



UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group

10 August 2022 14:00 – 16:00

Meeting Note

Members in attendance

Name	Organisation	Sector
Sue Gray (Chair)	DLUHC	UK government
Stephen Rusk (representing Colin Perry)	NIO	UK government
Adrian McCreesh	SOLACE (Mid Ulster District Council)	Local government
Marie Ward (Newry, Mourne and Down Council representing John Walsh – Belfast City Council)	SOLACE (Belfast City Council)	Local government
Professor Ian Greer	Queen's University Belfast	Higher education/skills
Seamus McAleavey	NICVA	Voluntary and community
Valerie McConville	CO3	Voluntary and community
Maeve Monaghan	NOW Group	Social enterprise
Ann McGregor	NI Chamber of Commerce	Business
Angela McGowan	CBI	Business

Secretariat

The meeting was supported by DLUHC officials: Chris Taylor, Hannah Henderson, Stephen Finley and Mike Ward.

Chair's Welcome and Actions Arising from Previous Meeting

The Chair welcomed members and nominees to the second UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group meeting and noted that:

- A declaration of members interests form was circulated along with the agenda and papers for this meeting, and that members should complete and return this.
- All actions arising from the previous meeting were completed.
- NIE Departments' active participation in the Partnership Group and investment planning remains subject to further discussion. Alongside this, DLUHC are having constructive bilateral conversations on opportunities to align with NIE Departments' policy and delivery arrangements.

Stakeholder engagement update and forward look



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DLUHC shared an overview of stakeholder engagement to date and feedback from workshops and other bilateral discussions with stakeholders.

Members noted that:

- Workshops have taken place for both business and local government representatives, along with direct engagement with a wide range of other stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is ongoing with meetings and workshops continuing into August.
- Smaller funders operating in Northern Ireland should be considered and engaged with when considering complementarity and the wider funding landscape, noting to the Chair several organisations who should be engaged with further.
- Continued engagement will reassure stakeholders, notably in the community and voluntary sector.

Members were content with the range of stakeholders engaged with. It was resolved that:

- DLUHC will continue to engage with, and seek the views of, a range of organisations in tandem with the investment plan development.

Investment priorities and interventions

DLUHC shared an initial, indicative prioritisation of interventions and funding allocations across the three investment priorities.

It was noted that:

- There are a variety of funding streams with varying foci operating in Northern Ireland covering the full range of investments; members recognised that UKSPF may not be the right route to deliver certain funding where there are existing and established funders. This covers some aspects of research and development which is a UKG priority, and larger capital projects can be covered by the Levelling Up Fund.
- Innovation has been subject to significant investment in Northern Ireland and more focus could be given to skills as a local priority and driver for economic growth.
- The chair noted that some members from Local Government emphasised the need for bricks and mortar interventions to address historic underinvestment and engender pride in place, but that funding available for UKSPF as a whole, and communities and place in particular means taking difficult choices. Capital projects typically have longer lead times and often face planning difficulties; members discussed the need to fund projects at pace, which may mitigate against significant UKSPF support.
- For people and skills activities to be viable at the scale proposed, experienced staff need to be retained in the VCS sector, and members noted that many ESF-funded organisations are considering putting staff on protective notice as its funding draws to a close.
- Alongside proposed interventions, tourism sector support, measures to improve resilience to cost of living, energy efficiency and green growth and skills should be considered.

It was resolved that:

- The indicative split of investment priorities was generally endorsed by members; however, the Chair noted the views of several present who commented on the



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need for greater investment in communities and place and people and skills interventions.

4. Key design considerations

It was noted by members that:

- The UKSPF programme team need to work closely with councils to determine the capacity of Local Authorities to deliver UKSPF projects.
- Interventions should be directed at fewer priorities in order to maximise impact, other funding streams may be more appropriate for certain types of intervention.

It was resolved that:

- DLUHC will engage with appropriate public sector delivery agents to ascertain their capacity to deliver UKSPF projects.

5. Next steps

It was resolved that:

- The next meeting will take place on 23rd September.
- DLUHC will bring forward plans to engage with Northern Ireland political representatives in due course.
- At the next Partnership Meeting DLUHC will present a draft investment plan for consideration.