Process for inviting Standalone projects

Background

The delivery models for the Shared Prosperity Fund for the region have been agreed as follows:

- Anchor projects - Thematic projects that will manage major parts of the investment strategy
- Standalone projects – Strategic applications that will address challenges that are not covered by the Anchor projects. Applications will be invited via open calls.
- Commissioned projects- procured activity to deliver precisely defined activity that is not being fulfilled by the delivery models detailed above.

The Anchor projects will deliver major parts of the investment plan, primarily by offering third party grants to organisations. As a reminder, it has been agreed that the following anchor projects be established. This approach is being replicated across the region

Sustainable Communities Anchor

Sustainable Communities will provide a third party grant of up to £250k activities aligned to the following themes.

- Poverty
- Circular Economy
- Wellbeing / Leisure
- Access to Services
- Environment and Green
- Tourism, Culture / Heritage
- Community Engagement

The Anchor project will also include additional budget for commissioning external expertise to provide strategic support.

Rural Anchor

The Rural Anchor will consist of 3 elements:

Ten towns initiative - Support will be delivered via a third-party grant scheme to support the realisation of projects identified within the economic growth plans for the respective areas. The Anchor project will include a budget to commission external expertise to provide strategic support.

Rural Innovation fund – a targeted fund that will provide opportunity to pilot, scope and test new innovative ideas that could be further developed through mainstreaming opportunities.

Hwb Fach y Wlad - Dedicated rural customer services officers will be available to support rural residents by developing provision across our rural market towns to support the needs of residents to access support, advice and information

Place Anchor:

The Place Anchor would look to support town centres through a Vacant Property Fund, a Town Centre Events Fund and a package of support to deliver key projects identified in our Town Centre Recovery Plans to address the ongoing challenges.

Supporting Local Businesses

The Supporting Local Business Anchor will offer financial support to local businesses to support them in all stages of their development through Business start-up and Growth Grants, a Business Renewable Energy Fund and also a Property Development Fund.

In addition, a key focus will be supporting Carmarthenshire businesses to benefit from public procurement spend.

Employability & Skills Anchor: New streamlined employability programme are being developed and there will be a focus on activity outside the remit of the RLSP and the Swansea Bay City Deal Skills and Talent project.

Options for Inviting Standalone projects

A substantial percentage of the overall allocation for the County will be committed to Anchor projects. The Anchor projects however will continually be monitored to ensure that there are sufficient applications coming forward for funding.

The remaining budget will be made available for more extensive strategic projects that will help address some of the challenges identified in the Investment Plan that are not covered by the anchor projects.

An initial assessment of the key challenges and opportunities identified within the Carmarthenshire Investment Plan against the funding opportunities being made available within the Anchor projects is mapped in Annex 1 for both the Communities and Place and Supporting Business investment priorities. A similar exercise will be undertaken for the People and Skills priority.

Based on the findings, it is proposed that the call for applications for 'standalone applications' should specifically focus on the following themes:

- Projects which respond to the opportunities identified in the Local Innovation Strategy (LIS) – Digital, Health, Circular economy and Foundational economy
- Volunteering support
- Social Enterprise support
- Local food models
- Active travel and rural transport
- Strategic Tourism / culture / heritage projects

- Strategic county wide Net Zero projects
- Digital support for businesses and local communities
- Projects to support a cohesive programme of meanwhile space/development of markets across the County

Standalone projects will be invited via an open call which is likely to be opened in early March and will be assessed against key criteria. All applications will be required to demonstrate that they can deliver by the end of December 2024 to allow sufficient time to close the programme by March 2025.

Communities and Place

Challenges

- Access to services is a challenge in some instances owing to a lower population density and rurality.
- An above average level of those considered to be in marginalised groups – including an ageing population, significant numbers of households living in poverty and higher than average levels of those living with disabilities or long-term limiting health conditions (including mental health).
- Increasing crime rates in some areas.
- Key strategic sectors recovering from the effects of the pandemic, specifically the Tourism, Leisure and Culture sectors.
- Areas of the county are susceptible to the negative effects of the climate emergency, especially flooding.
- Rurality
- Town centres attempting to recover from periods of decline.

Opportunities within local investment plan	Opportunities via Anchor projects	Proposed standalone themes
Reduce inequality of people's access to services, goods, and local cultural or leisure activities, especially where the need is greatest in the most at-risk or marginalised groups Support activity to reduce essential costs	Sustainable communities anchor project will provide 3rd party grant which will specifically focus on ' access to services'; 'addressing poverty'; 'community engagement' and leisure and cultural facilities. Grants of up to £250k will be made available for third sector and public sector applicants	Strategic projects that support: - volunteering across the County; - active travel/rural transport initiatives; - social enterprise support

for people on low income	Hwb Fach y Wlad providing targeted support for rural areas	
Support for foundational economy including tourism, leisure; culture; food etc	Sustainable Communities anchor will provide 3rd party grant for public and 3rd sector. Specific focus on tourism, heritage and leisure. Grants of up to £250k will be made available. Business anchor project will provide 3rd party grant for businesses within these sectors	Strategic projects to support the growth of the tourism and culture sector; local food production model
Climate emergency/ Supporting the Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy/ Increase locally owned renewable energy generation	Opportunity for smaller scale projects via Sustainable communities' anchor project for up to £250k.	Strategic projects linked to the County's net zero ambitions and climate emergency agenda
Enhancing digital connectivity and exploiting digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire	Opportunity via the Sustainable community anchor and rural innovation fund	Strategic projects focusing on exploitation of digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire for both third sector and private sector
Town Centre recovery / community-based solutions to revitalise and repurpose town centres as sustainable places for living, learning, leisure and work.	Place anchor project will provide support for town centres through a Vacant Property Fund, a Town Centre Events Fund and a package of support to deliver key projects identified in our Town Centre Recovery Plans to address the ongoing challenges Ten Towns initiative will provide support for 10 rural market towns	

Improve economic infrastructure to support sustainable communities of people in rural, coastal, city and urban areas.	Rural anchor project providing a package of support for rural areas - Ten Towns support and grant - Innovation fund for rural areas - Rural outreach service Sustainable communities and Place anchor will provide support for urban and coastal areas	
Increasing demand for quality and sustainability and growing opportunities for dispersed and remote working.	Potential for some smaller scale projects via the Rural anchor	Projects to support a cohesive programme of meanwhile space/development of markets across the County
Empower communities of place and of people to co-produce solutions to shared problems, connect with delivery partners, and to spread best practice	Opportunities via the Sustainable communities and Rural anchor projects for community engagement initiatives and community led action	Strategic projects that provide advice and support for the development and growth of social enterprises
Delivering against the county's Innovation strategy	Rural and Sustainable will support smaller scale innovative projects	Strategic projects linked: Digital: Enhancing digital connectivity and exploiting digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire Health: Development of a dispersed living laboratory Circular Economy: Leveraging a circular economy approach for the Net Zero agenda Foundational Economy: Sustainable food procurement

Supporting Business

Key challenges

- Low productivity and GVA
- Low wages – Too many jobs do not pay enough
- Underemployment – Too many people cannot access jobs which meet their needs
- Reliance on micro and small businesses, coupled with relatively high employment in the public sector
- Lower than average level of businesses starting up
- Businesses recovering following the pandemic.

Opportunities within local investment plan	Opportunities via Anchor projects	Proposed standalone themes
Support the sustainable and inclusive growth, succession, and retention of home grown businesses with a particular focus on progression into productive medium sized firms / Ensuring local businesses can access the finance they need to thrive and grow,	Business anchor project will include four business support related elements: 1. Business start-up and growth grants – third party grant 2. Property development fund – third party grant 3. Business renewable energy fund – third party grant 4. Sir Gar Business Engagement – direct delivery engagement to support businesses Financial support available for social enterprises via the Sustainable communities anchor	Strategic projects that provide advice and support for the development and growth of social enterprises as well as targeted support for the development of the foundational economy
New employment property funds to support the viability of private and public sector investment:	Business anchor project will include Property Development Fund – third party grant for businesses	

Enhance effective research, development, knowledge exchange and innovation capacity in businesses and research organisations in Wales /translating research into sustainable new and improved products, processes, and services Making the most of opportunities presented by the existing knowledge/research base.	Business anchor will provide financial support for exceptional projects linked to innovative future proofing solutions for growing businesses or research and development up to £50,000	
Progressive procurement' within a local business and supply chain development system Supporting dynamism (through entrepreneurship	Business anchor project will include Sir Gar Business Engagement project designed to support supply chain development and local procurement	
Re-use and redevelopment of public assets to create work hub spaces		Strategic projects that will develop a cohesive programme for meanwhile space /market development across the county
Supporting resilience (through technology adoption, management capacity and succession)		Strategic projects focused on exploiting digital opportunities for businesses and communities across Carmarthenshire

Green economy – adding economic value through keeping resources in use and where waste is avoided, invest in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy	Business anchor will provide grants for businesses and community enterprises for the installation of renewable energy	
Delivering against the county's Innovation strategy	Rural and Sustainable anchors will provide support for smaller scale innovative projects	Strategic projects linked to: Digital: Enhancing digital connectivity and exploiting digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire Health: Development of a dispersed living laboratory Circular Economy: Leveraging a circular economy approach for the Net Zero agenda Foundational Economy: Sustainable food model