

Report of Neighbourhood Support Fund Assessment Panel

BAP Meeting on Thursday 1st September 2022

Introduction

This paper outlines the recent work undertaken by the Assessment Panel for the Berwickshire Area Partnership, Neighbourhood Support Fund. It gives a brief description of various activities and a review of recent applications. It goes on to make recommendations for consideration by the BAP.

Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23

Berwickshire Area Partnership, Neighbourhood Support Fund, Assessment Panel (NSF AP) met for the second full meeting of the financial year, between 2pm and 4.20 pm on Wednesday 17th August 2022. The table below indicates how several individual funds have been drawn together into the Neighbourhood Support Fund for 2022/2023.

Community Fund (previous)	£50,230.87
Neighbourhood Support Fund (previous)	£36,382.00
Plus 2021/22 Community Fund carry forward	£2,620.21
Plus Local Festival Grants carry forward	£5,454.11
Plus Ring-fenced Horse Time 2021/22 funding	£4,500.00
Plus BBBB underspend 2021/22	£810.00
Total Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23	£99,997.19

Approximately £6k of this available spend was awarded to NSF applications in the first round. There were 18 applications to this round to a value of just under £80k. It was considered prudent to hold some funding for the last round of applications, but no fixed sum was set aside prior to consideration of all the applications.

Changes in the Application Form

Earlier in the year some minor changes to the application form were introduced, to simplify it and streamline the assessment of submissions. These changes have been largely successful. It has not been possible to introduce an on-line version of the new version of the BAP form, but we are hopeful that this will be available before the next round of applications.

Additional Panel Members

We are pleased that two new members have joined the Assessment Panel: Kathy Huffman and Jim Hettrick. They were able to fully participate in the recent assessment process. This means that there are currently two vacancies on the panel. In view of the need for four voting members for the panel to be quorate, there is always a need to recruit additional members and attain a full complement of panel members. Anyone interested in joining the panel should contact Gillian Jardine GJardine@scotborders.gov.uk or James Purves JPurves@scotborders.gov.uk for further information.

Attaining full delegated powers for the Assessment Panel

At its meeting on 4th March 2021 the BAP agreed to the following recommendation: “We recommend the creation of a sub-committee of the BAP with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently make awards.”

At our last meeting our recommendation that “the Neighbourhood Support Fund – Assessment Panel receives full delegated powers to make and communicate its decisions to applicants” was again endorsed by the BAP.

To date all the recommendations made by the Assessment Panel have been agreed by the BAP. The process of reaching our decisions is now understood and accepted as fair, consistent, robust and transparent. Unfortunately, because the current arrangements require us to make recommendations to a BAP meeting, the communication to applicants, of subsequent awards, is being delayed significantly.

We would therefore like to uncouple the work of the Assessment Panel and the BAP and move to three equally spaced application periods on an annual basis. We could then publish these dates well in advance rather than having to wait for BAP meeting dates to be set. Clearly, we would still report our decision to the BAP and our processes would be open to the scrutiny of the BAP and periodic modification as appropriate. We look forward to the Council agreeing to our request at a future meeting.

Assessment of Applications

I have outlined below the assessment process:

- The Assessment Panel members involved were Keith Dickinson (Chair), Anne McNeil, Andrew Mitchell Kathy Huffman and Jim Hettrick (voting members)
- Three councillors, John Greenwell, Mark Rowley and James Anderson took part in the meeting although they were not involved in agreeing the recommendations.
- Recognising the need for transparency, panel members made declarations of interest related to a number of applications.
- Prior to the meeting SBC officers checked that applications complied with the published Eligibility Criteria.
- We blind marked all applications, according to the published criteria and SBC officers tabulated and circulated all marks prior to our meeting.
- There was a strong measure of agreement on a number of applications that were strongly supported and others that were considered of low priority. We spent a good deal of time exploring differences of interpretation related to a number of mid-ranking applications. Although the task was demanding we moved relatively smoothly to a consensus and agreement on our recommendations.

A brief description of the applications considered and some individual feedback from our deliberations, can be found in **Appendix 1** below.

The minutes of the assessment panel meeting can be seen in Appendix 1 below, but to summarise:

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. It is recommended that BAP approve the awards detailed in Appendix 1**

APPENDIX 1

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND ASSESSMENT PANEL

MINUTES of Meeting of BERWICKSHIRE
NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND
ASSESSMENT PANEL held via Microsoft
Teams on Wednesday 17 August, 2pm

Present:- K Dickinson (Chair), A McNeil, A Mitchell, J Hettrick, K Huffman,
Councillors J Anderson, J Greenwell & M Rowley.

In Attendance:- Community Engagement Officer James Purves

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23. The Chair welcome the two newest members of the assessment panel, Jim Hettrick and Kathy Huffman.

Apologies were received from Rachel Parker.

The Chair drew attention to the current Neighbourhood Support Fund criteria and guidance notes.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

There is a requirement that the panel has a minimum of four non-SBC members for the panel to be quorate.

Five non-SBC members of panel attended hence the panel was quorate.

There are still two spaces available on the Assessment Panel and members were asked to canvas interest from the community.

3. UPDATE ON DECISIONS MADE AT JUNE BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP (BAP)

For feeding back - Grants to Burnmouth Community Council and ReTweed have been paid. Burnmouth CC contacted SBC to say they has miscalculated the cost of the items they wished to purchased and asked if they could still go ahead with spend of the grant but not buy everything that they had originally attended. The Chair had approved this.

All Assessment Panel recommendations to the AP were approved at the June meeting. In addition, BAP supported the request for the Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund Assessment Panel to be given full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently

make awards. Finally BAP approved the recommendation that in future they would introduce three equally spaced funding rounds per year.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was a brief discussion of difference between a panel member declaring an interest in an application and having a conflict of interest in an application. It was agreed that, as previously discussed at the May meeting, that individuals should always declare an interest, but it was for each panel member to decide if this constituted a conflict of interest and withdraw themselves from the assessment of an application.

5. FUNDING AVAILABLE

The funding available over the year is just under £100k. It was agreed that holding back between £25k and £35k would give applicants for the final round of funding a fair opportunity of success.

6 PROJECT ASSESSMENTS

BAVS

An application from BAVS requesting **£4500.00** was received for Berwickshire Alliance to build a strong database as a referral and information source for people in communities, social care and health services.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £4500.00**

BORDER LINKS Ltd

An application from Border Links Ltd requesting **£4500.00** was received for Fun On Zoom project to provide a twice weekly zoom session to alleviate social exclusion. Approx 40 participants on zoom during Covid. They would like to continue for 12 months.

The panel felt it was uncertain from the application that this project would make a significant impact and it was unclear how many people in Berwickshire would benefit.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership does **not make an award**

Birgham Community Development Trust

An application from Birgham Community Development Trust requesting **£5,000.00** received to upgrade Play Park Equipment in Treaty Park, Birgham.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Berwickshire Marine Reserve

An application from Berwickshire Marine Reserve requesting **£5000.00** for Community Outreach Officer salary.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Sea the Change

An application from Sea the Change requesting **£5000.00** for Nature's Tonic Project pilot, to fund costs of new member to team to encourage more of the community to access the outdoors, connecting with others and the environment in Covid friendly and purposeful way.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Berwickshire Swap

An application from Berwickshire Swap requesting **£3924.00** for van maintenance and running costs. Van funded by Lottery grant to help reach rural communities.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £3924.00**

Ayton Heritage

An application from Ayton Heritage requesting **£5000.00** for St Dionysius preservation – the money is needed as a first step to allow the removal of ivy from the ivy-covered church ruins. The community has removed all lower level ivy but professional service needed for remaining ivy. Thereafter the exposed stonework can be assessed for restoration and allow for further funding applications.

It was agreed that further information was needed, before a panel decision could be made, particularly related to other external funding which may have been recently received. In the light of additional information received from the applicant (including their August Newsletter) the panel were not supportive of this application.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership does **not make an award**.

Eat Sleep Ride

An application from Eat Sleep Ride requesting **£5000.00** for their Growing Today will Help Tomorrow project to evolve self-sustainable chemical free kitchen garden, thus create & improve places and spaces that matter to the community & reduce social isolation whilst learning new skills.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Gordon Village Hall

An application from Gordon Village Hall requesting £3640.00 to upgrade their existing disabled toilet and put it in same area as other facilities. The panel felt the application did not give sufficient detail on usage and need.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership does **not make an award**

Chirnside Development Group

An application from Chirnside Development group for **£4000.00** to provide sound insulation in upstairs Function Room following installation of roof space insulation.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £4000.00**

Roxburgh Berwickshire CAB

An application from Roxburgh Berwickshire CAB requesting **£5000.00** towards the employment cost of a Cost Of Living Advice Worker. The panel recognised the valuable work of CAB but felt that the Neighbourhood Support Fund was an inappropriate funding stream for CAB. It was believed that SBC could guide them to other options to obtain additional support.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership does **not make an award**

Interest Link Borders

An application from Interest Link Borders requesting **£4206.00** for their Learning Disabilities Befriending Project - Peer-age volunteer befriending (1:1 and in groups) for 30 children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and autism.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £4206.00**

Chirnside Football Club

An application from Chirnside Football Club requesting **£5000.00** to obtain structural engineer's report as part of major development project.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Ayton Gardening Society

An application from Ayton Gardening Society requesting **£847.00** to deliver a series of initiatives providing opportunities for education, recreation and competition, and to provide horticultural, creative and artistic development across the local community

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £847.00**

Frangipane Bakery

An application from Frangipane Bakery requesting **£4950.00** for an art exhibition with Allanbank Arts which will highlight the untapped potential of overlooked people, particularly those with autistic / neurodivergent disabilities.

The panel felt there was insufficient information to fully understand the aims of the project. Additionally, it was felt that the link between the creation of the artwork and the delivery of the project aims, including employability, had not been adequately established.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership does **not make an award**

A Heart for Duns

An application from A Heart For Duns requesting **£4950.00** for Paint Our Town Red with Allanbank Arts. Allanbank Arts in collaboration with AHFD aim to offer young people from Berwickshire High School catchment, two 10-week projects to build towards the creation of showcase weekends.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £4950.00**

Connect Berwickshire Youth Project

An application from Connect Berwickshire Youth Project requesting **£5000.00** for drop in sessions as approx. 50% contribution to unspecified youth work projects / drop in sessions. - They would like to employ 2 x PT youth workers.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £5000.00**

Abundant Borders

An application from Abundant Borders for **£4174.64**, This project will provide facilities to support the expansion of Community Food Growing and Outdoor Activities for individuals and community groups in Eyemouth.

Decision: It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership make an **award of £4174.64**

7 OVERALL REVIEW OF MARKS

Overall, the panel felt that some of the applicant groups need to:

- look at the financial sustainability of their projects, which should not rely on funding from the Neighbourhood Support Fund on an ongoing basis.
- read the criteria and guidance notes carefully before applying.
- in some cases strengthen their evidence of need.

8 DECISIONS AND REPORT TO AREA PARTNERSHIP

The panel considered 18 applications. It was agreed that 13 applications would be recommended to the BAP for funding and five applications would not be recommended for funding.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

No date has yet been fixed for the next Berwickshire Assessment Panel meeting which will assess Third round NSF applications. Information on the submission date for the third round will be available on Scottish Borders Council's website in due course.

The meeting concluded at 4:20 pm