

## **EX127. Levelling Up Fund & Community Renewal Fund Update**

The Convener led the Executive in paying tribute to Douglas Duff for his many years of service to the Council, including recently as the Acting Director of Development Services. This was Douglas' last meeting and the Executive wished him well in his retirement.

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Place Services which provided a progress update on delivery of the UK Government's 'Levelling Up Fund' and the 'Community Renewal Fund'.

A £20m Round 1 Levelling Up Fund bid for the Westfield bridge and associated infrastructure upgrade to the A9/A904 had been submitted to the UK Government. On 27 October 2021 the Chancellor announced the outcome and the Council's successful bid was announced, along with 7 other projects across Scotland, totalling £176m. The announcement of £20m supported delivery of the Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) infrastructure investment programme to the A9/A904 Westfield area and related connections to the motorway network, vital for the area's economy.

Following the award announcement, a Memorandum of Understanding had been received constituting the formal grant offer. UK Government representatives had also undertaken a site visit to Falkirk to obtain footage around the Westfield area for future promotion of the project.

The A801 Avon Gorge was a major scheme to improve connections between the M8 & M9 and involved key partners including Scottish Government (via Transport Scotland), West Lothian and Falkirk Councils. Delivery of the project was contingent on securing matching contributions from each partner and the package had not yet been confirmed for its delivery. The scheme was however identified in 'A National Mission with Local Impact' the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-26 to 2025-26, confirming its commitment to the project.

Transport Scotland was undertaking a review of the A801 design in line with latest policy and Falkirk and West Lothian Councils continued to liaise closely to determine if any redesign would be necessary. Thereafter a second round LUF submission could be considered.

The UK Community Renewal Fund provided £220 million funding to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in 2022 helping to inform the design of future UKSPF programmes. The priorities of the Fund were to support people and communities most in need across the UK, to pilot programmes and new approaches which invested in skills, community and place, local business, and supported people into employment. Applications were invited from all private, public, third sector and community organisations able to deliver innovative responses to local challenges and need in the Falkirk Council area. Bids up to a maximum of £3 million per place were invited. A total of 12 bids were assessed and a shortlist of five projects,

totalling £2.8m were submitted to UK Government for approval on 18 June 2021.

Following consideration of the five submitted bids, the UK Government announced, in November 2021 that the Council was successful in securing CRF funding for two projects totalling £1,254,204. The successful projects awarded were:-

- Falkirk Food Futures led by Forth Environment Link (£534,054) and
- Falkirk's Canal: A Collaborative Pathway to a Fairer & Net-Zero Future led by Green Action Trust (£720,150).

Since the award announcement, a grant funding agreement had been signed between UK Government and Falkirk Council. Additionally, project funding agreements had been signed between each project delivery body and the Council.

### **Decision**

#### **The Executive:-**

- (1) noted the award of £20m of 'Levelling Up Funds' by the UK Government to Falkirk Council to assist delivery of the Westfield bridge and associated infrastructure upgrade to the A9/A904;**
- (2) agreed to sustain its work jointly with West Lothian Council on the opportunity for a Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid for Avon Gorge (A901) and associated infrastructure, and**
- (3) noted the outcome and progress of work relating to the UK Community Renewal Fund award of £1.3m of revenue support in 2021-22.**