal Fund was intended to close on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, however due to the delay in awarding funding projects were given until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to deliver.