# European Update for Cheshire and Warrington Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise Sector 29th October 2021

## Highlights

ESF Extensions

Replacements for ESF (Three Year Spending Review and Budget)

 Community Ownership Fund first round results announced, second round soon

 Community Renewal Fund still waiting

 UK-Shared Prosperity Fund - not fully funded until 2024/25

## ESF

Most projects across the country have been extended where appropriate. This has generally been done without the involvement of the local LEP level ESIF committees (our committee has not met since November 2019, so performance of individual providers is unknown). All live projects in Cheshire and Warrington have been extended. In addition, Torus (with seven partners) has secured funding for Springboard, a new project for recently unemployed adults.

## Another ESF Annual Implementation Report published

The English ESF AIR for 2020 was published on 26th October. This follows the publication of the report for 2019 on 18th August and reports for 2018 and 2017 on 27th May 2021. The reports are a requirement of European Funding, and are a useful resource on what is being delivered.

The online reports are not in pdf, but are in html only, which means they cannot be downloaded or printed easily. There is a brief “Citizens Summary” which is very brief, plus the main report and a large set of data tables.

The ERDF AIR for 2020 was published on 30th September.

*www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-implementation-report-2020*

## Budget and Three Year Spending Review

The Budget and Review were on 27th October, and the information is being analysed to see what it will mean (and how much is new money). The full delivery of UK-Shared Prosperity Fund has been put back by two years, although part will be available from April as originally promised (see below). Money for Boosting Skills has been agreed for Further Education, as we have been falling behind other countries in performance and in spending on FE. Other monies cover apprenticeships etc. There will be a new Multiply project (for basic maths).

*www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-and-spending-review-october-2021-what-you-need-to-know*

*www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-documents*

## Community Renewal Fund.

Originally called Pilot Programme for the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund. This is £220m of short term ESF-style funding to test ideas for the UK-SPF. Due to finish March 2022, but not yet started. Winning bids were expected to be announced from **late July**, but we are not aware that any have yet been announced. It would seem that appraisals have finally been completed, but we are waiting for the Minister to “moderate” the results. It is rumoured that there will be an announcement within the next fortnight.

*www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments*

## Community Ownership Fund

The first round was a rush. Announced 15th July, deadline 13th August. Results were promised for mid October, and were announced on 27th. Revised guidance is due “in the Autumn” for the second round (December), so could be available very soon.

£5.3m was allocated in the first round for 21 projects in the UK (161 bids received, which produced a shortlist of 30). £3.5m was for 12 projects in areas across England (including one for Forest of Dean, and one for the New Forest). Three areas in North West England were agreed (Wigan, Stockport and Hyndburn). More information is published (see link below) to help with future bids.

The total available (over eight rounds) is £150m, so there is plenty more still to bid for.

*[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus)*

*www.gov.uk/guidance/community-ownership-fund-first-round-successful-bidders*

*www.gov.uk/guidance/community-ownership-fund-explanatory-note-on-the-assessment-and-decision-making-process*

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund

This replaces previous European Funding, will eventually come to £1.5bn a year, but the spending review revealed only £0.4bn will be available for 2022/23 and £0.7bn for 2023/24.

£0.56bn will be deducted for Multiply, so the total of £2.6bn for the first three years will reduce to £2bn.

Very little information has been revealed about UK-SPF, and the promised open consultation was scrapped. We are still hoping for proper partnership involvement, so that together we can deliver an effective and efficient fund at local level through local authorities, local third sector organisations and others. North West Third Sector Organisations met in August and September to share information, and discuss how it could work, and a further meeting is planned for the end of November.

It seems likely that the Government will allocate UK-SPF to areas based on its own calculations, and that it will then be up to local partners to work together to develop a strategy and deliver results.

The UK wide Multiply service is new, and information is still being interpreted. It is not clear if it is another top down fund, or whether it will be allocated and delivered locally. It says Multiply will equip hundreds of thousands more adults with functional numeracy skills across the UK, in particular the North East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.

*https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/1028813/Budget\_AB2021\_Print.pdf*

## Levelling Up White Paper

The White Paper has been further delayed, and is now expected November/December.

*www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments*

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