

# **Report of Neighbourhood Support Fund Assessment Panel**

## **BAP Meeting on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

### **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 third full meeting of the financial year, between 1pm and 3pm on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Approximately £100k was available for distribution through the Neighbourhood Support Fund during 2022/2023. Following the awards made in the first two rounds of funding this year circa £33k remained.

Initially there were 38 applications to this round, however during the process two were withdrawn. The panel were faced with assessing 36 applications, to a value of just over £121k. To put this in context this was more than twice the previously highest number of applications for a single round. It also resulted in a very significant shortfall in the funding available. In summary only between a third and a quarter of applications could be funded, irrespective of their merit.

It is good to know that communities have become more aware of the NSF and have made record numbers of applications. It is however worrying that many deserving applicants will be disappointed that their strong applications did not receive support. It is hoped that these record numbers of quality applications will be recognised when setting the NSF budget for next year.

### **Changes in the Guidance Notes**

Following round two of the assessment process, in September 2022, further clarification was made to the NSF Guidance Notes. It now states that:

- *The fund provides support and assistance with the development of community-based projects for voluntary and community groups that are active in their local area. We wish to encourage applications with clearly defined outcomes that can be delivered within stated timescales. ....*

- *Funding can be used for a variety of purposes (see guidance notes). It is less likely that the Neighbourhood Support Fund will be used to support ongoing activity and general staff support, unless there are very compelling justifications for doing so.*

## **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. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to introduce an on-line version of the new version of the BAP form this year, but we are hopeful that this will be available soon.

## **Additional Panel Members**

We are pleased that two new members have joined the Assessment Panel this year: Kathy Huffman and Jim Hettrick. Unfortunately, Anne McNeill, who has been key to the development and implementation of our assessment process, has decided to step down. We all want to thank Anne for invaluable contribution to our work over the past 2 years.

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](mailto:GJardine@scotborders.gov.uk) or James Purves [JPurves@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto: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-subcommittee of the BAP with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently make awards.”

At the BAP meeting 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022 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.

We would 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 and deal with applications more timeously.

## 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, Jim Hettrick and three councillors: John Greenwell, Mark Rowley and James Anderson.
- 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.
- In view of the record number of applications, each was initially scored and ranked by three panel members.
- Where there was an identified difference between the initial three rankings, a fourth member assessed and ranked the application.
- Applications were blind marked, according to the published criteria and SBC officers tabulated and circulated all marks and rankings prior to our meeting.
- Initially a group of applications that were highly supported by all who had assessed them were considered. After due consideration all were considered worthy of support and of high priority.
- A second group of applications, that were broadly supported, were considered and provisional recommendations made.
- Before final recommendations were made panel members were given the opportunity to consider in detail any of the remaining applications.
- There were clearly applications that were considered fundable but considered to be of a lower priority and they could not be supported due to the funding constraints.
- The volume of applications, this funding round, tested the process and the panel. However, although the assessment task was demanding, we moved relatively smoothly to a consensus and agreement on our recommendations.

The minutes of the assessment panel meeting can be seen in **Appendix 1** below, which includes a brief description of applications considered and some individual feedback from our deliberations. Our recommendations are summarised in **Appendix 2**.

## Summary of Recommendations

- 1. It is recommended that BAP approve the awards detailed in Appendix 2**

## APPENDIX 1

### SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE COMMUNITY FUND ASSESSMENT PANEL

MINUTES of Meeting of BERWICKSHIRE  
COMMUNITY FUND ASSESSMENT  
PANEL held via Microsoft Teams on  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1pm

Present:- Keith Dickinson (Chair), Anne McNeil, Kathy Huffman, Jim Hettrick, Cllr Anderson, Cllr Greenwell,

Apologies Rachel Parker, Andrew Mitchell, Cllr Rowley

In Attendance:- Community Engagement Officer James Purves, Community Co-ordinator Gillian Jardine

#### **1. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the content to be covered during the meeting. The Chair confirmed the withdrawal of two applications from this round of funding.

#### **2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL**

The Chair confirmed that AM is stepping back from her role on the panel and thanked AM for her contribution in helping establish the panel and the process of assessing applications.

#### **3. PROCESS OF APPLICATION ASSESSMENT FOR ROUND 3**

The Chair outlined the approach that had been devised to manage the assessment of 38 applications and ensure that the appropriate level of assessment was maintained. All applications were initially scored and ranked by three panel members. Where there was an identified difference between rankings, a fourth member assessed and ranked the application.

#### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Panel members had previously confirmed any interest in applications and marking was assigned to panel members to accommodate this.

#### **5. FUNDING REQUESTED AND FUNDING AVAILABLE**

SBC confirmed that 38 applications had been received, but two had been withdrawn. 36 applications with a total request of £121,300 would be considered. A budget of £32,931.55 was available. This did not include ring-fenced funding for Horse Time which had been granted funding in 2021/22 on the condition of a successful evaluation of another project they had received funding for. The panel did not have the time to consider Horse Time's evaluation due to the date of its submission. The Chair proposed that the evaluation for Horse Time and a second grant be considered at the next meeting.

#### **6 OVERALL REVIEW OF MARKS AND RANKINGS OF APPLICATIONS**

The Chair shared an overview of application rankings based on the panel's scoring. The ranking was used to show the level of support for each application

and provide a starting point for discussing the applications. Initially a group of applications that were highly supported by all who had assessed them, were considered. After due consideration all were considered worthy of support and to be of high priority. A second group of applications that were broadly supported were considered. However, before final recommendations were made panel members were given the opportunity to propose that any of the remaining, lower ranked applications, should be further considered in detail. The following section provides some detail on the applications that are recommended for support. Appendix 2 shows the total list of applications assessed and the funding recommendations.

## **7 PROJECT ASSESSMENTS**

### **GORDON COMMUNITY SPORTSFIELD**

An application from Gordon Community Sports field requesting £5000.00 was received to help acquire and manage the sports field in Gordon, which is currently privately owned. They will develop its use as the hub for outdoor, sporting and community activities in Gordon.

#### **Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£5000.00**. The panel were supportive of the aims of the group and commented on the level of community support this project has and the long term legacy. Granting them an award would provide the applicant with full project costs allowing them to complete their project.

### **BORDERS POTTERY**

An application was made, requesting £4829.00 to buy equipment that will enable the applicants to offer growth of numbers and allow access to the pottery classes for people with mobility difficulties.

#### **Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£4829.00**. There was a view that this model has potential to develop in to a social enterprise business and generate income from the pieces being produced which the panel were supportive of.

### **ABUNDANT BORDERS**

An application was made, requesting £3636.00 for a project which will work with people in East Berwickshire to reduce poverty and food insecurity by teaching skills required to make healthy, inexpensive meals in fuel efficient ways by using, for example, slow cookers.

#### **Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£3636.00**. The impact this project will have, and the contribution it will make, resulted in the application being scored highly by the panel who considered Abundant Borders to be delivering excellent work in the Berwickshire area.

### **COLDSTREAM HEART RHYTHM**

An application was made, requesting **£2250.00**, to buy a defibrillator, training materials and consumables to promote health and save lives in Coldstream community.

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£2250.00**. This project scored highly due to the evidence of community backing, support from health practitioners, the group's long term plans for maintaining the defibs, the planned roll out of training and the importance of having these assets in a community.

**BORDERS WOMEN'S AID**

An application from Borders Women's Aid requesting £1080.00 was received to enable groups accessing their service to attend wellbeing groups, to relieve isolation, gain peer support and learn new skills

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£1080.00**. The panel felt this was a strong application from an organisation with a proven track record of delivery and that this project was based on a model successfully delivered elsewhere.

**A HEART FOR DUNS**

An application was made, requesting £5000.00 to develop a community website to complement their Town trail and include an events calendar and social media presence.

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£5000.00**. AHFD has a wide reach and the panel were of the view that this is a sensible project to be supporting which would provide value for money. It was commented that the impact AHFD has on the Duns community is visible.

**PARENT SPACE**

An application was made, requesting **£3752.10** to give parents across Berwickshire more access to quality advice, information and support along with one-to-one support.

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£3752.10**. The panel were supportive of the capacity building and 1:1 support that this project will support and commented on the fact demand for this service is increasing. There was reflection that courses are always well managed and well attended with continued support for parents who participate.

**AYTON CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

An application was made, requesting £945.00 to help continue the provision of Christmas lights in Ayton village.

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£945.00**. There was discussion amongst the panel on whether there were other way the group could raise funding but overall, there was support for this project.

**DUNS RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**

An application was made, requesting £3500.00 to fund more kit and storage to enable more families and children to participate.

**Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£849.45** which is the balance of the NSF. This was a well written application from a club which has good uptake from young people from a wide geographical area. The application scored lower than the other applications as the presentation of their priorities could have been stronger.

#### **DUNS FOOTBALL CLUB**

An application was made, requesting £1000.00 for guttering and flashings to finish off the club's new roof.

#### **Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£1000.00**. For a modest sum this will allow for the completion of the project. The local business community has invested time, money and materials in to the club and the panel were happy to also contribute to realise the community benefit this project will provide.

#### **BIRGHAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

An application was made, requesting £4590.00 to replace an existing small pavilion in Birgham's recreation park to ensure a safe and protected seating area.

#### **Decision NOTED that:-**

It was agreed to recommend that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of **£4590.00**. There was discussion amongst the panel on the community impact of this project but on the whole the panel were supportive of the overall aims of the project and the encouragement this provided for outdoor activity and community engagement.

### **8 DECISIONS AND REPORT TO AREA PARTNERSHIP**

Consideration was given to how to present the panel's recommendations given the volume of applications received and that providing detailed feedback on all applications would not be possible.

### **9 MEETING OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL TO REVIEW 2022/23 FUND**

The panel are confident in the assessment process that has been developed following minor adjustments that have been made this financial year. The volume of applications this funding round tested the process and the panel are happy with the outcome. The panel has no recommendations to make to the Area Partnership for any further changes to the application and assessment process.

## Appendix 2

### Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund - Recommendations February 2023

Ref Number	Project Title	Sum Requested	Total Awarded
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£121,300.58</b>	<b>£32,931.55</b>
NSF2223/BER/22	The Cheyne Gang	£3,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/23	Greenlaw Bowling Club	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/24	Perfect Harmony	£2,700.00	
NSF2223/BER/25	Chirnside Common Good Association	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/26	Berwickshire Marine Reserve	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/27	Berwickshire Marine Reserve & Abundant Borders	£4,942.80	
NSF2223/BER/28	Eyemouth & District Community Trust	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/29	Berwickshire Cookery Club	£1,040.00	
NSF2223/BER/30	Gordon Community Sports Field Group	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
NSF2223/BER/31	Borders Pottery CIC	£4,829.00	£4,829.00
NSF2223/BER/32	Berwickshire Swap	£4,492.80	
NSF2223/BER/33	Outside the Box Development Support Ltd	£4,482.00	
NSF2223/BER/34	Abundant Borders	£3,636.00	£3,636.00
NSF2223/BER/35	Coldstream Heart Rhythm	£2,250.00	£2,250.00
NSF2223/BER/36	Royal British Legion Coldstream	£2,073.60	
NSF2223/BER/37	The Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service	£3,500.00	
NSF2223/BER/38	Border Womens Aid	£1,080.00	£1,080.00
NSF2223/BER/39	DunsPlay Fest	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/40	A Heart for Duns (AHFD)	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
NSF2223/BER/41	Duns Tennis Club	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/42	Duns Golf Club	£1,350.00	
NSF2223/BER/43	Whitsome Vill Hall	£927.36	
NSF2223/BER/45	Grantshouse Vill Hall	£2,700.00	
NSF2223/BER/46	Parent Space	£3,752.10	£3,752.10
NSF2223/BER/47	Ayton Christmas Lights Group	£945.00	£945.00
NSF2223/BER/48	Duns Rugby Club	£3,500.00	£849.45
NSF2223/BER/49	Duns Football Club	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
NSF2223/BER/50	Friends Duns Primary	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/51	East Berwickshire University of Third Age (ebu3a)	£754.96	
NSF2223/BER/52	Gavinton Village Hall	£3,500.00	
NSF2223/BER/53	Cockburnspath Allotment Association SCIO	£1,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/54	Allanbank Arts AHFD others	£3,500.00	
NSF2223/BER/55	Eyemouth Scout Group	£754.96	
NSF2223/BER/56	Cockburnspath Playground Association	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/57	Eat Sleep Ride	£5,000.00	
NSF2223/BER/59	Birgham CDT	£4,590.00	£4,590.00