

**Getting Building Fund**

**Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

**Date – January 2022**

1. **The Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEP Getting Building Fund**
   1. The Government is making £900 million available through the new Getting Building Fund (GBF) for investment in local, shovel-ready infrastructure projects to stimulate jobs and support economic recovery across the country.
   2. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP had been allocated **£23.7m** from the GBF for a wide-ranging package of projects that will deliver a much-needed boost to the local economy.
      1. Subsequent programme changes led to a change in GBF funding allocation. SSLEP and D2N2 LEP had both been awarded GBF funding to jointly bring forward the Drakelow Park scheme. To de-risk the scheme for SSLEP and to allow greater autonomy and programme management efficiencies for D2N2 LEP (who are managing the scheme), the two LEPs agreed with MHCLG that £5.05m could be de-allocated from SSLEP and re-allocated to D2N2 LEP, subject to specific conditions (e.g. the funding can only be used for this scheme; SSLEP is acknowledged as co-investor).
      2. The revised SSLEP GBF allocation, after £5.05m has been transferred to D2N2 LEP to invest in Drakelow Park, is **£18.65m**
   3. In Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, the funded projects are expected to deliver support for businesses through new innovation and enterprise space, investment in digital skills for young people, and improvements to transport infrastructure which will enable increased sustainable travel, helping to facilitate a green recovery. These projects align with the LEP’s key priorities and will support the LEP area’s recovery from Covid-19.

The schemes selected for GBF funding are detailed on the SSLEP’s [website](https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/delivering-growth/deals/getting-building-fund/)

* 1. The Getting Building Fund programme can be broken down into a number of key features and groups of interventions which have come forward within the programme and are:

Support for businesses through new innovation and enterprise space:

* Innovation Centre 7, Keele University will deliver 2,696m2 of BREEAM excellent innovation space at the Keele Growth Corridor University Enterprise Zone. The centre will focus on the grand challenge areas of artificial intelligence, machine learning and a data-driven digital economy. It will enable delivery of a business transformation programme focussing on supporting SMEs develop their understanding and use of advanced data analytics and related digital technologies creating over 175 jobs and contributing a net additional £10m of GVA per annum.
* Creative Lab (formerly named New Enterprise Collaboratory) will accelerate and strengthen the creation, survival and growth of business start-ups through access to specialist equipment, co-working environment and wider enabling facilities and support within the University's Innovation Enterprise Zone. The collaborative space will be centred at heart of Staffordshire University’s Stoke on Trent campus and an evolving enterprise and innovation ecosystem encompassing access to expertise, research, students, specialist support and innovation platforms.
* Powering Up Enterprise - a suite of 6 properties, 5 of which are within the ownership of Stoke on Trent City Council, suitable for conversion into new start-up / enterprise space. This provision of new floorspace, with an accessible local business support network, removes a significant barrier between the idea of starting up and making it a reality.
* Shire Hall Business Hub - the GBF bid focuses on the creation of the Business Hub in the newer part of the building and improvements to the Assembly Hall events/exhibition area. The business hub will deliver 42 jobs, create 21 new business units and £12,000 sq m of new business floorspace, together with bringing an important historic building into re-use and the resulting positive impact on the economic prosperity of the County Town.

A programme of Digital Skills Project investments including:

* Health Innovation Centre – Staffordshire University’s new ground-breaking initiative will use advanced VR and AR technology; this new capability incorporates advanced digital simulation and immersion suites that enable healthcare students and existing professionals to explore and develop new patient safety techniques.
* Church Street gaming Hub - The Church Street Gaming Hub is a collaboration between Stoke-on-Trent City Council, VX Fiber and Staffordshire University in part of the Spode site. With a strong focus on the more innovative area of game streaming platforms the hub will provide educational and training support for video game development and programming across the community, offering digital skill opportunities for those upskilling, for school leavers and NEETS, as well as opportunities for graduate internships. Encouraging engagement with the central hub through a community hub system, the Innovation Hub will provide opportunities for all areas of the community. As well as an educational and training function the hub will provide an ideal environment as an incubator for business start-ups.
* Cleveland Future Skills Hub – to provide refurbished facilities enabling more flexible education areas – providing greater capacity and improved resilience for the delivery of training courses. (e.g. in Covid-secure teaching arrangements). It will also enable PM Training to deliver the digital elements of their original submission – including digital and creative skills (e.g. Cyber Security, Digital Support, Software development, IS Solutions).

and Digital Skills Projects for young people:

* SEF C – Digital Skills Academy. South Staffs College The Digital Skills Academy will provide digital hubs at Cannock & Tamworth to provide access to high quality skills training supported by state of the art physical and digitally simulated environments in order to develop the skills needed by local and regional employers. The Digital Skills Academy will provide technical and industry relevant courses on Microsoft and Huawei as well as emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, 5G routing and switching, security, Wireless Local Area networks, cloud, storage, and big data.
* SEF F - Creative and Digital Industries Project Phase 2. Stoke on Trent College. Incorporates the completion of the remodelling and refurbishment of the New Library Building to create a collaborative learning space for the development of digital skills including coding and software engineering for Digital Arts and Engineering learners at advanced and higher levels enabling them to progress to Higher Education or into local jobs. The investment will support skills growth for existing and new business start-ups emerging from labour market restructuring in North Staffs and the City of Stoke-on-Trent.
* SEF H - Digital Construction Skills. Stoke on Trent College. The College would expand the use of the AR/ VR hubs at both sites to incorporate building information management hardware and software. Students will benefit from the opportunity to engage and interact with the latest digital technologies expanding their existing industrial skills and knowledge making them more productive and effective. They will be work ready to support the supply of sites and commercial premises. There will be an emphasis on low carbon technology to future proof students’ skills and to ensure significant improvements in economic productivity for the city and for the region.
* SEF G – JCB Automation and Robotics suite. The scheme will create an Automation & Robotics Suite to include a Control and Automation Suite, a cad & visualisation suite and an independent study area. The suite will enable the expansion of curriculum in both the mechanical and electronic sector from level 1 to level 3. The facility will provide a bureau of specialist knowledge and equipment and will allow smaller employers access to emerging technologies and advice.

Investment in sustainable transport options:

* Staffordshire Local Sustainable Transport scheme – a package of 6 schemes that will deliver 3.6km of walking/cycling infrastructure in Tamworth, Biddulph, Burton, Uttoxeter, Burntwood and Eccleshall. These will to retain and expand the rediscovery of active travel seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, support community priorities and promote health and mental well-being, access to jobs, social inclusivity and a sustainable alternative to public transport.

Major infrastructure to unlock development sites for employment:

* The Western Extension to the highly successful i54 South Staffordshire site will enable 60 acres of prime employment land, which can accommodate up to 1 million square of employment floor space and is expected to create up to 1700 jobs and generate £110 million of Gross Value-Added benefits. An access road to the site was completed in March 2020 and the fully serviced development plots are due for completion in summer 2021. End users on the site will join major companies on i54 such as Jaguar Land Rover, Moog aerospace and others.
* Drakelow Park – although funding has been de-allocated from SSLEP and re-allocated to D2N2 LEP, SSLEP is credited as a co-investor. The delivery of the full scheme is dependent upon the completion of a new Walton-on-Trent river bridge and bypass to enhance access to the site. It would unlock a 110-hectare site to open up development of 2,239 homes, 12 hectares of employment land and two mixed use centres with retail, leisure and education facilities

1.5 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP will be expected to deliver the agreed projects but will have flexibility to deliver the greatest economic benefits to the area. Any significant changes to the programme or to individual projects would be subject to an MHCLG change request process. All investment decisions must be undertaken in line with locally agreed audit and scrutiny arrangements.

1.6 As part of the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan we have been mindful of the direction of travel of both the Government and the SSLEP to be reflective of SSLEP’s Strategic Economic Plan and the challenges that we must face to improve productivity.

1.7 As well as the broad groupings of interventions highlighted above, we have considered how they will primarily contribute to SSLEP’s Strategic Economic Plan to help us shape our future programmes and projects around their impact and contributions.

1.8 Many of the projects included in the GBF programme are likely to provide substantial contributions to the Higher Value-Added sector priorities of the LIS.

1. **Our Approach to Monitoring and Evaluating the Getting Building Fund Programme**

**Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation**

2.1 A requirement of the Getting Building Fund, and a component of any good funding programme, is the development of an agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan covering the capital projects allocated Getting Building Fund grant.

2.2 As part of a suite of initiatives to refresh the Governance arrangements in place, the SSLEP has identified a set of metrics for use in monitoring project progress and outputs and these are regularly presented to SSLEP’s performance management groups, with the relevant information reported to Government as required. In addition, discussions have taken place around the development of an Evaluation Plan to measure the impact and outcomes of the programme.

2.3 In all cases it is important that evaluation maintains a balance of proportionality and is selective; taking into consideration the scale, value and scope of an intervention.

2.4 However, as a minimum level the SSLEP has an expectation that all projects should capture and report relevant monitoring information, particularly in relation to outputs, and to ensure that the learning related to the success or otherwise of a project or programme is shared, to enable the LEP to reflect upon the greatest return on investment from its funding. These provisions should be built in as minimum level by project managers into the overall management of their projects.

**Routine Project and Programme Monitoring**

2.5 Following the recommendations of a review of SSLEP Governance arrangements undertaken by Hatch Regeneris in Autumn 2019, the monitoring of projects where delivery is ‘on track’ will now be on a quarterly basis to the SSLEP Strategic Programme Management Board. This acts as a subgroup of the LEP Executive Board with the remit to make proportionate decisions and challenge the performance of projects where necessary.

2.6 In line with MHCLG grant conditions, SSLEP will be required to track project progress against core metrics and outcomes, and to provide quarterly monitoring reports to MHCLG to provide an update on progress and track performance against agreed outputs. Throughout the delivery period the Cities and Local Growth Unit’s area team will liaise with SSLEP on a regular basis. From time to time they may inspect GBF funded projects and may require additional information from SSLEP to enable them to monitor progress.

2.7 In accordance with the requirements of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), further in-depth monitoring information relating to project outputs and financial performance will also be provided. (GBF grant is to have been fully expended by the deadline of 31st March 2022).

**Our Proposed evaluation approaches**

2.8 As a general principle, the SSLEP has identified that the preferred approach to evaluation will be to identify those projects which offer the greatest value for others to learn from – in other words a focus on projects which may be innovative, have alternative approaches to delivery or represent a way of working which maximises success and benefits. However, it should be noted that the Getting Building Fund has specific criteria attached which have been set by government to support local recovery from Covid-19. In addition, government reserves the authority to give consent to the inclusion of a scheme in the programme or any changes proposed to the programme.

2.9 In most cases, ‘standard’ transport schemes will not be subject to an in-depth evaluation as part of this framework. There is a strong body of evidence to demonstrate the quantitative and qualitative impacts of such schemes and they have a strong element of evaluation built into their delivery process on a ‘business as usual’ basis. Drakelow Park scheme would fall into this category.

2.10 **Annex 1** to this Monitoring and Evaluation Plan sets out the elements of the SSLEP Getting Building Fund programme to be evaluated, the proposed approach of the evaluation and the suggested timescales for undertaking the evaluations. (Significant changes to the original programme were approved by MHCLG during 2021 and are reflected in this revised Annex 1).

2.11 We recognise the importance of a structured and well-planned approach towards evaluation both to understand the performance and successes or otherwise of our interventions as well as in providing a good evidence base to inform the direction of any future interventions and investments.

2.12 Our evaluation framework will be a key element in shaping our future working and the development of SSLEP strategies and associated programmes to ensure the maximum impact for the SSLEP area.

2.13 We anticipate that project and programme evaluation will generally follow four approaches:

* Output evaluation
* Process evaluation
* Impact evaluation
* Economic evaluation

These are outlined in more detail below and it should be noted that more than one of these approaches are likely to be applied to a given project:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Approach | Description |
| Output | A quantitative measure of whether the project has achieved its targeted numerical outputs. This could include jobs created, floorspace developed, homes constructed. |
| Process | This is a qualitative evaluation and will consider how projects were delivered in terms of their processes. For instance in the case of a ‘programme’ approach, did the programme effectively and efficiently operate or were there issues that could be captured and used to improve future processes and arrangements? |
| Impact | This is likely to involve both quantitative and qualitative evaluation and will look at the overall difference a project has made to the local economy.  Impact evaluations will be more in depth and generally be reserved for those projects which are novel or offer the greatest opportunity for others to gain learning from. |
| Economic | This is a quantitative measurement to calculate how the economic costs associated with a project and an economic translation of the impact or benefits of a project can be represented as a return on investment.  Different types of economic evaluation will apply to different projects such as using a cost per unit of outcome, a wider cost benefit analysis exercise (as is often associated with large transport schemes) and as a net gain in terms of a quantifiable financial or other metric. |

2.14 Our Getting Building Fund projects are key elements in delivering the objectives of the government’s Covid-19 local recovery plan and align with the LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan.

2.15 It is essential that all projects are evaluated and monitored at least against their stated business plan delivery targets to understand the contribution they have made and the extent to which GBF investment has helped to support the government’s post-Covid recovery plan:

* deliver support for businesses through new innovation and enterprise space
* investment in digital skills for young people
* improvements to transport infrastructure which will unlock new housing sites
* enable increased active travel, helping to facilitate a green recovery.

2.16 The greatest value is likely to be gained from a flexible approach to evaluation, targeting where the greatest learning benefits can be gained.

1. **Key evaluation principles**

3.1 A flexible approach to evaluation is likely to offer the greatest benefit for the learning and direction of any future project and programme development. SSLEP will work with BEIS and beneficiary projects to determine the best approach.

3.2 The key principles of our proposed evaluation framework are set out in the table below. As with all similar frameworks it will be important to ensure that this is periodically reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Approach | Rationale | Method of Evaluation | Dissemination of Information |
| Output | Appropriate for projects where standard methodologies are in place for appraising projects or where standard metrics apply. | Normal project monitoring reports submitted to the LEP. No funding generally required | Management information through SSLEP website and reports to relevant groups and boards |
| Process | Appropriate for projects which were more reliant on a ‘process’ to drive delivery. Evaluation is likely to consider the operation and efficiency of the process and the best ways of sharing best practice and lessons learnt. | **Independent detailed evaluation**.  This should ideally be commissioned and funded by the project sponsor, however the historic requirements within funding agreements may mean that it is difficult to secure funding. | SSLEP website,  Case studies, presentations at LEP events, stakeholder events etc. |
| Impact | Appropriate for projects which are more innovative or unique in their objectives; or approach. Evaluation should focus on the key learning points such as how could the project be delivered differently and what learning opportunities could be shared to shape similar projects in the future to reduce costs, deliver more quickly or achieve better outcomes, reduce risks and or/improve quality. | **Independent detailed evaluation.**  This should ideally be commissioned and funded by the project sponsor, however the historic requirements within funding agreements may mean that it is difficult to secure funding. | SSLEP website,  Case studies, presentations at LEP events, stakeholder events etc. |
| Economic | To establish the cost per unit outcome or cost/benefit analysis of a project. | A recognition of the need to define quantifiable project costs and benefits at the outset of a project will be required. | Management information through SSLEP website and reports to relevant groups and boards. Case studies etc. |
| Anticipated Level of Evaluation Detail  Scale of Intervention | | | |
| The Scope and scale of evaluation information provided by relevant projects and programmes is likely to be in accordance with the scale of the intervention (in respect of planned benefits, length of project and investment required)  As discussed above, the Major Scheme Business Cases for large transport projects are likely to include a level of detail and complexity which may sit beyond the scope of this framework | | | |

1. **Lessons Learned Logs and Project Closure information**

4.1 As a key part of the ongoing programme management of the Getting Building Fund as well as other relevant programmes under its jurisdiction, the SSLEP has introduced a Lessons Learned process to capture, learn from and share relevant findings from active and completed projects and programmes.

4.2 The Lessons Learned information has informed recent improvements to the SSLEPs programme management arrangement such as how outputs are captured and reported, the structure of and mechanisms contained within funding agreements, and the criteria against which candidate projects are assessed for potential funding.

4.3 At the closure of relevant projects, the SSLEP will request a project closure report from the project sponsors. Such project closure reports will invariably include a substantial body of evidence which will be valuable to the overall monitoring and evaluation framework.

1. **Conclusion**

5.1 The above proposals are considered to provide an appropriate and proportionate approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the SSLEP Getting Building Fund programme. It will be important to periodically review the contents of this framework to ensure that it remains relevant and adds the greatest level of value to the SSLEP, its partners and projects for now and the future.

5.2 Using all of the above principles and with consideration of value for money, lessons learned and understanding the delivery of benefits, the SSLEP will be in the best placed position to consider the most relevant and impactful projects and programmes in which resources and investment can be placed in the future.