

Economy and Growth Committee 4 June 2024

Item 5 – Final Outturn 2023/24

Written Response to Questions

Responses provided by Carol Hyde, Head of Rural and Cultural Economy.

It was asked if the Committee could be provided with more details in relation to the Countryside Stewardship Grant in relation to Tatton Park. The Head of Rural and Cultural Economy undertook to provide a written response.

The Countryside Stewardship Grant has been a part of both Tatton Park and Countryside Management for over 10 years. A new agreement came into force from the 1st October 2023 following the ending of the previous 10 year agreement. The Countryside Stewardship schemes provide funding to farmers and land managers to improve their local environment. The funding is specifically related to land management practices at specific sites and supports a range of enhanced environmental outcomes, from restoring wildlife habitats and creating woodlands, to managing flood risk.

With specific regard to Tatton Park, there are defined areas within the scheme that stipulate how the grant is used. Predominantly this is around the management of the land covered in the scheme and as a result, also prohibits other activities on the land. The key areas are referred to as “maintenance of wood, pasture and parkland”, “maintenance of ponds” and “restoration of grassland”. The funding therefore covers specific work packages across a variety of areas within the Tatton Park estate, for example, grazing management to allow improvements in biodiversity, stock management of the deer and sheep, management of hay meadow, hedge and tree planting, monitoring and maintenance of bird and bat habitats, insect management, management of the Meres including water quality monitoring, maintaining water levels, removing growth around culverts etc.

Natural England monitor the Countryside Stewardship scheme on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and routine inspections at Tatton Park, both by regular check-ups and spot checks, are carried out.

Reference was made to the rural aspect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and it was asked if details could be provided on the projects in the rural element. The Head of Rural and Cultural Economy undertook to provide a written response.

Rural UK Shared Prosperity Funding for years 23/24 and 24/25 amounts to an allocation of £827,627 (UKSPF) for Cheshire East council to be spent on capital schemes supporting rural business, communities, and place.

Nine capital grants totalling £75,000 have been distributed for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in Cheshire East in 2023/24. These grants have supported initiatives such as new kitchen equipment for catering establishments, new

manufacturing machinery, equipment to reduce energy consumption and a new electronic point of sale system.

Seven capital grants totalling £63,000 have been distributed for the development and promotion of the visitor economy in Cheshire East in 2023/24. These grants have supported initiatives such as new accommodation provision, development of a new seasonal event, hospitality infrastructure, new café and education spaces in existing tourism providers.

Nine capital grants totalling £80,000 have been distributed for capacity building and infrastructure for local civic society and community groups in Cheshire East in 2023/24. These grants have supported initiatives such as access improvements, upgrade of insulation and heating systems, kitchen refurbishment, lighting and storage improvements in various community, volunteer, parish and charitable group's buildings and spaces.

Rural UKSPF grant funding schemes for 2024/25 are currently in progress, including further capital grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises, the development and promotion of the visitor economy, capacity building and infrastructure for local civic society and community groups, digital infrastructure, cultural, historic and heritage institutions.