

## SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

### Introduction:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and will provide funding over the next 3 years up until March 2025. All areas of the UK will receive an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition. Its mix of revenue and capital funding can be used to support a wide range of interventions to build pride in place and improve life chances.

The overall UKSPF total for the region is made up of 'core' funding, which will fund most of the Fund's Priorities and the Multiply numeracy programme.

The UKSPF core funding will be invested in the following three priorities:

- Communities and place
- Support for local businesses
- People and skills

Multiply will be delivered as part of the people and skills priority and is a new programme to help transform the lives of adults across the UK, by improving their functional numeracy skills through free personal tutoring, digital training, and flexible courses. Adults who need to improve their numeracy (up to and including Level 2/SCQF Level 5) will be able to access free flexible courses that fit around their lives, whether that be in person or online, at work or in the evening, part time or intensive.

The allocation for each of the local authorities across the region is as follows:

<b>Total</b>	<b>Core UKSPF</b>	<b>Multiply</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>South West Region</b>	<b>£113,985,415</b>	<b>£23,739,072</b>	<b>£137,778,487</b>
Carmarthenshire	£32,002,918	£6,680,221	£38,683,139
Neath Port Talbot	£28,448,295	£5,938,236	£34,386,532
Pembrokeshire	£19,1254,971	£3,992,314	£23,118,286
Swansea	£34,408,230	£7,182,300	£41,590,530

### Designation of Lead Authority

In Wales, UK government supports delivery across the four regional strategic geographies. Local government is being given responsibility for developing a Regional Investment Plan for approval by the UK government, and for delivery of the Fund thereafter. A 'lead local authority' for the region will receive the Region's allocation and have overall accountability for the funding and how the Fund operates. It has been agreed at officer level that Swansea Council will act as the lead Authority on behalf of the South West region. This decision was

agreed and minuted by Swansea Council's Chief Executive Officer and Leader at a Cabinet and Corporate Management Team meeting on 16 June 2022. It is understood that a formal decision of Swansea's Cabinet will be made at their meeting in September 2022.

## **Investment Plan**

In order to access their allocation, lead local authorities are being asked to complete a Regional Investment plan, setting out how they intend to use and deliver the funding at a very high level. The Regional Investment Plan covers the unitary authority areas of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot but there are separate financial allocations for each area.

The template and guidance provided by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) require that the Investment Plan is a high-level strategic document, without specific information regarding the projects that will ultimately be funded.

Each local authority has prepared a local investment plan which has fed into the wider Regional Investment Plan for South West Wales. The Investment Plan for Carmarthenshire has been drafted based on our existing strategies and plans including the Economic Recovery Plan, Local Innovation Strategy, Wellbeing Assessment, and the South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan.

Key features of the Carmarthenshire Plan under the Communities and Place priority include the need to expand and build on the third sector's role in delivering effective and resource efficient services and to further support structural changes within the sector as well as community-based measures to ease access to local services as well as leisure and cultural activities. Harnessing the potential of the circular economy as well as environmental and green developments which will help support the County's transition to a net zero economy are clearly identified along with the need to support town centre recovery. A specific focus on the recovery and growth of rural towns and their surrounding areas has also been highlighted.

Under the Supporting Business priority, the focus is on the expansion of existing firms and the start-up and attraction of new ones. The opportunities afforded through the localism approach ensuring that these businesses are supported to access the right skills at the right time, have access to increased capital investment, have access to better infrastructure and make better use of technology as well as advancing progressive procurement in the county with a focus on community wealth are all highlighted within the plan.

In relation to the skills priority, creating a growing and resilient local labour market is highlighted as a priority, providing individuals with the skills required by local employers. With the County experiencing high levels of economic activity there is a strong focus on supporting people into work through bespoke programmes, offering a menu of training opportunities including access to basic skills, employability support, mentoring and work placements to improve employment outcomes for specific cohorts who face labour market barriers including 50+.

Youth engagement, both pre and post 16 provision is also an area which has been highlighted including working with those at risk of NEET or already NEET children.

The Welsh language is included as a key overarching theme which extends to the protection, promotion and facilitation of the Welsh language in everything that we do, recognising its importance in creating a sense of place for Carmarthenshire and its people.

The Carmarthenshire Investment Plan priorities have been incorporated into the wider Regional plan. As well as setting out the challenges and opportunities facing the region in relation to each of the three strategic themes of the Shared Prosperity Fund, the document proceeds to set out information about the interventions we propose to use in the region as set out in the national guidance. Proposals for the delivery and governance of UK SPF in South West Wales as well as consultations that have taken place at a local and regional level are also detailed within the regional plan.

Whilst it is likely that the primary method of allocating funds will be by competition (as preferred by the UK Government), at a Carmarthenshire level we have also identified the need to establish a number of grant schemes focused on town centre developments; property development grants as well as community and business grants which will provide the mechanism for local communities and businesses to access support via the UKSPF from the outset. These have been incorporated within the Regional Plan.

The Regional Investment Plan must be submitted to UK Government by 1<sup>st</sup> August at the latest by Swansea Council. If approved, it will lead to the unlocking of the allocations for South West Wales. It will also be the Regional Investment Plan against which DLUHC will monitor our progress and implementation. Once agreed by DLUHC we believe that DLUHC will issue a funding agreement to Swansea Council as the lead authority and that subsequently an agreement will be put in place between Swansea Council and this Authority.

## **Consultations**

UK government is keen that the insight and expertise of local partners including local businesses, public and third sectors as well as Members of both UK and Welsh Government is sought in the production of the plans. A Carmarthenshire Regeneration Partnership has been established who have been engaged and consulted as part of the process. The Partnership will also have an on-going role in overseeing the delivery of the UKSPF at a local level.

Local Members and local stakeholders have also been consulted via an online consultation' which sought the views of key stakeholders' investment priorities (not projects) which was launched on 31st May and closed on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.

In addition, a Corporate Funding group has been established, facilitated by the Bureau, which includes cross departmental representation. The group has been meeting regularly over the last few months to ensure that they are regularly informed and to ensure that our corporate priorities are fed into the process.

At a regional level, the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership organised an event on 20 June when organisations from across South West Wales were invited to comment on the skill requirements of the region. A further regional stakeholders event was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022, led by Swansea Council.

The information gathered from these consultations has had a direct influence in shaping and refining the proposals contained in both the local and the Regional Investment Plan.

## Timeframe

The following timeline illustrates the activities undertaken to date in Carmarthenshire to ensure that the deadline set by UK government is met:

When	Activity
30 May 2022	Leader and Cabinet Member briefing on SPF
31 May 2022	External two week on-line consultation on interventions needed for Carmarthenshire.
w/c 13 June 2022	Series of engagement events and consultations planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal corporate funding group meet to review draft investment plan</li><li>• SPF Sir Gar Partnership meeting to review draft investment plan and secure partner input to include MPs and Members of the Senedd</li></ul>
23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Local investment plans collated to produce regional document
w/c 4 <sup>th</sup> July	Regional consultation event
w/c 11 <sup>th</sup> July	Advice from regional consultation incorporated in regional plan
25 July	Deadline for political sign-off of investment plan
29 July	Investment plan is submitted to UK Gov via portal
1 August 2022	Investment plan window closes

## Conclusion

Considerable progress has been made over the last few months in preparing for the new UKSPF. Submission of the Regional Investment Plan to UK Government will ensure that the Region is a step closer towards drawing down significant investment into the County and wider region.