

CABINET

DATE	16/06/2021
REPORT OF	Councillor Callum Procter, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Sharon Wroot, Executive Director Environment, Economy and Resources
SUBJECT	Approval to accept the Government's Welcome Back and Coastal Funds
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	GENERAL EXCEPTION - Not included on the Forward Plan therefore, to be considered under the General Exception provisions of the Constitution.

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The acceptance of the Government's Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund will make a significant contribution to the Council's strategic objective of a 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Community'. This funding has been allocated to North East Lincolnshire to support the safe return to the high street. The Welcome Back Fund forms part of wider support government is providing to communities and businesses, to protect jobs, support the most vulnerable as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be tackled and begin to build back better. The fund will allow North East Lincolnshire Council (the Council) to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies reopen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Welcome Back Fund which was recently launched by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), builds on the £50m Reopening High Street Safely Fund allocated to councils in 2020. North East Lincolnshire was allocated £141,143 Reopening High Street Safely Fund which is currently being delivered against an agreed Grant Action Plan. The Council has now been allocated £141,143 Welcome Back Fund, plus £100,000 Coastal Fund to extend the Programme. The Council has therefore submitted plans and proposals to MHCLG with the support of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Upon MHCLG approving submitted plans, authorises the Executive Director for Environment, Economy and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism, to accept resultant grant funding on behalf of the Council.
2. Delegates responsibility to the Executive Director for Environment, Economy and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism, to implement proposals and deal with all matters arising from and ancillary to the above.
3. Authorises the Monitoring Officer to complete and execute all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To enable the Council to receive grant funding, assuming approval of plans and proposals by MHCLG, and to enable swift implementation.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 In June 2020, MHCLG launched the £50m Reopening High Street Safely Fund which was allocated to councils in England to introduce a range of safety measures in a move to get people back to work and customers returning.
- 1.2 The Council, which was allocated £141,143 Reopening High Street Safely Fund, submitted a Grant Action Plan to MHCLG which included a range of eligible activities for public facing campaigns, business facing campaigns and temporary highways adaptations. The Council's Reopening High Street Safely Fund Grant Action Plan was formally agreed by MHCLG, a funding agreement was put in place and the activities are currently being delivered. The Reopening High Street Safely Fund deadline has been extended to 31st March 2022 in line with the new Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund timelines.
- 1.3 In April 2021, MHCLG launched the Welcome Back Fund which extends the Reopening High Street Safely Fund Programme. The Council has been awarded a further £141,143 through Welcome Back Fund which will allow additional measures to be put in place to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies reopen.
- 1.4 The Council has also been awarded £100,000 Coastal Fund to support coastal areas as they prepare for the summer tourism season and to safely welcome

holiday makers in the coming months.

- 1.5 The Programme, which is funded through European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), requires the Council to adhere to the strict eligibility criteria when considering new activities to include and must also comply with the ERDF procurement and branding regulations. All funds are claimed from MHCLG in arrears and must be accompanied by evidence of appropriate procurement, delivery and spend.
- 1.6 The combined funding for Welcome Back Fund and Coast Fund is £241,143, and it can be used for a range of activities including, but not limited to:
- Boost the look and feel of high streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces, and seating areas to make high streets welcoming.
 - Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold activities that will boost footfall and encourage people back into the high streets and thereby supporting local businesses.
 - Install and refresh COVID signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety.
- 1.7 At the time of writing, engagement is taking place with stakeholders, this will include the Council's private sector-led Development & Growth Board, the SME advisory group and the Visitor Economy Services & Retail (VESR) group.
- 1.8 The Grant Action Plan will include indicative activity streams for the funding which can subsequently be modified if required, subject to further stakeholder engagement. The headline themes of the new proposed activities include:
- **Welcome Back Fund Activities:**
A WBF activities organiser will be recruited to manage and deliver a schedule of themed activities by 31st March 2022.
 - **Beautification:**
To include some additional planting and chewing gum removal in public areas of Grimsby and Cleethorpes' town centres.
 - **Tourism and marketing promotion:**
To include a tourism recovery campaign and data insights research.
- 1.9 The full Government guidance is available here:
[Welcome Back Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/welcome-back-fund)

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The £241,143 Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund offer provides a significant opportunity to support local tourism and supply chain businesses to safely reopen and welcome back the local community and visitors to North East Lincolnshire.

- 2.2 If the funding is not accepted then the proposed activity will not be able to proceed. Another opportunity to access this type of funding is unlikely in the foreseeable future which would present a reputational risk to the Council.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 **Do Nothing** - Not responding to the offer of funding would not achieve the Council's key strategic aims for a stronger economy, specifically in terms of economic recovery and growth.

- 3.2 **Not accept the allocated funding** - This will result in losing the opportunity to support the safe reopening of businesses in North East Lincolnshire and welcoming back the community and visitors to our tourism areas.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The successful implementation of the Welcome Back Fund and Coast Fund offer will generate positive reputational and communications impacts and enhance our reputation with MHCLG. This will result from the additional activities associated with Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund in Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham and the associated benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.

- 4.2 There will be reputational risks for the Council due to the time constraints in carrying out the required external engagement and the resultant restrictions in being able to fully engage.

- 4.3 Reputational risks will be another factor for the Council if the revised Grant Action Plan is not submitted to MHCLG within the specified deadlines.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 If the Council accepts the funding, the additional activities for Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund will be financed directly by MHCLG through ERDF. The Council has been allocated £241,143 in total.

- 5.2 The Welcome Back Fund and Coast Fund, which is specifically revenue funding, will provide funds to deliver the indicative activities mentioned in section 1.8 of this report.

- 5.3 Council match funding is not required and there will be no call on Council reserves. All the proposed activities can be delivered through the allocated funding.

- 5.4 The Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund Programme requires the Council to follow specific ERDF procurement rules which require the securing of products and services considered to be 'best value'.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This proposal will make an overall positive contribution to the Council's published commitments on climate change and the environment. As part of the COVID safety messaging to the public, there is a focus on discarding face masks and general litter responsibly for example.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

Due to timeframes, there has been no consultation with scrutiny

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All planned activities are to be fully funded through external grant.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The funding described in the above report will be delivered through a funding agreement. Legal Services will support colleagues in understanding the conditionality around such agreement and ensure that all risks are appropriately mitigated. The Economy and Growth Team has extensive experience in successfully delivering projects of this nature.

The delegations sought are appropriate.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications contained within the recommendations of this report

11. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of Welcome Back Fund and Coastal Fund will have positive implications across North East Lincolnshire.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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