

Title of Report:	DAERA Rural Business Development Scheme
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 March 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy
Outcome	Council contributes to increasing business start-up and survival rates
Lead Officer	Economic Development Officer

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Provision of Grant from DAERA - £125,000, with cost recovery of 10% of Letter of Offer value by Council (£12,500)
Included in Current Year Estimates	Included in the 2022/23 estimates
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	As above

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members on funding from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the roll-out of a fourth Rural Business Development Scheme for the financial year 2022-2023. This grant is delivered by all 11 councils concurrently.

2.0 Background

This is proposed as a further grant under the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI). Its key aim is to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived rural areas. The Scheme's primary aims are to:

- Alleviate financial poverty by enhancing entrepreneurship and growth.
- Alleviate financial poverty by supporting micro businesses in rural areas.

This proposed fourth round of funding would be delivered to further support recovery and sustainability post-COVID.

3.0 Programme Criteria

- Micro businesses located in rural areas (*as per NISRA NINIS definition*).
- New businesses must be able to demonstrate they have commenced trading.
- Must demonstrate added value of proposal both to business and impact on recovery and sustainability.
- Must demonstrate ability to complete project and access grant by 31st October 2022.
- Minimum grant awarded £500 with maximum of £4,999.
- Must demonstrate they are ineligible to access similar support from elsewhere.

4.0 Funding Level

- Grants providing capital support up to a maximum of £4,999 or 50% of total costs.
- Match funding must be in the form of a 'cash' contribution. Labour or 'in-kind' contributions will not be accepted.
- The total cost of a project should not exceed £20,000.

5.0 2021 Rural Business Development Scheme Outputs – Causeway Coast and Glens Council Area

- Total number of successful projects: **40**
- Total value of grant aid awarded: **£113,171.49**

Level of Interest

- Number of Enquiries received for the application call: **127**
- Number of applications received: **83**

6.0 2021 Grant Programme

Councils will complete an evaluation of the 2021 fund. DAERA has now requested a further collaborative business case to consider a fourth round of the Rural Business Development Scheme, based on the levels of uptake and feedback from the 2021 fund and specifically to further support recovery and sustainability of rural, micro-businesses post-COVID.

A Letter of Offer and Contract from DAERA are pending. It is anticipated that this grant would open in early May 2022 for a call of approx. one month duration, with a budget in the region of £125,000 with an additional technical assistance payment to council at 10% (£12,500) based on Letter of Offer value.

7.0 DAERA Indicative Timeline

- Mar 2022 DAERA approval for Programme and Contract for Funding issued.
- April 2022 Revision of Programme documentation (Application Form, Scoring Matrices/Criteria) and Programme Promotion.
- 04 May 2022 Public call for Applications.
- 31 May 2022 Deadline for Applications.
- June-Aug 2022 Screening & Assessment of Applications.
- Sept 2022 Issuing of Letters of Offer.
- Sept 22/Nov 22 Project Delivery.
- Nov/Dec 22 Submission of Claims / End of Project Reports.

8.0 Recommendation

That Council accepts the funding on offer from DAERA and agrees to deliver the Rural Business Development Scheme in Causeway Coast and Glens in May 2022.

Members should note that, as with all funding from central government, the timeline and other details included above are indicative only.