

## Marches Investment Fund (MIF) Support for Strategic Tourism Business Initiatives

### Update on Progress to the Marches LEP – November 2020

#### Background

Following the application from Shropshire Council, supported by the Shropshire Business Board to the Marches LEP at the end of May for funding support for both businesses and market town recovery, Shropshire Council received £737,000, which was agreed to be split as follows;

- £600,000 for grant funding for businesses securing a minimum of 195 jobs and split into the following categories;
  - £450,000 to be split into £10,000 grants for 45 businesses employing between 11-20 staff focused on businesses within the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Business Enabling sectors.
  - £150,000 to be split into £5,000 grants for 30 businesses employing between 1-10 staff again focused on businesses within the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Business Enabling sectors.
- £137,000 for market town recovery work focusing on both recovery through both COVID-19 and flooding, which would be split as follows;
  - £117,000 to the seven key market towns of Shropshire, receiving the following; Shrewsbury - £50,000, Ludlow and Bridgnorth - £20,000 each, Oswestry - £12,000, Market Drayton, Whitchurch and Shifnal - £5,000 each.
  - £20,000 would also be allocated within to four innovative projects from market towns outside of Shrewsbury and would be open as part of a competitive process to support to drive confidence and footfall.
- Amendments to the scheme meant that the £600,000 allocation to businesses for grants was reduced to £570,000 and the market town recovery work was uplifted to £167,000. This was used to uplift the small market town projects from £20,000 to £50,000.

#### Progress to Date

##### Business Grants

The funding support for businesses was implemented within Round 3 of Shropshire Council's discretionary fund, which opened on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June and closed on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June. During this period, the full £570,000 of funding from the MIF pot to businesses was paid out and job targets that were set were exceeded. We can confirm that the final results are as follows;

- 20 Business Enabling and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure businesses supported with £10,000 grants, totalling a spend of £200,000.
- 74 Business Enabling and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure businesses supported with £5,000 grants, totalling a spend of 370,000.
- 306 jobs were safeguarded through the support of these funds. 145 through the support of a £5,000 grant and 161 through the support of a £10,000 grant.

## Shropshire Market Towns Recovery Work

The Shropshire Market Towns Fund was launched on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July, where the Town Councils (and BIDs) from the seven key market towns were contacted outlining the requirements to submit a proposition for the use of funding to Shropshire Council. These were assessed and agreed, with released to these bodies to allow them to complete work on Market Town recovery. This £117,000 was released as follows;

- Shrewsbury - £50,000
- Bridgnorth - £20,000
- Ludlow - £20,000
- Oswestry - £12,000
- Market Drayton - £5,000
- Shifnal - £5,000
- Whitchurch - £5,000

The competitive process that formed the second phase of the Shropshire Market Towns Fund was also launched on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July with all Town and Parish Council's and potential partner organisations notified, a webpage was developed with a downloadable application form.

The scheme closed on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July, following an agreement to uplift the value of this opportunity from £20,000 to £50,000 using some funds from the business grant scheme.

Further to the closure of applications, the full £50,000 funding was allocated as follows;

- Bishops Castle - £5,000
- Ellesmere - £5,000
- Much Wenlock - £5,000
- Church Stretton - £5,000
- Cleobury Mortimer - £5,000
- Wem - £5,000
- Clun - £4,100
- Broseley - £5,000
- Craven Arms - £5,000
- Shropshire wide - £5,900

Whilst a number of the areas have progressed with their projects to use these resources to support the initial recovery phase, the latest national lockdown has posed restrictions within this process. It is therefore our request to the Marches LEP to allow spend and returns to be extended until the end of the financial year. Shropshire Council will be working closely with each of the market towns to support the conclusion of these schemes to a successful outcome following national lockdown.

Interim reports were requested from all applicants to be completed by the end of October. Details of these are outlined below;

TOWN	COMMENTS
Shrewsbury	<p>All activities set out in application have been confirmed as delivered – except Castle Quarter Dining Club (reduced interest from businesses). Campaign has been ‘most successful’ to date with positive feedback from businesses, partners and public.</p> <p>All grant funding has been allocated. Seven-day average footfall up 77% from start of campaign to end Aug (to 24.7k).</p> <p>Anticipating further impacts on footfall, spend and online engagement in Autumn/Winter period.</p>
Oswestry	<p>Street cleaning in progress. Maps and dispensers ordered. Spend allocated, purchase orders raised, and some invoices received. Due to start marketing and promotion through various channels. Holding back some of marketing due to coronavirus restrictions. Will be holding a late-night shopping event in early December.</p>
Ludlow	<p>Love Ludlow campaign will begin in earnest in November for the Christmas period – press and social media which will continue Jan – Feb. Street bunting, lamp post signs to be installed from beginning November with some dressing in situ for 6-9 months. New orientation maps in production.</p> <p>Overall project is ‘unfolding from Oct – Mar’ with local and national marketing. Short and longer-term impacts.</p>
Bridgnorth	<p>Initial efforts around support for Saturday market, ensuring public health social distancing procedure in place. Costs for marshalling and public information £3,150. Bridgnorth Safe to Shop £500</p> <p>Activity put in place for Halloween pumpkin trails, virtual ghost walk (£950). Let’s Go local this Christmas £1,200.</p> <p>Anticipate street scene improvements Jan – Mar 2021</p> <p>Public information publicity Nov 2020 – Mar 2021</p> <p>This means going beyond timescales for use of grant.</p> <p>Views of impact of activity and use of grant are ‘varied and will need to be considered more fully to be sure of outcome’.</p>
Whitchurch	<p>Of total grant £2,000 spent to date on marketing print material (Welcome back to Whitchurch Christmas brochure). Impact expected to be felt over the next six-month period. Asked for further time to develop project into the new year.</p>
Market Drayton	<p>Project based on pedestrianising Cheshire Street. Members of MDTC have decided not to go ahead with proposal after discussions with local Traders Association.</p> <p>New proposal is to progress a permit from SC to hold walking markets in the centre of town. ‘We hope to have something in place by the end of the year – this is very dependent on SC working with us.’</p> <p>Report does not include any details for new scheme or any costs. Engagement with the applicant ongoing to ensure the scheme is delivered but would require more time to deliver.</p>
Shifnal	<p>They have unfortunately not been able to progress this project much past the concept stage due to workload commitments and staff absences. Applicant has outlined that they think that they will be able to progress it promptly before Christmas but mindful of current deadlines. Have asked for further time to progress.</p>

Much Wenlock	Work in progress with new marketing tools in production – signage, videos, coaching sessions. All funding allocated. Some indication of impacts expected over Christmas with longer term view in next 12 months.
Clun	Monthly produce market reopened and has been expanded to include outside stalls. Footfall at October market was highest they had ever had. All funds allocated. Greater buzz with people enjoying themselves. Refreshments now on offer. Premises being used in a COVID-19 safe way and people feel comfortable. Increase in use and presence of outdoor stalls has brought in passing trade. Next big change will come when able to open for larger events as impact of kitchen improvements will be felt.
Bishops Castle	Elephant trail artwork in progress or completed. Street signage and interpretation for work on Heritage Weighbridge done. Marketing through website, press releases and social media progressed. Coverage in Shropshire Star, Radio Shropshire, County Times. Spend to date £1,500. Future spend £3,500. Match funding £1,100. September footfall in town above average. Recent farmers markets and flea markets 25% increase on pre-COVID-19 attendances.
Cleobury Mortimer	Applicant continues to push on with this project but do not expect to be near completion at the end of November. Historical research continues to be undertaken for the displays and they are trying to get confirmation from the hydrologist about the most suitable supply of water for the Wells. They have requested a two-month extension to the time period.
Craven Arms	Some schemes have commenced and others are in progress with plans being made for events early next year. May take until Spring to have a real impact. Events all planned to help increase footfall, retail/leisure spend, help secure and advertise businesses, involve customers and communities.
Broseley	Planning done but not implementation. Updating town boards plus new boards on Ironbridge Road and Coalport Road with costs agreed with supplier. Walking routes designed and maps completed. Town Council suggests 24-month period for accurate assessment of impact.
Ellesmere	Ellesmere's work focuses around signage improvements, new notice boards, maps which are either in progress or completed with all budget allocated.
Wem	Report has not been completed to date, continue to chase for follow up.
Church Stretton	Marketing includes new videos to showcase Church Stretton and Shropshire Hills which are in production. Picnic furniture installed. Prep done for new signage and leaflet dispensers ordered. Budget is all allocated out.
Shropshire wide	Grant intended for Autumn/Winter marketing campaign to stimulate Shropshire's visitor economy in towns and the countryside. Visit Shropshire (VS) to be project lead with Shropshire Council's providing match-funding for campaign costs. Interest from the tourism sector was generated but there was a reluctance to spend on marketing. VS promoted the footfall driving campaign through website and social media. Towns used social media.