



**Interim Evaluation
of the
Pilot North East Derbyshire
Business Growth Fund**

November 2016

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Weblink to Guidance and Application Forms: <http://www.northern-derbyshire.gov.uk/index.php/business/business-support-advice>

1. Introduction

The North East Derbyshire Business Growth Fund (BGF) was launched on 16th November 2015 to address the funding gap in areas not eligible for BNED LEADER support (Clay Cross, Dronfield and Tupton). The £40,000 grant scheme, funded from the Invest to Save Budget, is a 24 month pilot which will operate until autumn 2017. Grants are available to businesses which the Council is confident will achieve economic growth and/or job creation and growth within the District and which do not conflict with the Council's Values as detailed in the Corporate Plan.

It was originally envisaged that the BGF would be evaluated at the end of the 24 month pilot period, however following reflection of the outcomes achieved to date, it was determined at the Cabinet meeting held on 28th September 2016 that the pilot evaluation should be brought forward to a suitable time to be able to inform 2017/18 budget setting considerations, should there be a will to extend the programme. As such, this report has been produced for consideration at the January 2017 Cabinet meeting, to inform the budgeting timescales.

This interim evaluation has therefore been produced to assess the arising challenges and successes of the BGF within its first 12 months of operation, in order to inform the next 12 months and to consider the future of the fund post-Autumn 2017. Where appropriate, observation comments have been made in the sections below which reflect these successes and learning opportunities. A further evaluation will be undertaken in 2017 to assess the impact made in the original 24 month pilot period.

2. Rationale for the NED Business Growth Fund

During the preparation of the bid for the 2014-2020 Bolsover North East Derbyshire (BNED) LEADER Approach it was noted that DEFRA had amended its rural classifications since the successful 2007-2013 BNED LEADER approach. A result of this was that Clay Cross and Tupton businesses were no longer eligible to access LEADER funding, and Dronfield, where many NED businesses are located, remained outside the scope for the programme.

Economic Development Unit (EDU) experience had also identified that the minimum £4,000 intervention threshold required by Local Enterprise Partnerships' (LEP) loans and grants is too high for the vast majority of NED businesses, approximately 90% of which are micro businesses employing fewer than 10 people. For example, when the BGF was developed, the Sheffield City Region Regional Growth Fund (RGF) 'Unlocking Business Investment' programme provided grants of between £25,000 to £2,000,000 with an average intervention rate of 20%, whilst the D2N2 RGF Global Derbyshire Small Business Support offered grants of between £4,000 and £75,000 to SMEs with an intervention rate of 30%; these levels are far beyond the scope of the needs and funding capability of many North East Derbyshire businesses seeking to develop and there has been little change to this approach into 2016.

In order to support the delivery of the 2014 Bolsover and North East Derbyshire Growth Strategy, it was therefore felt that piloting a scheme which offered business grants of between £500 and £4,000 in non-LEADER areas would help address geographical inequity and ensure that all businesses within North East Derbyshire could potentially access funding to assist with their business growth.

Observation 1: Due to current LEP funding still focusing on larger grants there remains a local need for lower level funding for business support, particularly in non-LEADER areas.

3. Priorities

With a particular focus on delivering the Growth Strategy priority of “*Supporting Enterprise: maintaining and growing the business base,*” key drivers for the fund are:

- **the creation of jobs and apprenticeship opportunities**, the rationale being that increased employment supports more economically sustainable households and communities who are less likely to experience pressures such as financial exclusion. Links with existing schemes such as Ambition, Talent Match and the Working Communities Programme help to support local people into these employment opportunities where practicable.
 - The 2014 Joseph Rowntree Foundation report “*The benefits of tackling worklessness and low pay*” found that in “for every out-of-work claimant that moved into a job that paid the Living Wage (then £7.45 per hour), the government gained, on average, almost £6,900. The local economy benefited, on average, by more than £14,000 per year every time an unemployed person began a Living Wage job.” This varied locally due to factors including local wage, rent and Housing Benefit levels. (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/benefits-tackling-worklessness-and-low-pay>). The BGF is therefore currently expected to be a very cost effective contributor to job creation.
- **the increase of Business Rates (National Non-Domestic Rates, NNDR)** in businesses which the Council is confident would achieve growth. The rationale is that increased council powers to retain Business Rates provide an opportunity to increase flexible budgets which can be utilised to retain and develop local jobs and services. The BGF aimed to generate Business Rates proportionate to those created by the BNED LEADER Approach 2007-2013: annual gain 3.19% of grant (£35,269 NNDR generated from 9 businesses granted a total of £1,107,289).

Although similar to LEADER, the Council would not be tied to the LEADER priorities and could either remain open to any business or set its own priority bidding themes (e.g. training), whilst retaining the right to re-focus the priorities should it so wish; this would be following discussion between the Partnerships Team and EDU.

The BGF can support a broad range of activity, which includes:

- Extending and Improving Premises (e.g. Brighter Business)
- Employing an Apprentice (but not core staff costs)
- Financial Packages (e.g. Website, Advertising, Artwork)
- Business Start-up Costs
- Business Growth Items (e.g. Equipment [including ICT], Machinery)

Ineligible expenditure includes items which would not create a direct growth output or on stock, which is generally ineligible for most business grant schemes:

- feasibility studies
- planning application costs/consultants fees
- stock and other consumables

Operationally the fund also has the following parameters:

- Operate in Non-BNED LEADER Areas in NED
- Support both Capital and Revenue Grants
- Provide a maximum grant of £4,000 / a minimum grant of £500
- Expect at least 10% match funding from the businesses to show their own commitment to their project.

The clear focus of the grant is on businesses which the Council is confident will achieve growth. Businesses which request funding to address decreases in trade are not eligible as it is unlikely that the modest investment from funding would enable a long term change to their decline; such businesses would be signposted to business support services to look at how they operate.

Recognition is also given to the wider benefits to the community and the Council. It is hoped that BGF recipients become rooted within the district and grow as a local employer and part of the local supply chain network, helping to sustain other businesses within the community. This is especially a benefit where the business is a tenant in a Council owned-property as the grant encourages the company to stay in the area whilst generating rental income on an annual basis for the Authority. This has proved to be the case with one successful applicant, who is a new tenant at Coney Green Business Centre.

Monitoring the impact of grant schemes can be difficult, particularly due to the long-term nature of changes to supported businesses. Therefore, as well as jobs and business rates, the business turnover for two financial years and any other outcomes and case studies (such as business awards) are recorded.

In general the priorities are appropriate, with the flexibility of the fund allowing for the Council to be accommodating of projects which are felt to add value to the area. Shared experience between the Partnerships Team and EDU did note the following issues however in their 13th July and 18th November 2016 Review Meetings and amendments made where appropriate:

- Growth outcomes from applicants just wanting grants to develop websites were often deemed to be negligible and a full level grant therefore felt inappropriate. Because of the increasing number of free website development resources available to businesses it was agreed to limit such grants to £500. Applications for websites to develop added functionality (such as customer relationship management or sales-to-stock management capabilities) will still be eligible to apply for a maximum of £4,000 as such additions are developing the capabilities of the business in a more defined way.
- There have been a number of home-based business start-up enquiries which will not initially generate Business Rates, employment opportunities or significant turnover or have a track record assessable through their audited accounts. It was agreed that providing a business plan would help evidence the business proposals likelihood of generating significant longer-term growth. This would be mandatory for any start-up business applicants and upon request for any existing business whose Expression of Interest (EOI) raised significant queries. In addition, start-up businesses are signposted to the national Business Support Helpline, gov.uk business plan development site and Growth Hub advisors.
- There have been no applications which request BGF to support the employment of apprentices, although some of the jobs created have been apprenticeships. Because of this low demand and alternative support elsewhere through LEP and local programmes (e.g. Talent Match and Ambition), the Review Meetings felt that this should no longer be a priority of the BGF.
- Having the flexibility to promote shop front improvements was felt by EDU to be a clear benefit although it was noted that tying Brighter Business-type activity to BGF outcomes is difficult, making it harder for these projects to be approved.

Observation 2: The amendment to the website eligibility levels is appropriate, in order to focus the BGF on projects which deliver clearer growth outcomes.

Observation 3: The request for a business plan has ensured stronger bids are submitted, with weaker applications easier to identify at Full Application stage; or the advice given helping applicants to reassess their business approach.

Observation 4: Due to other support available and nil demand, it is not felt that funding to employ an apprentice should remain a priority.

Observation 5: Generally the BGF priorities are appropriate, although Brighter Business-type activity is less likely to evidence or deliver quantifiable BGF outcomes and therefore less likely to be approved.

4. Publicity and Promotion

The BGF pilot was launched in parallel with the BNED LEADER Approach 2014-2020 to maximise publicity of funding programmes covering the whole district and will operate until autumn 2017. The original timescale was to operate between June 2015 and June 2017 but due to significant delays with the national launch of the LEADER programme it was felt inappropriate to launch the BGF in advance of this.

It was initially intended to utilise the BNED LEADER application process. However, once this was publicised it was clear that the process was too complex for BGF therefore a new procedure was developed based on the principles of the 2007-2013 LEADER Approach, keeping processes as simple as possible whilst retaining the best practice principles to manage the scheme.

Due to the modest sum of funding available, the BGF is primarily promoted through contact with the EDU in order to manage demand and avoid raising expectation with local businesses. The EDU are also best placed to identify the potential within a business to grow and therefore identify early the suitability of arising project ideas.

To ensure transparency and equity of access to all businesses the BGF is also publicised in the "Business" section of the NEDDC website and was promoted after its launch in the winter 2015 and summer 2016 editions of NED News, whilst the Partnerships Team budget covered the £9.17 cost of producing 300 leaflets for EDU, LEP and other businesses advisors to pass to any potential applicant. In addition, the scheme has been promoted at the Business Network meetings arranged by EDU and BNED LEADER officers have signposted suitable potential projects to the scheme when receiving enquiries from NED businesses in non-LEADER areas.

Based upon the success rate to date, a greater number of approved projects (4) came through the EDU Key account Management (KAM) process than speculative contacts from businesses who had called following seeing NED News (1). So far, the benefits of targeted engagement through EDU's KAM and one-to-one seems clear, as applications are developed built upon an existing working relationship, whilst the officers dealing with the speculative applications generally have to provide a greater level of support, guidance and analysis to the business proposal to assess whether they should be advised to progress with a BGF application.

The 18th November 2016 BGF Review Meeting noted that there was likely to be greater benefit in targeting "growth businesses" through the sector intelligence provided through the MINT business database system and this would be looked at in the New Year. It

was also noted that the KAM approach was more successful in encouraging robust BGF applications, albeit resource intensive and current resources to support this were stretched. There was awareness that referrals from the NED area to the LEP Growth Hub Advisors was very low and further staffing resource to generate this interest and business support would be an ideal.

Observation 6: The publicity approach was appropriate although targeting growth businesses through KAM and using intelligence resources such as MINT would help better identify projects which better delivered BGF priorities.

5. Management of Programme

The programme is managed jointly by NEDDC's Partnerships Team and Economic Development Unit, with a division of responsibility identified in **Appendix 1**.

In general terms the EDU act as "front of house," providing the first contact gateway to discuss the project idea with the applicant and to establish the nature and eligibility, visiting approved projects on monitoring visits and ongoing contact; whilst the Partnerships Team act as "stage managers," ensuring the process is delivered within the parameters of the programme and its priorities, overseeing the contracting, endorsement, approval and internal reporting.

The two teams meet regularly, both informally and in the Review Meetings, to discuss progress, outcomes and any issues arising through engagement with projects and applicants. This provides flexibility in the approach, allowing for tweaks to the guidance notes and application forms, development of any stages within the process as well as considering whether any of the priorities should be refocused based upon experiences to date (this can be actioned through delegated authority).

The BGF Review Meeting held on 18th November 2016 between the Partnerships Team and EDU raised the following issues in their discussion about the ongoing operation of the scheme, experience to date and thoughts about its future:

- **The size of the funding pot:** although modest, this was felt to be reasonable.
- **The outputs created:** these were felt good although the low output/outcome rates on positively perceived Brighter Business-type activity were a challenge
- **The impact of current policies:** current national policy is to drive business growth through the Growth Hubs. Although difficult to engage, some of the businesses that have secured considerable LEP funding to create jobs and there could be value in providing a general employer engagement service to drive up referrals to the growth hubs. Additional engagement with private owners to develop sites and bringing empty commercial properties back into use would further support the Council's increased powers to retain Business Rates.
- **Other business funding provision and support:** whilst the Growth Hubs offer a range of general and funding advice they tend to lack the detailed local knowledge of Local Authorities as they cover a much wider area.
- **Whether the scheme is meeting its aims and if it demonstrates best use of the Council's money:** it was recognised that there should be a clear benefit for the Council to justify the investment (even if indirect such as local job growth).
- **The locality serviced:** although the "back-fill" role to BNED LEADER was acknowledged, the aspiration to find funding for other local priorities such as activity to underpin the Market Towns Frameworks was noted.

In general the working relationship between the teams has been very positive and cohesive, with little fundamental disagreement regarding the overall approach. There have been some minor funding reductions and condition changes at the Approval stage and to date consistency with the Appraisal recommendations being supported. So far only one appeal has been received, with unanimous agreement to that the rejected application was unsuitable for BGF support.

Any arising disagreements have related to the subjectivity of an applicant's eligibility to the BGF in terms of impact against the fund objectives. Reasons for not endorsing projects usually relate to low perceptions of growth outcomes or concerns arising from information provided by the applicant (e.g. conflict with planning regulations). As with many schemes, despite being endorsed, Full Applications are not submitted, with time constraints and paperwork given as key examples. There is clearly a need to maintain consistency between the officers in terms of the "message" provided to applicants in order to avoid external challenge. Balance is required between:

a) not causing undue work and effort for the applicant completing a full application which seems very unlikely to achieve any significant growth outcome/work for the two teams in processing, appraising and approving the application

and b) allowing the applicant the opportunity to provide detail in a Full Application in order to best present their business proposal against the BGF priorities.

Observation 7: The priority focus of what constitutes an eligible needs to be determined at the Review Meeting, with the key focus being "what outcomes will be delivered" and "why would council want to fund them?"

Additionally, there has been welcome support provided by other departments within the Authority in terms of establishing and managing the fund, without which the delivery may have been difficult. It is recognised that some of this support can be of a detailed technical nature and should be noted that all departments have responded swiftly and professionally when their help has been sought.

Departments and the type of support provided are:

- **Accountancy** – financial profiling; timely payment of grants
- **Communications and Marketing** – BGF logo/leaflet design; NED News publicity
- **Development Management** – advice on noise restrictions
- **Environmental Health** – technical advice on project proposals with potential working environment impact; signposting businesses with proposals to the BGF
- **Estates** – advice regarding leases of tenant applicants
- **Legal** – producing the Grant Agreement
- **Planning Policy** – advice on conservation area restrictions

Observation 8: Delivering the BGF successfully requires engagement and support from various departments who do not have this as a workload priority; to date this has been forthcoming in a professional and timely manner.

6. Objectives and Outcomes

A full statistical breakdown on the progress to date can be found at **Appendix 2**.

At this point, the BGF has either contracted with or endorsed applications to the value of £31,858 from the £40,000 available. Requests for grant have been evenly split between businesses from Clay Cross and Dronfield with the more modest interest from Tupton recognised because of the significantly smaller business base. Should the endorsed EOIs result in contracted applications within forecast timescales, the BGF will

have allocated 79.6% of funds with significant time still to officially run. Additional funding to extend the scheme would create the opportunity to deliver more job outputs in the short term and potentially business growth in the medium to long term which could lead to increased NNDR if the businesses supported expand into larger premises within the district.

Observation 9: The level of funding available (£20,000 per annum) is reasonable although should conversions rates from EOIs to approved bids be high, then spend may be achieved well before the end of November 2017.

Whilst it is felt that appropriate support and information is provided to all applicants, as is typical of many two-stage funding schemes, for a number of reasons, not all applicants proceed with their project. Common reasons often relate to eligibility of activity, commitment to the project, changes within the business, planning and licensing requirements and the requirement to complete application forms.

There is a robust appraisal and approval process which has resulted in the majority of approved projects receiving less funding than requested, with no detriment to the delivery of the project or its outcomes (only one applicant directly expressed disappointment, although the project itself proceeded and is on track to deliver the same outcomes).

Of the 5 approved projects to date, the contracted outputs are good in terms of job creation, however it is looking unlikely that any increase in NNDR will be generated due to the size of businesses supported, which are typically exempt from Business Rates. It is not yet possible to determine if there are any changes although the Revenues Team will be notified of any grants made as projects complete, to refer to the Valuations Office as appropriate. Changes to business Turnover cannot yet be evidenced as the first projects have only recently been completed and annual accounts will not be available for at least a year.

Observation 10: There is unlikely to be any significant generation of NNDR, with an expected level of below £1,000 per annum based on proportionate experience of the 2007-2013 BNED LEADER Approach.

Once clear benefit is the value for money of the scheme, which is exemplified in:

- **Jobs Created:** Currently, BGF applicants collectively are contracted to deliver 7.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs for the total £15,858 grant expenditure, a unit cost of £2,143 per job. This is significantly higher value for money than the LEP £25,000 per job rate, showing the value of lower limit business funding schemes.
- **Match Funding:** The contracted match funding rate is, at 49.82% of overall costs, significantly higher than the 10% minimum expected in the funding guidelines. This figure has not been skewed by any one project and shows the commitment to invest in their companies which businesses are willing to undertake should a level of seed-corn funding be available.
- Although reliant upon a significant level of staff time (estimated at least 1.0FTE for the collective time spent), other costs are low, with only leaflet printing costs being the cashable value (£9.17). All other publicity has piggy-backed on existing business support events and publications.

Observation 11: The BGF has generated significantly high value for money outcomes in terms of jobs created and match funding from internal business investment which shows the desire for companies to grow within the district.

7. Feedback from Applicants

Monitoring feedback from applicants and colleagues has been an ongoing process. As with any new scheme, it was anticipated that issues could arise as applications passed through the various stages from start to finish; for example, one applicant encountered a software compatibility problem with the EOI form, however this was quickly resolved with the support of a NEDDC officer.

In the majority of cases, grant awards were lower than requested, particularly where projects were for standard websites, or where the overall cost of the project and resulting private match funding had reduced significantly in the FA from that stated in the EOI. In one such case the applicant contacted us to express disappointment at being offered a smaller award and the impact this would have given the *“significant amount of time taken to complete the application”* however, the grant offer was accepted and the project has been successfully completed.

Consultation

A survey was carried out in October 2016 asking applicants about their experience of the scheme. They were asked about the different stages, the support they sought, the communications they had with NEDDC officers and their opinion of the value of such schemes to the local business community. 12 applicants were contacted and of these, 4 responded. Although the responses are not statistically significant due to the small sample size and response rate, the feedback does give useful guidance and perceptions about the fund.

Unsurprisingly, responses from applicants who had been successful in securing funding tended to be more positive about the scheme than those who had not. A summary of the responses can be found at **Appendix 3**.

Although applicants are encouraged to seek guidance from EDU officers with both their EOI and FA this offer of support is not taken up by all the applicants and this has sometimes led to them being asked to provide additional information. Respondents who had not sought EDU support commented *“I have found the process took excessive amounts of time to complete”* and *“I believe a more face to face approach would be much easier and less onerous”* whereas those who had received EDU support said *“I found it straightforward and easy to complete the application and the speed of payment was excellent”* and *“so far the process, although time consuming in receiving quotes, has been professional.”*

Respondents generally said that they were happy with their communications with NEDDC officers, saying *“we have found any personnel that we have spoken with approachable and they have explained any queries we had clearly.”*

When asked about the value of schemes such as BGF, most respondents felt it was worthwhile, commenting *“I think anything around business growth, development, sales and marketing is great”* and *“it has enhanced my business and I would have not been able to have done this without the grant funding”* whereas another said *“in my experience I have to say no it isn't worthwhile and isn't supporting local small businesses.”*

Suggestions for the focus of funding included *“possibly support with hardware purchases as often investment in equipment is a barrier”* and *“Management Training would benefit growing businesses”*. It should be noted that hardware and equipment

purchases are eligible, although management training is not due to the feeling that it would not create any direct outcome benefit for NEDDC. Growth Hubs already support Workforce Training (including management training) through their existing support programmes and there is therefore no need to duplicate this provision.

Other feedback received at various stages included a suggestion to “*introduce an interim stage where the proposed outcomes and costs are reviewed prior to appraisal*” to save “*SMEs expending valuable resource providing detailed information with no prospect of success.*” This has been addressed in part with the introduction of a ceiling grant amount for standard websites and may still be considered for other costs where these seem high. This however will not remove the requirement for three independent quotes for expenditure or the need for the applicant to complete the Full Application form.

Observation 12: The general business response to operating the BGF is positive; whilst there was some were concerned at the effort and paperwork required to access a grant, this is balanced with the Council’s duty to protect the use of public money.

Case Study

Dronfield based call handling company Paperclip Admin received grant funding towards an enhanced client and information management system and has already employed two new FTE staff as a result of the new system. Oliver, who started work recently had the following to say about his new job “*I started at the beginning of August and have so far found the experience to be highly rewarding and a great introduction to working within an office having graduated from university earlier this year*”. The full case study for this company can be found at **Appendix 4**.

8. Interim Evaluation Conclusions

The summary of the evaluation observations is as follows:

Observation 1: Due to current LEP funding still focusing on larger grants there remains a local need for lower level funding for business support, particularly in non-LEADER areas.

Observation 2: The amendment to the website eligibility levels is appropriate, in order to focus the BGF on projects which deliver clearer growth outcomes.

Observation 3: The request for a business plan has ensured stronger bids are submitted, with weaker applications easier to identify at Full Application stage; or the advice given helping applicants to reassess their business approach.

Observation 4: Due to other support available and nil demand, it is not felt that funding to employ an apprentice should remain a priority.

Observation 5: Generally the BGF priorities are appropriate, although Brighter Business-type activity is less likely to evidence or deliver quantifiable BGF outcomes and therefore less likely to be approved.

Observation 6: The publicity approach was appropriate although targeting growth businesses through KAM and using intelligence resources such as MINT would help better identify projects which better delivered BGF priorities.

Observation 7: The priority focus of what constitutes an eligible needs to be determined at the Review Meeting, with the key focus being “what outcomes will be delivered” and “why would council want to fund them?”

Observation 8: Delivering the BGF successfully requires engagement and support from various departments who do not have this as a workload priority; to date this has been forthcoming in a professional and timely manner.

Observation 9: The level of funding available (£20,000 per annum) is reasonable although should conversions rates from EOIs to approved bids be high, then spend may be achieved well before the end of November 2017.

Observation 10: There is unlikely to be any significant generation of NNDR, with an expected level of below £1,000 per annum based on proportionate experience of the 2007-2013 BNED LEADER Approach.

Observation 11: The BGF has generated significantly high value for money outcomes in terms of jobs created and match funding from internal business investment which shows the desire for companies to grow within the district.

Observation 12: The general business response to operating the BGF is positive; whilst there was some were concerned at the effort and paperwork required to access a grant, this is balanced with the Council's duty to protect the use of public money.

Analysing these observations, it is clear that the BGF has helped local businesses to deliver some clear business growth outcomes in the non-BNED LEADER areas. Initial intentions to deliver increased Business Rates seem unlikely to be realised, although the job creation and business investment levels for such a modest grant are very positive. The flexibility of the fund has allowed it to evolve to ensure that the Council and local area will benefit from the grants provided, streamlining the bidding process to make it both easier for businesses to apply and for NEDDC to manage.

There are considerations highlighted for the Council to make in terms of what the wider offer to business can be resources (e.g. more KAM/one-to-one EDU support and identifying suitable privately owned sites for development to encourage inward investors) although that does not fall into the remit of this interim evaluation.

The key options to consider are:

Option 1: End the programme in Autumn 2017/when current funding is spent

Closing the programme in line with the original timescale, or sooner if funds are spent, would still mean that the scheme produces some good outputs. Any unspent funding could be re-allocated to other NEDDC's Growth Strategy actions.

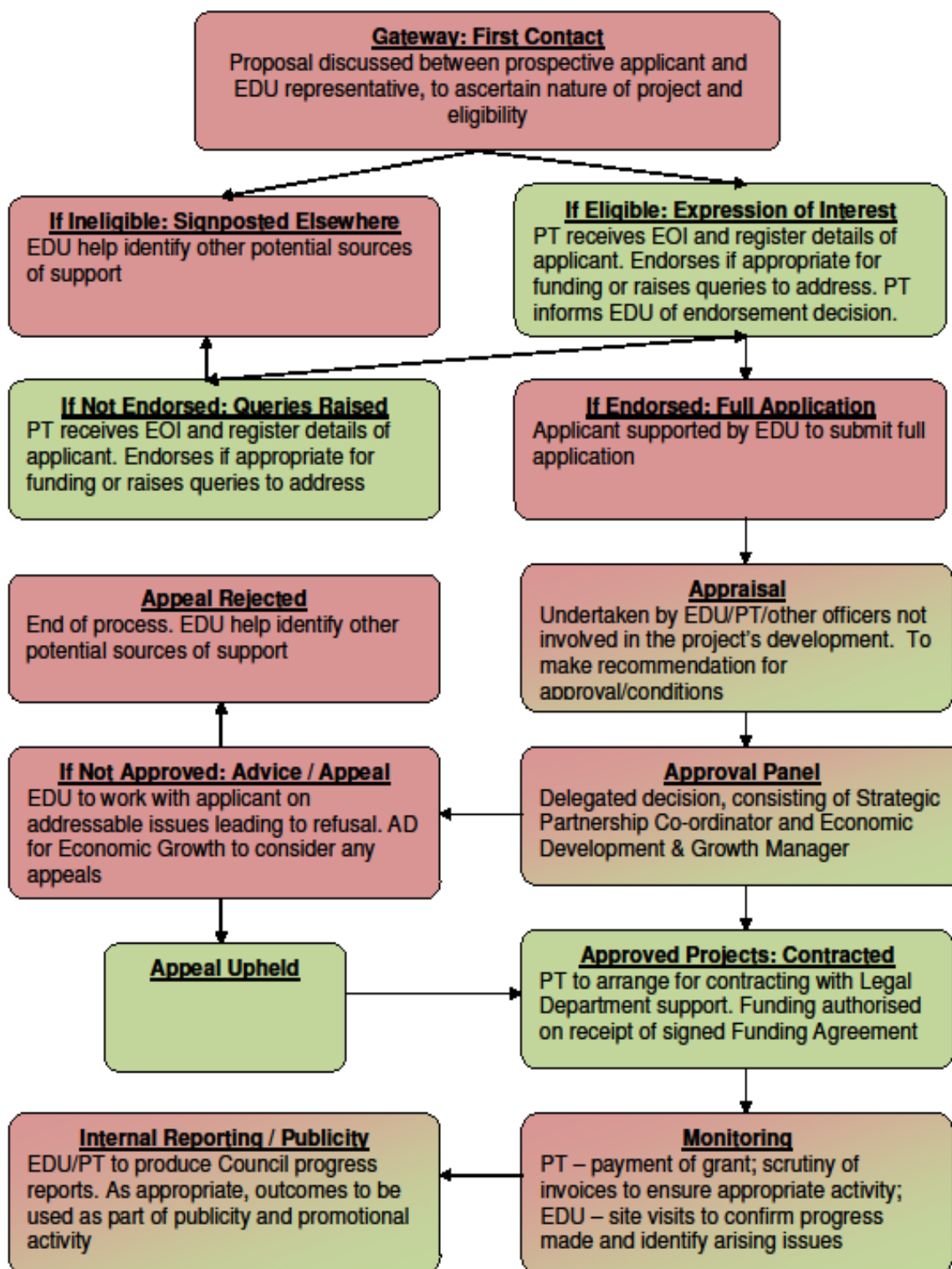
Option 2 – Extend the BGF programme and continue in its current format

Given the success of the scheme to date, the outputs being generated, value for money for job creation and the recent clarification by Government that the LEADER 2014-2020 Approach will continue to contract with projects until the UK officially leaves the EU (likely to be Spring 2019), extending the scheme to the end of March 2019 would facilitate additional outputs and align it with the financial year end and the expected closure of the LEADER programme. This approach would also ensure that the Council offers equitable grant support and is seen to champion Business Growth across all local communities within North East Derbyshire.

9. Recommendation

That the Council allocates an additional £26,500 funding to extend the North East Derbyshire Business Growth Fund by 16 months to March 2019, with the BGF management team maintaining flexibility on priority setting.

North East Derbyshire Business Growth Fund Outline Process:



NED BGF Outputs/Outcomes - November 2015 to 6th December 2016

	Total	Clay Cross	Dronfield	Tupton
Enquiries				
Enquiries Received (2 further enquiries from ineligible areas are considering LEADER bids)	37	18	16	1
Expressions of Interest (EOIs)				
Expressions of Interest Received	19	8	10	1
Expressions of Interest Endorsed (invited to full application)	17	7	9	1
Expressions of Interest Withdrawn by Applicant	3	1	2	0
Expressions of Interest Rejected	2	1	1	0
Total Funding Endorsed for EOIs currently developing applications	£16,000	£4,000	£12,000	£0
Total Forecast Job Outputs for Endorsed EOIs currently developing applications	8.5	2	6.5	0
Total Estimated Match Funding for Endorsed EOIs currently developing applications	£10,190	£2,250	£7,940	£0
Full Applications (FAs)				
Full Applications Received	7	3	3	1
Full Applications Approved (<i>not all at the funding level requested</i>)	5	3	2	0
Full Applications Rejected	1	0	1	0
Full Applications Withdrawn	1	0	0	1
Total Funding Approved	£15,858	£8,800	£7,058	£0
Contracted Match Funding	£15,741.85	£7,995.85	£7,746	£0
% Match Funding delivered (against a 10% minimum expectation)	49.82%	47.61%	52.32%	-
Total Contracted Job Outputs for Approved Full Applications	7.4	2.4	5	0
Job Outputs Achieved to date for Approved Full Applications	3	0	3	0

List of contracted projects (as at 6th December 2016)

Project	Location	Activity	Grant Amount	Project Start Date
Alma Osteopathic Practice	Clay Cross	Renovation of a second treatment room and purchase of equipment to provide a facility for an additional practitioner to work from the premises.	£3800.00	October 2016 to December 2017
Inspire Design & Development Ltd	Clay Cross	Development of a website to improve marketing capabilities and increase client numbers.	£1000.00	June to September 2016 (Completed)
JGW Training Ltd t/a Skills for Careers	Dronfield	Website development including search engine optimisation and creation of applicant and vacancy management system.	£3058.00	June to December 2016
Paperclip Admin Ltd	Dronfield	Purchase of a bespoke call centre software package to enable automation of call answering, minute monitoring, reporting opportunities for clients and increased capacity for call handling volumes.	£4000.00	February to October 2016 (Completed)
STAL Ltd	Clay Cross	Purchase of new dust extraction system	£4000.00	October 2016 to December 2017

Summary of Applicant Questionnaire Responses

Appendix 3

Questions	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
1. How did you find out about BGF?	In the North East Derbyshire Update magazine that comes through the door.	through Jane Weston, one of the NEDDC advisors	I was informed about the grants when looking into Leader funding.	Through Jane Weston, my business relationship manager at NEDDC. She promoted this along with everything else that the council could offer support with.
2. Expression of Interest (EOI) stage				
a) Did you speak to a member of the Economic Development Unit before submitting your EOI form? YES/NO	yes	yes	yes I believe so but I can't remember	yes
b) If not, why?				
c) Did you find the guidance for completing the EOI form clear and helpful? YES/NO	yes	yes	yes the guidance was clear and helpful.	yes
d) If not, why?				
e) Did you find the EOI form easy to complete? YES/NO	yes	yes	yes, fairly easy	yes
f) If not, why?				
3. Full Application (FA) stage				
a) Did you consult a member of the Economic Development Unit to advise you how to complete your Full Application form? YES/NO	yes	yes	yes	yes
b) If not, why?				
c) Did you find the guidance for completing the Full Application form clear and helpful? YES/NO	yes	yes	yes	yes
d) If not, why?				
e) Did you find the Full Application form easy to complete? YES/NO	yes	yes	-	yes
f) If not, why?				

Questions	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
4. Communication with NEDDC officers				
a) Were you happy with your communications with NEDDC Officers? YES/NO	yes	yes	-	yes
b) If not, why?			I found the communication rather off putting and curt! I had several options to establishing a new business and have been trying for several years to obtain help. I have either been in the wrong area, the wrong type of business, the wrong age..... And I have found the process took excessive amounts of time to complete In this case I had decided to put our house up for sale and fund my own business. I didn't alter my plans on the off chance that I MIGHT get funding.	
c) Was detail clearly explained? YES/NO	yes	yes	-	yes
d) If not, why?			-	
e) Were you dealt with in good time (in line with the agreed timescales)?YES/NO	yes	yes	-	yes
f) If not, why?			-	

Questions	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
<p>5. Do you feel that small grant schemes such as the BGF are worthwhile for the local business community? YES/NO</p> <p>a) If Yes, is there anything you suggest such funds should focus upon (or not)?</p> <p>b) If not, why?</p>	<p>yes</p> <p>We think the focus should be as it already is, i.e. generating jobs and supporting local businesses to grow.</p>	<p>yes</p> <p>I think anything around business growth / development / sales and marketing is great. Possibly support with hardware purchases as often investment in equipment is a barrier. Management Training would benefit growing businesses.</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>In my experience I have to say no it isn't worthwhile and isn't supporting local small businesses. I got the impression that the scheme was looking to support bigger businesses that could offer additional employment rather than small enterprises that could flourish. Trying to establish a business is very tiring and time consuming, the time involved in applying for funding is demanding. I believe a more face to face approach would be much easier and less onerous.</p>	<p>yes</p>

Questions	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
<p>6. Is there anything more you would like to tell us about your experience of the BGF process?</p>	<p>So far the process, although time consuming in receiving quotes, has been professional. We have found any personnel that we have spoken with approachable and they have explained any queries we had clearly.</p>	<p>I found it straightforward and easy to complete the application and the speed of payment was excellent. Thank you.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>It has enhanced my business and I would have not been able to have done this without the grant funding. I would definitely encourage other businesses to apply for the BGF – it really does make a difference when financial support is needed.</p>

NEDBGF Case Story November 2016 – Paperclip Admin Ltd, Dronfield

How did you hear about the Business Growth Fund?

Through Jane Weston my business relationship manager at NEDDC. She promoted this along with everything else that the council could offer support with.

Was the guidance clear?

Yes. It was very easy to understand and the instructions were clear on how to apply for the funding.

Was the process straightforward?

It was very straightforward. Jane explained before I applied on what the process would entail and the process involved.

Have you been happy with communications with NEDDC officers?

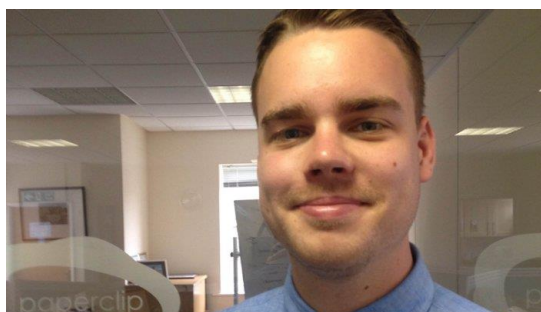
Yes, absolutely. I felt I could ask anything or say if there was a problem. I felt very comfortable. For example my project had a minor hiccup where one of the milestones was not hit due to a technical hitch and I just talked this through with Jane without any worries or pressure. I was reminded of various timescales by Sue from the Partnership Team, so I knew exactly what I needed to do by when which was really helpful.

Would you recommend the scheme to others?

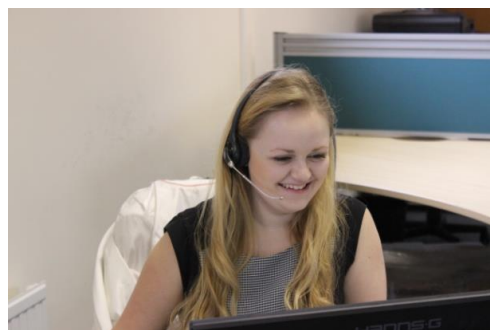
Yes – definitely. It has enhanced my business and I would have not been able to have done this without the grant funding.

Who have you appointed as a result of the Business Growth Fund and how are they getting on?

Oliver Chapman and Alex Marshall, both of whom work full time now. Alex has been with the team the longest and she is now taking on more responsibility, which is brilliant.



Oliver Chapman



Alex Marshall

Quote from Oliver:

'I started at the beginning of August and have so far found the experience to be highly rewarding and a great introduction to working within an office having graduated from university earlier this year. I hope to continue my progression with the company and feel that I have grown into the role well and learnt a lot already during my time here, I believe that the job has helped me in a number of areas that I would have once highlighted as weaknesses of mine but I now feel more than comfortable with. I wish to continue working here for the foreseeable future and strengthening in all areas I can in order to best assist the team at providing excellent customer service and assisting the business' that we work in conjunction with.'

How has the equipment improved your business?

The biggest advantage that the system has provided is the provision of LMI. We can now provide really detailed information for businesses on how many calls are taken on their behalf, how long they take and what time we take more calls for them. All this is done automatically whereas before similar information was collated manually which took a considerable amount of time and was not so detailed. The information is presented very visually and clearly for clients. This detailed information provides our clients with information on when they receive the most calls, i.e. their peak times and can develop their own business accordingly. There are at times when there are 3 people who are taking calls for one business at a specific time which again saves the business the cost of recruiting a person if needed just in peak times and when one person would not be enough to answer the phones anyway. As the information is collated automatically, this means that more time can actually be taken answering calls so enables more customers to be taken on which supports with our business growth.

Could anything else have been better with the process?

No – everything has been very straightforward. The submission was not arduous at all and we were fully supported throughout. I would definitely encourage other businesses to apply for the BGF – it really does make a difference when financial support is needed.

Anne Batty, Managing Director, Paperclip Admin Ltd.