

Title of Report:	Department for Communities and Department for Agriculture Town Centre Recovery Funding
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development
Date of Meeting:	20 October 2020
For Decision or For Information	Decision and Member feedback

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity
Outcome	Promoting the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit
Lead Officer	Head of Service, Prosperity and Place – in conjunction with Town and Village Management Team, Regeneration Team and potentially Funding Unit Team.

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Cost to Council – staffing time
Included in Current Year Estimates	Not applicable – external funding
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	Existing staff time

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the development of the second tranche of a Covid Recovery Programme, for town centres and rural businesses.

2.0 Background – as per the August Report

2.1 On 19 June, Council was informed of the Department for Community's intention to provide funding for town centre recovery actions. The proposal was to fund the Scheme in two tranches - Tranche 1 for immediate and urgent support and ***Tranche 2 for aspects of town actions that are more medium term or require a longer time to design and/or procure.*** Some guidance that was given included:

- Councils will be expected to absorb delivery costs.
- Monitoring and evaluation will be the responsibility of the Council – outcome report card has been developed by the department and surveys will be provided.
- Expenditure must be incurred by March 2021 with final post project evaluation completed by March 2021.
- Funding is provided for capital spend only.

3.0 Tranche 2 – spend aimed at mid term recovery

3.1 Tranche 2 is based around longer term initiatives to assist town centre recovery. Initially funding was solely from Department for Communities. Staff returned an expression of interest based on the request from Department for Communities, with indicative actions.

3.2 Subsequently, a further amount from Department for Infrastructure was committed. Council was also informed that the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was also being considered.

3.3 This brings the total package available to Tranche 2 to:

- Department for Communities – committed – approximately £344,000.
- Department for Infrastructure – committed – approximately £395,000.
- Department for Agriculture – at time of writing, as yet unconfirmed – potentially around £109,000.

3.4 Submission was required by 15 September, which given the Unit's ongoing work with several funding streams, meant that a speedy return had to be made. It was completed as requested with the caveat that the project submission had yet to be approved by Council. Where possible, Council officers have fed back to relevant stakeholders, or have sought submissions from interested parties, such as Chambers, Town Teams etc.

3.5 A list of 'best guess' projects, with outline costs is provided at Annex 2. Members will notice that the submission is in excess of any amount likely to be granted. This is to allow for changes, and project 'drop out'. The timetable for approval given at Annex 1 also shows that Council will be receiving feedback from the Departments on their submissions, so this also provides

Council with a “pause point” to make changes. (Received at time of writing, and included).

3.6 The following points are noted:

- Project spend must be capital. Therefore proposed marketing campaigns or other revenue-type items are not eligible at this point.
- At time of writing, there is no final confirmation of any DAERA funding.
- Funding has to be aimed at helping town centre recovery or making the case for it.
- A list of Department for Infrastructure project areas is appended at Annex 3 – many of these are expensive as standalone items; it would be doubtful that Council could complete them within the timeframe available, and many of them lie within the remit of external departments.
- It is hoped that the timeline of spend by end-March will be extended, but not yet confirmed

3.7 Given the fast turnaround required for the second tranche submission, Members do have the opportunity to contribute, submit or remove any of the project ideas. The Department has been advised that members will have the opportunity to review. Further progress will be advised as it happens, through the Leisure and Development Committee.

3.8. As of 1 October, Council has received further feedback and guidance on the nature of projects to be submitted. This is included at Annex 4.

4.0 Summary

- Progress papers will be brought to Committee as Tranche 2 proceeds.
- Members are encouraged – while bearing in mind the constraints outlined in this paper – to feed back medium term scheme ideas at any stage before the meeting to the Head of Service or Director, with copy to the Chair of the Committee. Staff will be happy to facilitate any group discussion that members may wish to have before acceptance of any letter of offer.
- A revised Expression of Interest is requested by the Department, by 9 October 2020.

Recommendation:

Within the constraints that this EOI was completed and submitted, it is recommended that members agree in principle to accept the concept and amount of a funding package when it becomes available from the departments. It is also recommended that the project list remains open subject to final suggestions, funding availability, and potential to deliver within the existing timeframe.

Annex1: Timeline

Date	Action
15 Sept 20	Council to submit 'Draft' Revitalisation Plan
18 Sept 20	Area liaison to provide commentary on draft Plan and send to the Strategic Review Group
25 Sep 20	Strategic Review Group meet to discuss and review draft plans
29 Sep 20	Strategic Review Group provide comments to local councils
09 Oct 20	Council submits 'Final' Revitalisation Plan to the Department
12 Oct 20	Letters of Offer for Tranche 2 issued to Council

<p>MOBILITY; TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES; DIGITAL</p> <p>Access & Navigation to town centres ; physical and digital projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle parks or routes to town centres. Include cycle infrastructure <p>Potential Locations: Depending on site availability, Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Portrush and Portstewart – potential sites have been identified, subject to planning and public realm availability</p>	<p>£35,000</p> <p>Cycle parks & shelters and potential route management Cycle Maintenance Posts</p>
<p>MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Expansion of outdoor market infrastructure to ensure continuity throughout the year</p> <p>Generator – Naturally North Coast</p> <p>Causeway Speciality Market, Naturally North Coast</p> <p>Potential Locations: Coleraine (Causeway Market), Limavady, Ballymoney, Ballycastle (Naturally North Coast)</p>	<p>£14,000</p> <p>£8,000</p>
<p>TOWN CENTRES</p> <p>Data Collection: Expansion of the digital footfall monitoring infrastructure across the borough. To include Portrush & Portstewart and additional counters in the 4 main towns</p>	<p>£25,000</p>
<p>MOBILITY</p> <p>Christie Park – upgrades to entrances to the park which will enhance cycling and walking linkages between the town centre and the west Bann part of Coleraine</p> <p>Location: Coleraine</p> <p>Blackrock Coastal Path – NCN Route 93 – addressing health and safety concerns, segregating cars from cyclists and walkers</p> <p>Location: Portrush</p> <p>Tow Path – widening to facilitate social distancing and encourage more walking into town – there is existing lighting and a tarmac surface</p> <p>Location: Ballycastle</p> <p>Blackburn Path – improvements to town entrance of park, including planting, clean up, improved lighting, provision of benches</p> <p>Location: Limavady</p>	<p>£130,000</p> <p>£30,000</p> <p>£60,000</p> <p>£30,000</p>
<p>TOWN CENTRE, WELL-BEING</p> <p>Art is a key element in the health and well-being of our citizens and in turn our town centres. Successful towns and cities across the globe are using art and culture to be a footfall driver and potential economic driver to assist in transformation of our towns post the Covid19 restrictions.</p> <p>Proposal is to create a moveable light box art installation that could be used across the parks within the 6 urban towns.</p>	<p>£60,000</p>

<p>The project would involve the manufacture of solar powered light boxes. These would then be wrapped in local art and/or literature and placed in our local parks. The installation can be viewed both during the day and at night would light up creating a new safer atmosphere for the park usage in the evening time.</p> <p>Locations: Town Centre Parks – Coleraine, Limavady; Seafront - Ballycastle</p>	
<p>TOWN AND VILLAGES, ANIMATION, WELL BEING</p> <p>Play Parks and Areas Town centres can no longer rely on retail as the main sustainability driver for successful towns. Taking on board the place management ethos that people can live work and play in this project will focus on the Play element which does not need to be restricted to children but can be engaged by all age groups. Examples can be seen globally by making small interactions to encourage longer dwell time in our open spaces. Purchase involves large scale game equipment and sanitising equipment</p> <p>Potential Locations: Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Portrush and Portstewart</p>	<p>£6,000</p>
<p>RURAL</p> <p>Dereliction Funding – grant programme for Rural Villages – it is proposed that a grant programme with a small number of awards is constituted which will be allow applications from rural community groups. Groups can identify opportunities for clearance of derelict sites or clean ups in and around their main retail areas. (DAERA funding)</p> <p>Alternatively Taking those rural settlements with a retail core of three or more shops, implement a small ReVitalise Scheme, on a first come first served basis. As per the Portrush model, 100% grant aid funding up to a maximum of £4,999.</p> <p>Potential Locations – depending on the application interest and process, it is anticipated that this will be open to those small settlements outside of the six main town centres, but which have three or more shops.</p>	<p>£100,000 – 5 grants of £20k, or 10 grants of £10k etc.</p> <p>£2,000 – Grant administration charge</p> <p>£7,000 – assistance to businesses in developing plans through Alchemy or other programme</p>
<p>TOWN CENTRES, URBAN AND RURAL, WELL BEING, ENHANCING SPACES</p> <p>Street Art and Billboard Project – using key display or wall space, as well as temporary billboards on acceptable lands (private or public), the project will engage a professional moderator to gather artists and themes to reflect the talent and culture of our area – aiming for six locations around the Borough</p> <p>Living Wall installations – around £500 per square metre</p> <p>Potential Locations: Depending on site availability, Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Portrush, Portstewart</p>	<p>£80,000 – curation, materials, artists payments and installations where relevant</p>
<p>Design and fees costs attached to projects at 10%</p> <p>Current Total (Available funding)</p>	<p>£43,000</p> <p>£1,062,000 (c£848,000)</p>

Annex 3 – Department for Infrastructure Suggested Projects

- Projects which support active travel, promote connectivity and access to services, and/or create and enhance green/blue spaces e.g.
- Cycle tracks or lanes - including pop-up cycle lanes and creating space on pathways for cyclists.
- Pavement or footway widening to allow for physical distancing.
- Cycle parking and charging facilities.
- Connection pathways to access town and local centres – adapting existing routes and/or creating desirable new ingress and egress routes.
- Tree planting incidental to creating/improving walking or cycling paths.
- SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) schemes including in the form of parklets, rain gardens, living roofs, or living vertical gardens. These could form part of public realm schemes.

Annex 4 – Feedback provided by the Departments

- Councils should consider design codes in specific areas for awnings, furniture and other purchases to ensure they are complementary in locations where there are numerous purchases. Councils encouraged to consider opportunities to engage the arts sector to help ‘tailor’ these items for each specific place? Risk of multiple types/designs having negative impact on aesthetics. Need to avoid potential negative impact in conservation areas and those with a heritage value.
- Use of heaters – councils should consider environmental impacts when acquiring.
- DAERA Funding – councils should review Village Plans within their areas to consider if DAERA allocation can be used to deliver any of the needs identified within them.
- Are there opportunities for cycling facilities to be provided in rural locations to support and encourage cycle tourism. i.e. cycle maintenance stations.
- Councils should consider opportunities for creating HUBs in smaller towns and villages to provide access to desk space, printers, photocopiers, etc. to those who are working from home.
- Environmental improvement schemes should directly support COVID recovery. i.e. to create a shared, useable space. Not just a general tidy up.
- Consider school and work linkages and how they can be improved for walking and cycling.
- Plans need to set out clear arrangements for delivery and procurement. (Note that further advice is being sought from CPD on procurement requirements for Tranche 2.
- Plans should be strategic – avoiding a scatter gun approach and considering longer term strategic outcomes.
- Plans need to demonstrate real value as a response to COVID.
- Some plans include proposals for lighting. This is acceptable as long as it enhances places, providing longer term benefits. Should not be one off usage. (refers to Christmas lighting)
- Councils are encouraged to continue to work with the Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture and the Built Environment as they finalise and deliver their plans.
- Consider using Parklets to remove parking spaces, where possible.
- Revised plans should set out how councils propose to use revenue allocations.
- Consider use of mobile Planters to temporarily close off streets.
- Consider Pop-up streets. - Cork a great example of their use.

Specific to CC&G

1. Over-planning ok as long as managed effectively. However, list of projects should be prioritised.
2. There appears to be some crossover between DFC & DFI funding and it is not clear what each is being used for. Plan needs to clearly show how the different funding elements are to be used.
3. DAERA element: Dereliction Funding - Is this really COVID recovery related? What does it hope to achieve? Will it bring these buildings back into use?
4. There appears to be a lot of small type projects in the plan. Is there not a risk that smaller spend will have less of an impact. What's is the aim of using the funding in this way? –Is it part of a long term strategy?

Illustrations

What is a Meanwhile Space?

Meanwhile Space brings vacant assets into use for affordable and easy access **space** for startup enterprises, communities, and better places. ... And local communities in typically neglected areas, who gain from facilities, activities and services that improve community cohesion, skills and access to employment.

www.meanwhitespace.com > about

[About](#) | [London](#) | [Meanwhile Space CIC](#)

'Meanwhile spaces': the empty shops becoming a creative force across the country



What is a Parklet?

A Parklet originally started as a temporary pavement extension which would sit in existing parking bays.

These small green areas would be host to benches and often greenery. Their aim is to provide passers by with a place to rest, whilst enjoying the hustle and bustle of city life.

The first Parklet was introduced in the United States, gracing the streets of San Francisco in 2010. Due to the success that it had with the people of San Francisco, many more were seen popping up all over America.

The pocket park, started as a simple installation of greenery, and a bench and from there they have become a staple in spaces with limited park areas.



Examples of Covered Bike Shelters



Bike Maintenance Stands



Road Closures or Low Traffic Neighbourhoods



Low-traffic neighbourhoods are made up of:

- traffic cells where through-traffic is restricted by barriers like bollards or planters;
- urban boulevards/avenues or people-friendly main roads with safe space to cycle, generous pavements, planting, seating; and
- connected quiet streets that link the traffic cells with safe crossings across the boulevards/main roads. This creates a city-wide network of direct routes for walking and cycling that any age or ability can use.

We know that low-traffic neighbourhoods -- also known as 'mini-hollands' -- deliver genuine benefits to all residents. Children play out more, neighbours catch up, air pollution is lower, road safety improves and walking and cycling are the natural choice for everyday journeys.

Green Walls

Green walls are vertical structures that have different types of plants or other greenery attached to them. The greenery is often planted in a growth medium consisting of soil, stone, or water. Because the walls have living plants in them, they usually feature built-in irrigation systems.

Green walls differ from **facades**, which are often seen climbing up the outside walls of buildings, using them as structural support. In green walls, the growth medium is on the surface or structure of the wall, whereas facades are rooted in the ground. Moreover, the greenery of facades can take a long time to grow enough to cover an entire wall, while green walls may be pre-grown.

