

## Appendix B

### Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Economic Recovery Programme Update

24/08/21

#### Background

BEIS provided local authorities with ARG funding to provide extra support to their businesses beyond what was covered by the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB). Shropshire Council decided to invest the ARG funds into a) businesses that did not qualify for LRSB support and b) a programme of activity that would see wider economic impacts.

Shropshire was awarded £12,096,178 over the three rounds of ARG. This has been spent or committed on the following key investment areas:

		Spent	Committed
DARG	Grant scheme for businesses that did not qualify for LRSB / Restart	£8,263,416	-
Wider Economic Recovery Grants	One off scheme to provide grants of up to £25k to businesses to support specific investment	£1,114,979	-
Wider ARG activity	Larger projects to deliver longer-term economic benefits	£540,742	£2,200,430
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,895,748</b>	<b>£2,200,430</b>

**Shropshire Council achieved its initial spend target of £9,330,00 set by BEIS for the end of July 2021, which has allowed for the draw down of the remaining allocation.**

#### DARG

The discretionary grant scheme, designed for businesses that did not qualify for LRSB but were still impacted by the pandemic, ran for three rounds. It supported over 350 individual businesses, including businesses that did not pay business rates and other sectors that were affected but not mandated to close.

#### Wider Economic Recovery Grants

This scheme provided grants to businesses for specific projects that could demonstrate wider economic benefits. This attracted a great deal of interest with 136 applications received leading towards a total of 54 grants with an average award of £20k.

A broad spread of sectors benefited. The biggest beneficiary was the tourism sector, but other areas also benefited including professional services, environmental businesses and community enterprises. Projects included:

- Installation of wi-fi at Burwarton Show – to support online sales
- Market Drayton Traders CIC – launch of local delivery scheme in TF9 area
- Stiperstones Inn – GPS-guided walks in AONB area & ‘story caches’
- Oswestry Borderland Tourism – launch of ambassador scheme
- Worm Soil – food waste recycling for restaurants, pubs and hotels

- Niche Patisserie – bringing a heritage building back into use to create Shropshire’s own version of Betty’s Tea Rooms here in Oswestry

There was also a good spread of investment geographically, as follows:

Town	No of grants	amount	
Bishops Castle	2	£35,116	3%
Bridgnorth	4	£72,800	7%
Broseley & Buildwas	4	£99,525	9%
Cleobury			
Mortimer	1	£11,500	1%
Craven Arms	1	£22,800	2%
Ellesmere	1	£16,250	1%
Ludlow	6	£114,393	10%
Market Drayton	1	£25,000	2%
Oswestry	11	£211,502	19%
Shifnal	2	£50,000	4%
Shrewsbury	20	£431,093	39%
Whitchurch	1	£25,000	2%

**total                    54        £1,114,979**

### Wider ARG Activity

The remaining funding of £2.7m is being invested in a range of activities that aim to provide a legacy to the funds. There have been some changes to the planned activity following clarification from BEIS on how the funding can be used. The activity is ongoing and needs to be completed by the end of March 2022.

The key components of the package are detailed as followed:

Theme	Spend @ 24/08	Budget
Growth Hub and business support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of 12 hr business support programme</li> <li>- Pre-recorded events &amp; comms to access business support (learning pool) 2/2</li> <li>- Silverpreneurs (Over 50's programme)</li> <li>- Digital Hub - Digital Academy (including Tech Severn partnership)</li> <li>- Social Enterprise Support - Event</li> <li>- Extension to step up programme (TBC)</li> <li>- Enhanced export audit (TBC)</li> <li>- Debt advice (TBC)</li> </ul>	£126,742	£571,000
Work-based training and employability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uplift to Shropshire Ladder</li> <li>- Employability and skills gaps (TBC)</li> </ul>	£20,000	£170,000
Co-Working offices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 year Pilot to run Hub in Shrewsbury with SBTP (operational costs) (TBC)</li> <li>- Shropshire-wide digital infrastructure (TBC)</li> <li>- Ludlow (TBC)</li> <li>- Bishop Castle</li> <li>- Market Drayton (TBC)</li> <li>- Oswestry - Alt model</li> </ul>	£0	£450,000

Sector development and support: - Targeted support on up to 8 business sectors (TBC)	£0	£200,000
Circular economy and social enterprise - VCS - Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership sector support - Community Asset Fund	£159,000	£199,000
Tourism - Research and insight (TBC) - Destination marketing and branding (TBC) - DMO / Visit Shropshire review	£7,500	£160,000
Partnership work with BIDs (direct grants to BIDs) - Shrewsbury - Oswestry	£227,500	£398,000
Other (TBC) - Oswestry Heritage Zone top up + wider - Victoria Quay - Pop up shops and restaurants - large venues and events grant (pending legislation)	£0	£552,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£540,742</b>	<b>£2,148,000</b>

(Activity marked TBC remains to be finalised)

As of the date of this report, £2.16m remains in the budget to spend by 31/03/22. Approximately, £1.5m of this remains to be finalised and officers are currently working with delivery partners to ensure that the final commitments are made by end of September 2021 - well in advance of the final claim date – to reduce the risk of underspend.

Several projects have been removed or revised following information from BEIS that was not available at the start of the development of Shropshire's package. This has meant that officers have had to explore new opportunities and have not been able to finalise the programme as originally intended.