

Cabinet – 2 April 2025

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 25/26 allocations

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report sets out the projects proposed to be funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the financial year 2025/26.
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet: 1. notes the continued purpose of the UK SPF; 2. supports the allocation of 25/26 UKSPF funding towards specific projects as set out in this report; and 3. delegated authority is given for future decision making associated with the finalisation of the project programme for 25/26 UKSPF spend to the Strategic Director for Place Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	To progress proposals for the allocation of UK SPF funding to projects for delivery in the financial year 2025-2026.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Derek Tipp – Planning and Economy
Strategic Director(s)	James Carpenter – Strategic Director of Place, Operations & Sustainability
Officer Contact	Tim Guymer Assistant Director for Place Development tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022 by the previous Government and was designed to reduce inequalities between communities, replacing previous EU funding.
2. New Forest District Council was previously awarded £1 million in 2022 to cover the period 2022-2025. At that time, a Local Investment Plan was required to be prepared and submitted by this Council to demonstrate how the money would be spent in the district against the three national investment priorities as then set out:
 - a. Communities and Places
 - b. Supporting Local Businesses
 - c. People and Skills
3. Further details of the awarding of the original funding in 2022 was set out in a report to the Council's [Cabinet in July 2022](#). This included an explanation of the breakdown of the funding for each financial year, community engagement activities and the basis for preparing the Local Investment Plan.
4. Whilst the UKSPF was originally a three-year programme, the funding was heavily weighted to year 3 (2024-25) where c.£730k of the £1 million awarded was to be spent (c.£90k in 2022-23, c.£180k in 2023-24).
5. Officers have been overseeing and managing this expenditure during this period and expect the existing funds to be fully spent by the end of March 2025. A separate report will be prepared detailing the outcomes of this funding and any lessons learnt.
6. Meanwhile, in December 2024 the Government announced further UKSPF funding to be allocated to each local authority across England. For New Forest District, the total sum is £327,146 with £60,401 for capital expenditure and £266,745 for revenue expenditure. However, there is a degree of flexibility and previous guidance indicate that councils may increase the proportion of capital in response to local identified need. Government has continued to stipulate that a minimum of 10% of the overall allocation must be capital (i.e. £32,715).
7. Unlike the previous funding rounds, there is no requirement for local authorities to submit a local investment plan to secure this funding. Instead, local authorities are expected to update the Government through existing reporting arrangements. Up to 4% (£13,085.44) of

the fund allocated can be used by the Council to help support the administration of the fund.

Government criteria for how 25/26 funding can be spent

8. The priority investment areas of the UKSPF have not changed from the original prospectus with a focus on the following:
 - Communities and Place
 - Supporting Local Businesses
 - People and Skills

9. Figure 1 illustrates how these priority areas link to the five key national policy themes (and 12 sub-themes) set by the Government in December 2024.

Figure 1: relationship of Government missions to UKSPF priorities



10. The role of the lead local authority (New Forest District Council) remains the same as before from a delivery perspective, ensuring that collaboration and value for money is secured in delivering key local projects.

11. Reporting as per the 2025/2026 guidance will be simplified reducing the burden on the lead local authority, thus allowing it to focus on the delivery of positive outputs and outcomes. Further guidance from Government (via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) is expected in due course in this regard.

Identifying 2025/26 projects for New Forest District

12. In identifying a shortlist of projects for potential funding in 25/26, officers are mindful that the number and types of programmes funded in the existing 2022-25 programme has resulted in a significant administrative burden for officers over and above the 4% administrative charge that could be drawn. As such, it is suggested that this years' funding is focussed on fewer projects, with opportunities taken to minimise administrative resource where possible.
13. To collate a list of projects for consideration this year, two principal sources were used:
 - a. Existing UKSPF projects that provided positive outputs and outcomes and could readily be continued into 25-26;
 - b. Projects previously discounted from the 22-25 UKSPF programme and additional projects identified by officers taking account of established and emerging priorities for the District, including the Corporate Plan the priorities set out for a future Freeport Delivery Plan as agreed by [Cabinet in April 2024](#) and the work currently underway to develop a New Forest Skills Action Plan;
14. Appendix 1 provides a table of the projects considered, including their estimated cost, expected outcomes, alignment with UKSPF and Corporate priorities, consideration of project readiness and whether the project could be considered eligible for future CIL funding.
15. The proposed projects for funding from the 2025-26 UKSPF are set out in Table 1 below. A total of 9 projects are proposed, totalling an indicative cost of approximately £313k which, combined with the allowable administrative costs of £13k represents the total fund available for 2025-26.

Table 1 – Proposed projects

	Project	Cost (indicative)
1	Start up support programme	£25k
2	New Forest Apprenticeship Hub	£30k
3	Digital Skills Initiative for Business & Community	£35k
4	NEET Support Programme	£40k
5	Business growth accelerator programme	£50k
6	New Forest HEAT project	£20k
7	Replacement public litter bins	£53k

	Project	Cost (indicative)
8	Replacement noticeboards (Go New Forest)	£30k
9	Repairs to Hythe Promenade	£30k
	Total cost	£313k

16. Further details of these potential projects, along with those not recommended to be progressed for funding at this time, are set out in Appendix 2.
17. The projects listed in Table 1 include six projects with a particular focus on skills and business support, recognising the increasing imperative at a national and local level to upskill the workforce (and those currently not working). Three of these projects are proposed to be a continuation of existing projects delivered through the 2022-25 UKSPF, whilst a further three are new projects focussed on supporting those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), improving digital skills and supporting the growth of maturing businesses.
18. The indicative cost for these projects is expected to be in the region of £200k and all projects would be considered 'revenue spend'. As such, the opportunities to fund these through alternative measures (such as the Community Infrastructure Levy) is very limited.
19. The remaining three projects proposed are capital funded projects, aligning with the communities and place priorities of the UKSPF. They all directly relate to replacing/repairing existing community infrastructure. The litter bins replacement project would see approximately 75 replacement litter bins for those that have reached the end of their designed life and no longer reflect current waste standards, aligned to the new waste collection service.
20. The project to replace a series of dilapidated noticeboards of varying ages and designs across the New Forest to be replaced, providing better wayfinding and direct visitors to New Forest businesses. Income generated from advertising receipts for these boards would be used to support Go New Forest (as a Community Interest Company) in other tourism related activities, as well as supporting the ongoing maintenance of the boards.
21. The project to repair Hythe Promenade is in recognition of the need for significant maintenance to be undertaken on this important local facility over and above typical annual expenditure. Investment through this project will enable local people to access the waterfront next to the village centre with key views across Southampton Water.

Corporate Plan priorities

22. Appendix one sets out the links between the project's outputs, the Government missions and the UKSPF and Corporate Plan priorities. The UKSPF provides opportunities to fund projects across the Place, People and Prosperity priorities of the Corporate Plan.

Options appraisal

23. As set out in the appendices, there were a number of potential projects considered for allocating funding to from the UKSPF. Clearly, not every project could be funded for 25-26 and therefore officers have prioritised those listed in Table 1 which retain a predominantly revenue focus to expenditure.
24. Those projects that have not been proposed to be funded for next year have not been discounted because they don't have merit. Rather, that that when considered against the guidelines for expenditure of the UKSPF, local priorities and considering the prospect of alternative opportunities (including potentially Community Infrastructure Levy), the projects listed in Table 1 are considered to justify their inclusion for the coming year.
25. Those projects that are unsuccessful on this occasion will be considered again in the context of any suitable future funding opportunities becoming available.

Consultation undertaken

26. The original setting of the UKSPF funding for 2022-25 included meeting the New Forest Partnership Board, engaging with local MPs and engagement with local community representative groups which helped to inform the proposed projects.
27. The preparation of this report has taken into account this previous engagement, alongside extensive work with local business, infrastructure providers and education and skills providers in relation to the New Forest Skills Action Plan.
28. The Place & Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the basis of this report at its meeting on 13 March 2025. The Panel supported the recommendations set out in this report, noting that whilst there were a number of commendable projects for consideration, the ones identified in Table 1 met a number of key UKSPF and corporate objectives and were clearly able to proceed within the timescales required with the potential for longer term sustainable benefits. Other projects that were not proposed to be funded for this financial year from the UKSPF were encouraged to

continue to consider alternative funding options or would otherwise be looked at again if future rounds of UKSPF funding became available. This included a discussion on the potential funding of a replacement of the Hythe Pier Pontoon, where Members found that whilst there was merits to this project there remained considerable uncertainties about the details of the project.

Financial and resource implications

29. The UKSPF is a government awarded grant fund and therefore there are no direct costs to the Council in allocating funds to individual projects. With just over £13,000 available from the fund to cover the administration of the funds, it is unlikely that this will cover the officer costs of resourcing in full. However, any additional administrative costs are considered capable of being met from existing budgets and within the officer resources as provided for in the Economic Development Team.
30. The Council's procurement and contract management guidelines will be followed to ensure that the full funding allocation is spent within the 25/26 funding period, avoiding any project overspend.

Legal implications

31. Directly related to the content of this paper there are no legal implications to consider. However prior to finalising projects ready for delivery, a number will need to be tested in line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 to ensure rules and regulations related to subsidy control are not breached. Officers will also need to ensure compliance with procurement rules and regulations.

Risk assessment

32. No formal risk assessment is required for this report. The funding of projects will be subject to significant monitoring and reporting throughout 2025/26 which will ensure any risks arising are identified, managed and mitigated at the earliest opportunity.
33. Officers in consultation with potential delivery bodies, will prepare forecasted outputs and outcomes attributed to each project. This will support the ongoing management of the UKSPF 25-26, whilst mitigating any impacts should a project become unviable by ensuring there are a range of worked up schemes ready to replace any that drop out.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

34. Addressing sustainability and developing activity which directly supports the Climate Change and Nature Emergency is a key feature across the potential projects.
35. Reducing the environmental impact of all projects will be considered through the project design and procurement processes. Officers will seek to reduce risk and maximise added-value opportunities wherever possible.

Equalities implications

36. The UKSPF schemes are intended to improve life chances of all residents, increasing accessibility to services, fostering a pride of place and strengthening social cohesion. Within this context particular attention is given to those most vulnerable to remove barriers to participation both economically and socially.

Crime and disorder implications

37. Actions to improve the public realm, and address social exclusion are anticipated to have positive impact on crime and disorder, improving public perceptions around safety and foster pride in neighbourhoods.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

38. None.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

39. There are no direct implications in this regard.

Appendices:

Appendix One – Appraisal of projects
Appendix Two - Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

Background Papers:

July 2022 Cabinet Report: [Decision - UK Shared Prosperity Fund Council Services](#)

Appendix 1 – Appraisal of projects

Project	Cost (indicative)	Direct outcomes for Apr 26	UKSPF Priorities	Corporate Priorities	Capable of being funded through CIL?	Project readings (1 = high; 5 = low)
Revenue projects recommended to take forward for delivery through 2025-26 UKSPF						
Start up support programme	£25k	Continued delivery of focussed support for pre-start and newly established businesses	People and Skills; Supporting Local Business	People Prosperity	No	1
New Forest Apprenticeship Hub	£30k	Continued support for businesses in NF in securing apprenticeships (and similar) and understanding skills needs	People and Skills; Supporting Local Business	People Prosperity	No	1
Digital Skills Initiative for Business & Community	£35k	Delivery of new digital skills training to complement the roll out of high-speed broadband	People and Skills; Supporting Local Businesses; Community and Place	People Prosperity Place	No	2
NEET Support Programme	£40k	New programme to target those young people Not in Education, Employment or	People and Skills; Supporting Local Business	People Prosperity	No	2

Appendix 1 – Appraisal of projects

Project	Cost (indicative)	Direct outcomes for Apr 26	UKSPF Priorities	Corporate Priorities	Capable of being funded through CIL?	Project readings (1 = high; 5 = low)
		Training in New Forest District				
Business growth accelerator programme	£50k	New programme to support businesses into maturity (i.e. beyond 2 years)	Supporting Local Business	Prosperity	No	2
New Forest HEAT project	£20k	Continue support for energy efficiency and home energy resilience programme	Community and Place; People and Skills	People Place Prosperity	No	1
Capital projects recommended to take forward for delivery						
Public litter bins aligned to new waste collection services	£53k	Replacement of existing bins at end of life and below standard	Community and Place	Place	No (replacement)	1
Noticeboards (Go New Forest)	£30k	Improved wayfinding to local businesses & destinations	Community and Place	Prosperity	No (replacement)	2
Hythe Promenade	£30k	Repaired promenade	Community and Place	Place	No (repair)	2

Appendix 1 – Appraisal of projects

Project	Cost (indicative)	Direct outcomes for Apr 26	UKSPF Priorities	Corporate Priorities	Capable of being funded through CIL?	Project readings (1 = high; 5 = low)
Projects not recommended to take forward for delivery through 2025-26 UKSPF						
Hythe Pier Pontoon	£62.5k-£250k	Reinstated (and enhanced?) Hythe Ferry service	Community and Place	People Prosperity	Only if additionality secured i.e. to enable new services	2-3
Defibrillators	£20k	Emergency resuscitation facility in accessible locations	People and Skills	People	Yes	3
Calshot bus connectivity	£25k - £150k	Increased frequency of bus service connecting Calshot to wider network (1 extra service at c.11:30 = £25k)	Community and Place	People Prosperity	No	3
Access improvements at Hordle Cliffs	£30-£50k	Improved pedestrian access to beach from Hordle Cliffs	Community and Place	Place	Yes	4
Provision of additional CCTV cameras	Not currently available	Expansion of CCTV network in district	Community and Place	People and Place	Yes (for capital cost)	4

Appendix 1 – Appraisal of projects

Project	Cost (indicative)	Direct outcomes for Apr 26	UKSPF Priorities	Corporate Priorities	Capable of being funded through CIL?	Project readiness (1 = high; 5 = low)
Refurbishment of Public Conveniences	Not currently available	Refurbished public conveniences in district	Community and Place	People Place	No (refurb)	5
Solar canopies for public car parks	Not currently available	New solar canopy over a car park	Community and Place	Place	Yes	5

Revenue funded

Project 1 - New Forest start up support programme

1. The existing New Forest start up support programme, funded through the 2022-25 UKSPF, provided a face-to-face one-to-one mentoring service for pre-start businesses. At the time of launch this programme met an identified gap in business support and skills provision and since its inception has delivered support to 42 new/prestart businesses and 23 businesses that have been trading between 1 and 3 years.
2. Feedback from those that attended, and officers, has been very positive. In potentially funding such a programme for 2025-26, officers propose to consider a range of delivery partners to ensure continued best value.

Project 2 - New Forest apprenticeship hub

3. The apprenticeship hub programme funded by the 2022-25 UKSPF provides businesses in the New Forest with advice and guidance related to skills programmes. This included apprenticeships, T-Levels and work experience, support to undertake skills needs analysis for the business and guidance on how to secure an apprenticeship transfer levy.
4. The programme has performed well and delivered substantial outputs against its key performance indicators (KPIs) such as 46 businesses engaged in skills programmes and £191,000 apprenticeship levy transferred to businesses in the New Forest.
5. Officers recommend that this project is funded for 2025-26, recognising the significant benefits that have been secured to date.

Project 3 - Digital skills initiative for businesses and communities

6. A newly proposed programme providing revenue funding to deliver digital skills to businesses and residents in the New Forest. This is proposed to complement the £14m capital investment via Project Gigabit delivering highspeed fibre broadband infrastructure to circa ten thousand homes across the district.
7. Ensuring that businesses and residents have the right digital skills is essential to maximise the benefits associated with a highspeed broadband service. Benefits for businesses include efficiency improvements and access to wider markets. For residents especially in rural areas there are health and wellbeing benefits through

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

reduced isolation and economic benefits through increasing the digital skills for existing and potential employers, as well as greater value for money through access to a wider shopping experience.

8. Finally, environmental benefits can be realised through the opportunity for residents to work from home, thereby reducing congestion on the road network and, by proxy, CO2 emissions.
9. Currently under consideration is the potential to leverage further revenue funding from additional sources to create a multi-year programme. This will enable skills provision to track the infrastructure rollout, encouraging take up and ensuring the full benefit of fibre broadband is realised for the district. It is however recognised that UKSPF funding must be spent in the 2025/26 financial year. Therefore, if additional revenue is leveraged, SPF funding will be front loaded allowing alternative funding to be spent in later years.

Project 4 - NEET support programme

10. The NEET support programmes objective would be to reduce the percentage of young people (currently circa 4% of 16 – 17 year olds) in New Forest District who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).
11. Officers will consult with education specialists with an interest in the New Forest to ensure a balance for the programme between output/outcome coverage and impact.
12. A partnership approach is proposed to be adopted for this programme with a focus on collaboration with education establishments, community groups, voluntary organisations and private sector delivery partners.
13. The programme will move away from traditional skills support such as C.V. writing and interview techniques, instead delivering a well-rounded support package that meets the complex needs of the NEET target group.
14. If approved, officers will develop a framework for the programme ready for consultation with stakeholders once support is obtained through the NFDC governance process.

Project 5 - Business growth accelerator programme

15. The New Forest is a place of entrepreneurs with a business birth rate of 11% (the proportion of new businesses established in the area

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

compared to total number of active businesses) in 2023. However, unfortunately whilst many businesses start up there is a trend that sees a considerable number not make it through their first two years.

16. The business growth accelerator programme is proposed to act as a pilot project to address this issue, by providing extended tailored support to enhance the growth of businesses in the first two years of trading.
17. Whilst still under development, examples of the support that could be provided includes: -
 - Mentorship and coaching
 - Networking opportunities
 - Funding and investment identification and securing
 - Educational workshops and training
 - Product development and innovation
18. It is important to note that this programme moves beyond the support proposed to be available for the New Forest start up support programme, by providing specialist wrap around and extended growth advice targeted at businesses that have the desire and potential to grow exponentially.
19. As per the other programmes, officers will carry out due diligence to test current available provision. This will ensure the avoidance of duplication, guaranteeing effective use of public funding.

Project 6 - New Forest HEAT Project

20. The New Forest HEAT Project was previously funded through the 2022-25 UKSPF with the aim of supporting area-wide energy efficiency and home energy resilience, in addition to delivering green skills and creating opportunities for access to employment. The project has successfully delivered a wide range of outcomes, far exceeding its targets.
21. To date, three paid part-time roles have been created – Project Coordinator, Technical Coordinator and Project Mentor, with 56 volunteer energy advisors successfully trained (against a target of 15). Of these volunteers, 21 have subsequently participated in City and Guilds Level certified and equivalent courses in low carbon skills (against a target of 4).
22. The 22-25 HEAT project initially intended to provide 400 New Forest households with energy advice, albeit 677 contacts have been achieved (via home visits, info packs and event engagement). 17

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

community facilities have also been supported through thermal imaging surveys, energy savings advice and grant applications (against a target of 5).

23. The HEAT project has received a high level of community support and, if continued, could have greater reach across the New Forest District. Improving energy efficiency will support households with the cost of living, have positive impacts on health and wellbeing and enable greater energy resilience through reduced local demand.

Capital funded

Project 7 - Public litter bins

24. Waste management is a significant expenditure for NFDC, therefore, the purchasing and installation of up to 75 public litter bins to replace existing bins reaching the end of their life and not reflecting current standards has the potential to assist in reducing that cost. Investment via UKSPF will support the wider delivery of the NFDC waste management strategy, whilst also supporting key corporate priorities associated with prosperity and place.
25. New Forest residents and visitors have an expectation of a clean New Forest. By utilising UKSPF funding to support meeting this expectation there are direct economic, environmental and wellbeing impacts that can be achieved.
26. A litter free New Forest will attract recurring visitors and their associated spend, supporting the tourism sector and the wider economy. It will also protect the natural capital which is one of the key drivers for the visitor economy. Finally, a clean and green New Forest will attract residents and visitors to enjoy outdoor physical activity supporting health and wellbeing.

Project 8 - Noticeboards

27. Over the course of many years, the District Council has erected a number of noticeboards across the district which in recent years have been used to support tourism activity by enabling local businesses to advertise on the noticeboards. Upon the formation of Go New Forest as a Community Interest Company (previously the tourism service within NFDC) in 2017, the responsibility for managing these noticeboards was passed to this company as well as the income generated through selling the advertisement space. That income has been used to help support the wider tourism activities of Go New Forest since 2017.

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

28. Unfortunately, when Go New Forest was formed and responsibility for managing the noticeboard was transferred from the District Council, the ongoing maintenance of the noticeboards was not addressed. Subsequently the condition of the noticeboards has worsened, with many in a poor state of repair and a variety of historic NFDC branding (some dating back to at least the 1990s) on display.
29. The condition of these noticeboards is now hampering the ability of Go New Forest to sell advertising space with consequential impact on the reliability of this income stream to support their wider work as a Community Interest Company. The noticeboards themselves are also increasingly detracting from the quality of the environment which they are located within and present a somewhat confusing message of the District Council's brand.
30. Funding the replacement of the 11 current noticeboards managed by Go New Forest, and potentially looking to fund up to a further 4 noticeboards to address potential gaps in coverage (e.g. Calshot and Totton) provides an opportunity to provide a more contemporary and resilient group of noticeboards for Go New Forest to attract advertising revenue in support of their visitor marketing activities. It would also provide an opportunity for the District Council (or an alternative authority) to provide fresh and consistent branding across these locations.
31. If there was support for the principle of funding such an initiative, officers are keen to ensure that the maintenance of the noticeboards as an asset are resolved through an agreement with Go New Forest to take responsibility and fund through the income they receive through advertising the space.

Project 9 - Hythe Promenade

32. Hythe Promenade provides residents and tourists with the ability to navigate the seafront area at Hythe. Its attraction for visitors includes a prominent position to take in the local natural capital and is recognised as prime spot for watching activity on Southampton Water. The promenade adds to the wider visitor offer for Hythe and complements other attractions such as the pier and the ferry.
33. Unfortunately, the promenade has suffered from under investment, resulting in the planks that make up the walkway needing replacement. There is little doubt that this will impact residents and tourists utilising the promenade impacting on the wider prosperity of the area.

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

34. It is proposed that maintenance funded via the UKSPF will return the promenade to its original condition. This in turn will support NFDC corporate objectives associated with place and prosperity.

Hythe Pier Pontoon

35. The ferry route between Hythe and the City of Southampton has its origins dating back to at least the late eighteenth century. Twenty years ago, the ferry carried over 430,000 passengers each year, albeit by the start of the Covid-19 pandemic its patronage had fallen to just under 200,000 passengers a year.
36. In 2023, the ferry company operating the service was purchased by Red Funnel and in late 2024, ownership of the pier (enabling access to the deep water needed for the ferry service), was transferred to a new company (Hythe Pier Company Ltd). Earlier in 2024, the pontoon at the end of the pier necessary for the ferry to be used was found to need of immediate replacement. The current estimated cost of replacement is £250k and until/unless this is funded the ferry remains out of action. It is understood that the pontoon remains in the ownership of Red Funnel.
37. A number of public bodies, including Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council have been approached to ask for funding for this replacement but have declined. More recently this Council has also been approached for potential funding by Red Funnel, and local district councillors, with enquiries also being received from the Department of Work and Pensions as to when the ferry service will reopen. There is a history of public money being used to support the ferry service in recent years.
38. Clearly there are a number of potential benefits to enabling the ferry to reopen which don't need to be rehearsed in detail here but include:
 - **boosting the local economy** through encouraging tourists and visitors into Hythe and as a gateway to the wider New Forest;
 - **improving connectivity across Southampton Water** including access to jobs, education/skills training and leisure as an alternative to car based travel and longer public transport routes;
 - **environmental benefits** - The ferry offers a more eco-friendly alternative to road transport, potentially reducing congestion and carbon emissions.
 - **community support** - The ferry is an important part of local heritage and culture

39. Conversely, there are a number of potential issues arising with considering directing funding for this project including:

- **Cost Burden** - There has already been significant public subsidy given to the Hythe Ferry over recent years and there is no guarantee that the ferry will continue to operate on a sustainable financial footing in the future. In this regard, the complexity of the ownership of the different components of the service creates further uncertainty;
- **Lack of wider funding commitment** – linked to the above, officers have not been made aware of any other funding commitments made by either the current operator/owner or indeed the two councils with statutory responsibility for transport on this route (Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council)
- **Impact on Waterside bus service** – the reinstatement of the ferry service would potentially displace some demand away from the bus service, albeit there is no evidence available of any significant adverse impact on the viability of the bus service;
- **Lack of detail about proposal** – at this stage, there is no substantive information or detail available to inform a positive decision about funding. For instance, what options have been looked at? Is there any potential to secure an improvement to the service/infrastructure, rather than a like-for-like replacement? What other funding opportunities are being explored? Are there any other foreseen costs arising? What is the long term business case?

40. At this time this project is not proposed for funding for the 2025-26 UKSPF. However, if infrastructure improvements can be secured through a new pontoon over and above the previous operation model, the project may be eligible for bidding for funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Reconnection of bus services to Calshot

41. Some ballpark figures from Bluestar: reinstate the hourly frequency to Calshot on Bluestar 9 would be around £180k p.a. Bear in mind that there are no fewer people using the reduced level of service now than when the service ran hourly, so for me there's a question mark over value for public money here. One additional journey from Calshot to Southampton at say 11.35 which would fill the current gap in service would cost circa £25k p.a.

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

42. Following changes to the bus timetable in 2024, the regular Bluestar bus service connecting Calshot village and beach to the rest of the Waterside and Southampton was replaced by a less frequent service which has left significant times of the day when Calshot is not able to be accessed by public transport. This reduction of connectivity to a part of the District which has significant challenges in terms of deprivation is disappointing, particularly so given its wider function as a coastal destination.
43. Investment back into this service could range from the reintroduction of an hourly service at an estimated annual cost of £180k to a single additional service to fill a significant gap in late mornings at £25k per annum. This could have the potential to improve access for residents that otherwise do not have access to private vehicles. Wider outcomes associated with this approach include supporting access to employment and skills.
44. Tourism could also benefit from the proposed investment by improving connections of Calshot's foreshore to the main bus route attracting more visitors to local attractions boosting tourism and local businesses.
45. However, historical data has shown limited patronage to the service (12 passengers) that calls into question the financial sustainability of the service once UK SPF funding has been used. This has wider implications in terms of continued subsidy to maintain the service, should take up remain low, especially in the current economic climate.
46. Finally, due to the small population at Calshot and the potential of limited demand the wider outputs and outcomes that could be attributed to this project are likely to be significantly less than other interventions. This in turn would limit the impact when compared with other investments. For these reasons officers have not recommended this project for UKSPF funding for 2025-26.

Defibrillators

47. Installation of defibrillators across the New Forest could have multiple benefits for residents and visitors to the area. Public safety is enhanced, whilst reducing pressure on elements of the wider health care system. Defibrillators also provide confidence for residents and visitors in the area that should a serious cardiac incident occur, the relevant health infrastructure is in place allowing people to act quickly.

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

48. Defibrillators can also promote health awareness when deployed as part of a wider health and wellbeing campaign. The reason for officers not recommending this project for funding this time is two-fold. Firstly, that it is unclear as to the extent to which defibrillators are already in place across the District. Secondly, such a project could equally well be considered for funding through alternative sources of funding including the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Hordle Cliff access

49. Hordle Cliff is a popular tourist destination that provides valued sea views and is serviced by range of facilities including beach huts.
50. Recent storms have destroyed access to certain areas of the beach with steps allowing visitors to ascend and descend the cliff at key locations unusable.
51. There is a potential opportunity to reintroduce access points maintaining the popularity of the area and supporting the local economy. Health and wellbeing benefits can also be attributable to this potential project by allowing residents and visitors to enjoy physical outdoor activities through the navigation of the popular location.
52. However, at this stage there are no detailed proposals as to where such improved access could be secured with no surveys having been undertaken or design work carried out. Given that any UKSPF project would need to be completed by April 2026, it is highly unlikely that this project could meet this timeline

Provision of additional CCTV cameras

53. Deployment of CCTV provides a range of benefits including deterring illegal fly tipping and acting as a deterrent against anti-social behaviour, allowing residents and visitors to feel safe when navigating areas of the New Forest. There is a direct link between these outcomes and the corporate priorities of place and prosperity, however, it should be noted that the CCTV network has recently been extended and there is no evidence to suggest further extension is required at this point in time.
54. Additionally, as with the Hordle Cliff and Public Toilet projects there are no detailed plans in place. This raises concerns in terms of the deliverability of this project, especially when considering the short delivery timeframe of April 2026.

Refurbishment of public toilets

55. The refurbishment of public toilets across the New Forest District meets corporate priorities associated with place and prosperity. From a place perspective the improvement of aesthetics enhances their appearance creating a more welcoming environment. This is particularly important when considering the economic benefit the New Forest receives from the millions of visitor per year, and the positive impact this has on the local economy which supports prosperity for businesses, communities and residents.
56. However, at this stage there are no detailed proposals linked with this project and the short timeframe by which to defray UKSPF funding would suggest it is highly unlikely that this project could be delivered by April 2026.

Solar Canopies for public car parks

57. NFDC own and manage a number of public car parks across the district, many of which could be suitable sites for the installation of solar PV canopies. Such canopies would provide a range of added value benefits whilst preserving car parking facilities.
58. Benefits would include:
- Renewable energy generation – this could be: used to power onsite electrical equipment; direct wired into adjacent buildings; fed into the grid network for income generation; sold to local customers through a PPA (power purchase agreement); stored in batteries to boost capacity during periods of high local demand.
 - Cost reduction – reducing the current running of costs of car park facilities e.g. EV chargers, lighting, ticket machines, security/comms devices. It could also provide power to adjacent NFDC operated buildings to reduce utility costs.
 - Weather protection – canopies would provide shade from the sun and shelter from rain. This would be of benefit to car park users, but also provide protection to the carpark surfacing and infrastructure. Climate change projections indicate that weather conditions will become more extreme in the future.
 - Maximisation of space – development space within the district is tightly constrained, with many initiatives and priorities competing for space, particularly within towns and villages. The installation of solar canopies over car parks would provide additional benefits without requiring additional land.
 - Climate action – NFDC has declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency and is committed to taking action to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to extreme weather. This was reemphasised in the Corporate Plan 2024-28. Investment in

Appendix 2 – Further details of potential UK SPF projects for 2025/26

solar canopies would demonstrate delivery and corporate leadership in addressing the climate agenda.

59. Suitable sites are yet to be identified, and it is acknowledged that the physical impact of installing canopies would need to be carefully considered, along with an assessment of grid capacity and connections prior to confirming the suitability of sites to accommodate. At this stage there are no detailed proposals for this project. Once proposals have been developed, this project may be a suitable candidate for CIL funding, and therefore not a priority project for UKSPF funding.