

**Report for: Cabinet**

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Date of Meeting:	7 January 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Green Enterprise Grants</b>
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Natasha Bradshaw - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.
Responsible Officer(s):	Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist.  Linda Perry - Economic Development Officer.  Paul Deal - Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience.
Exempt:	None.
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	None.

### **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

This proposal builds on the success of a pilot scheme. The purpose of the Green Enterprise Grant is to help Mid Devon businesses to invest in making their operations more sustainable through energy and resource efficiency.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1. That Cabinet instruct the Economic Development team and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist to develop the next phase of the Green Enterprise Grant Scheme, in consultation with the Head of Service for Finance, Property and Climate Resilience as recommended by the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group.**

### **Section 2 – Report**

- 1.0 Background
- 1.1 The Council's Economy Team has piloted a scheme of Green Enterprise Grants to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Mid Devon.

- 1.1.1 The Grants encouraged business investment to reduce environmental impact - particularly greenhouse emissions. Resource and energy efficiency can achieve considerable cost savings too, which lends financial resilience at a time of price volatility.
- 1.1.2 Grants of £24,245 capital funding have been awarded to energy saving and solar projects by Mid Devon businesses. When complete, these are set to save circa 13 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) annually and achieve over £50k match-funding value.
- 1.2 The scheme was funded from a successful bid to the [Heart of the South West](#) Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund).
- 1.3 This complemented the [Prosper business support programme](#) that provides SMEs with advice and support to identify and reduce their carbon footprint.
- 1.4 Given the short timescale, a small funding pot and unknown demand, this was run as a pilot scheme to learn from the process and the responses.
- 1.5 This proposal emerges at a point of demonstrable success for a model the Council can take forward. Learning from the pilot, the team has reflected on the administrative needs and how to address the typical barriers and issues encountered.
- 2.0 Proposal
- 2.1 To develop the next phase of Green Enterprise Grants for Mid Devon SMEs.
- 2.2 Delivery. Key details:
  - Grants budget up to £30k. (Grant award values from £500 to £5k.)
  - Timeline: January 2025, prepare for launch using existing funds (also seek external additional funding); February 2025, pre-launch engagement to raise expressions of interest; March 2025, bid support workshop; April 2025 launch. Likely completion target: 31 March 2026.
- 2.3 Administration. Key details:
  - The decision panel awarding grants will comprise 3 Elected Members.
  - The administrative team will evaluate bids using a standardised process with a scoring protocol and assessment framework.
  - The administrative team will make recommendations to the decision panel and provide support to enable decisions, including research and specialist advice where required.
  - Decisions on grant awards will be considered on a monthly cycle, responding to completed evaluations for eligible applications.
  - Evaluation will consider quality of evidence (e.g. carbon footprints) around the forecast impact and match funding value of each project.
  - Due diligence checks will be carried out.
- 2.4 Scope and eligibility. Key details:

- SMEs based in Mid Devon only.
- Eligible SME types will include Community Interest Companies (CIC).
- The scheme will be fairly administered to all eligible enterprises. However, bids will not be accepted from certain business categories for specific reasons. For the avoidance of bias and any risk of overlap with the Council's climate action investments, business tenants based at Council assets will not be eligible to apply.

#### 2.5 Planning and other consents.

- The application criteria will make it clear that all necessary consents must be obtained prior to submitting an application.

#### 2.6 Mandatory quality standards

- Recognised standards will be essential for certain projects e.g. MCS - certified installers. ([Microgeneration Certification Scheme](#))

#### 2.7 Details of grant scheme outcomes and successful bids would be published. Quarterly performance reports would be provided to the decision panel and an interim review report can be produced after 6 months.

### **Financial Implications**

The grants would be funded by existing approved budgets. External funding will also be sought, in order to support or extend the grant scheme.

### **Legal Implications**

Any grant scheme would be subject to the current law around operational requirements and standards in public service. There are no legal implications associated with this proposal.

### **Risk Assessment**

The main risks to the project (mitigating actions in brackets) are: lack of uptake by enterprises (promotion will build on a well-established relationship with the local business community); non-delivery of approved projects (guidance, agreements and deadlines will help to manage timely delivery); applicants lack sufficient project management time or investment capital to achieve their projects (the small grant scale is suited to small, manageable projects).

### **Impact on Climate Change**

Based on the demonstrable ability for this form of grant scheme to create or accelerate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this proposal should contribute positively towards reducing climate impact. The funding could achieve a range of impact avoidance / savings annually between circa 1 and 10 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

There are no equality impacts associated with this project proposal; the scheme would serve a target segment of enterprises and a specific geographical location but would be open to all eligible. Projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

## **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

[Corporate Plan 2024-2028](#), priority 1.2: Support the district's response to the climate emergency.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Date:** 18 December 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 18 December 2024

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

**Date:** 18 December 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 08 November 2024

**Cabinet member notified:** (yes)

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Linda Perry. Email: [LPerry@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:LPerry@middevon.gov.uk) Tel: 01884 255255. Jason Ball. Email: [JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk](mailto:JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk) Tel: 01884 255255.

**Background papers:** Previous report to Economy PDG.