

Community Renewal Fund webinar video transcript

Good afternoon, my name is Lisa Jones and welcome to our webinar that I hope will provide an introduction to the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund, and the application process.

Please keep your mics on mute and refrain from raising hands. We welcome questions via the chat box in Welsh and English. These will be answered as part of a FAQ document which will be made available on our website and circulated to all participants on this webinar.

The link to our webpage has been posted in the chat box along with a reminder of our email address. This email address should be used by all organisations for all forward communication in relation to this fund.

The UK Community Renewal Fund is a competitive process and Bridgend County Borough Council and the UK Government will not enter into direct discussions with potential applicants and answers to all questions received will be shared on our webpage.

On 3rd March 2021, the UK Government announced its Community Renewal Fund, to help local areas prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which will launch in 2022. Whilst the UK Community Renewal Fund will inform the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, you should note that the funds will be different in regard to design, eligibility and duration.

The UK Community Renewal Fund will provide £220 million of additional funding over 2021 to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches, supporting innovative responses to local challenges.

The UK Government has stated it is committed to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom to ensure that no community is left behind.

For us in Bridgend, the fund will also introduce a new way of working with UK Government as they seek to work more directly with local partners and communities across Wales.

All places across the UK are eligible for funding via the UK Community Renewal Fund via a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility. Within Wales, local authorities will act as the lead authority for their area.

Lead authorities are responsible for inviting project proposals from a range of local applicants and have been asked to appraise bids received and produce a prioritised shortlist of projects for each place, up to a maximum value of £3 million per place. This list will then be submitted to UK Government for assessment and approval, by noon on the 18 June 2021. Full details of the lead authority responsibilities, assessment process and all paperwork are published on the UKG website and links are available via our website.

With regards to the maximum value of £3 million per place, I want to stress that this is not an allocation of funding, Lead Authorities are asked to submit a prioritised shortlist of projects, for formal consideration by UK Government, up to that maximum value. All funding decisions are made by UK Government.

Please note that a flat rate of 2% of the value of the UK Community Renewal Fund spent by each project may be used by Lead Authorities for the costs incurred in managing Fund awards. This sum forms part of the total award of up to £3 million per place.

4 investment priorities have been set out for the UK Community Renewal Fund:

- **Investment in skills**

For example, this could cover work-based training, retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce or promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion.

- **Investment for local business**

Examples of investment for local business include helping to create more job opportunities for current or new employees, encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential and supporting decarbonisation measures.

- **Investment in communities and place**

This could involve feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects, exploring opportunities for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development, improving green spaces and preserving important local assets or promoting rural connectivity.

- **Supporting people into employment**

This might consist of helping individuals engage with local services available in this area, identifying and addressing potential barriers to employment, raising job aspirations, assistance to gain basic skills or evaluating successful approaches to help people back to work

I've only provided some examples of possible activity here but want to emphasise that they are not prescriptive, I'd urge you to read the fund's prospectus to determine whether your idea fits. Again the link to the prospectus can be found via our webpage.

Some key points to note in developing your application:

- There is no ringfencing across these themes, they have been set out as equal priorities;
- 90% of the funding available is revenue funding, projects that focus predominantly on the construction or major refurbishment of buildings, the purchase of land or the purchase of large pieces of equipment will not be supported;
- The UK Government anticipates supporting a range of projects by theme and size, but applicants are encouraged to maximise impact and deliverability through larger projects (£500,000+) where this is possible. Smaller projects will still be considered and there is no minimum threshold,
- Costs may only be incurred from the point of approval onwards. Retrospective costs will not be paid,
- Bids for funding may be made by any legally constituted organisation delivering an appropriate service. Bids cannot be submitted for projects that benefit a single entity (for example a single business) – there must be evidence of wider impact for multiple individuals, businesses or other organisations,
- Organisations can submit more than one bid,
- Successful bids will be for this financial year, 2021 to 2022 only. All delivery and expenditure must be completed by 31st March 2022. This means that all expenditure must be incurred by this date,

- You should ensure that your projects are scaled appropriately and that you carefully consider your mobilisation, delivery and closure milestones within that timeframe. As funding decisions will be announced by UK Government from late July 2021 onwards, realistically you will be developing and submitting an application for a project with a maximum timeframe of 6 – 8 months and you will want to clearly demonstrate that your proposed activity can be delivered within that period.

Although the UK Community Renewal Fund is open to all places, the UK Government has identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience. This index measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills and population density. A methodology note has been published explaining how the index of economic resilience was developed. Across the Cardiff Capital Region, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen have been identified as priority places and a full list of priority places, including further information on UK Government's methodology can be found via the links on our webpages.

UK Government has set out that applications from non-priority list places will need to score a minimum of 80% against each of their selection criteria - strategic fit and deliverability, effectiveness and efficiency to be included within their UK shortlist.

As lead authority, Bridgend County Borough Council is now inviting applications from organisations seeking to deliver across the county borough, and the bidding round will close at 7am on Monday 24th May.

We will only be looking to submit good quality projects to UK Government for consideration, we will not simply be looking to submit projects up to the maximum value of £3 million per place.

All bids must be made on the UK Community Renewal Fund Application form, available via the link on our webpage, and must be submitted to us only via the designated email address, BridgendCRF@bridgend.gov.uk, the same email address you used to register for this webinar. Applications submitted in any other format and by any other means will not be accepted.

When developing your application, as well as considering the investment priorities set out by UK Government, **your proposed activity must align with these**, we would suggest you also consider fit against the local priorities set out within the Bridgend Public Services Board Well-being Plan and our Corporate Plan, the links to these are available on our webpage.

You will want to demonstrate how your proposed activity adds value to and aligns rather than duplicates any existing interventions. You may want to set out how your application takes account of and responds to the current challenges the county borough is facing as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

With regards to Match Funding, whilst this is encouraged it is not mandatory.

UK Government has stated however that they encourage applicants to maximise the leverage of other funding as this will enhance alignment and increase value for money.

The UK Community Renewal Fund can be used as match against other government funding streams, where this is permitted by any rules governing the other funding.

A Technical Note for Project Applicants and Deliverers is available online and all applicants will be expected to engage in monitoring and evaluation activities as defined within the technical note.

Further detailed guidance on monitoring, evaluation and assurance will be published by UK Government later in the spring.

Thank you for attending this webinar, I hope you found it a useful starting point.

All questions submitted through the chat function this afternoon will be collated and responses published on a FAQ document published on our website and shared with all attendees.

Further questions can be submitted via our designated email address BridgendCRF@bridgend.gov.uk and responses again published on the FAQ.

Please take care all and good luck with your applications.