

Evaluation of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund (Shared Prosperity Fund: 2025 - 26)

A report to Cadwyn Clwyd

March 2026

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Executive Summary

York Consulting was commissioned in September 2025 to undertake an evaluation for Cadwyn Clwyd of the Supporting Local Business Fund. The project received £2,125,995 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2025 – 26.

The project was designed to support Denbighshire's Prosperous Businesses theme and the UK SPF 2025 – 26 supporting local business agenda, with the aim of boosting productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards, particularly for micro and small businesses. It included three components:

- **Business Grant Scheme (Prosperous Denbighshire Fund).** Grants of between £1,000 and £35,000 to micro and small businesses to encourage innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions.
- **Business Networks Key Fund (Collaboration Fund).** Commissioning of projects to encourage collaboration among business groups, chambers of trade, and social enterprises to develop collective economic benefits.
- **People and Skills Key Fund:** Grant funding to support post-16 economically inactive and year 11 school pupils to gain employability skills.

The methodology included a comprehensive review of information and data and consultations with key stakeholders, project managers and grant beneficiaries.

Effectiveness of project delivery

Overall, management of the fund across the three strands of activity has been very effective.

Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

The Fund was managed through a partnership between Cadwyn Clywd, Denbighshire County Council and Business Wales. Delivery of the fund was effective across a range of areas:

- **The delivery model** (grant administration with business support and advisory services) combined local knowledge, experienced programme management and integrated business support, enabling the fund to be delivered effectively within a relatively short timeframe while maintaining a strong level of support for applicants throughout the process.
- **Promotion and engagement activities** helped ensure strong awareness of the programme and generated a high level of interest from businesses across Denbighshire.
- **The application and assessment process** was effective in supporting businesses to access funding while maintaining a structured and transparent approach to decision-making.
- **The support provided by Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales** helped ensure that applicants were able to navigate the application process effectively while also strengthening their capacity for longer-term business development.

The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund supported a wide range of projects across multiple sectors of the local economy, reflecting the diverse nature of Denbighshire's business base. The grants primarily supported capital investment, business modernisation, premises improvements and service diversification.

Collaboration Fund

Three projects were commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd through the Collaboration Fund:

- The **Denbighshire Enterprise Network (DEN)** was delivered by Lafan – a business consultancy based in North Wales - and included networking events, workshops, a 6-week start-up course and two business shows in Rhualt and Ruthin. Activities were generally well attended, with 78 businesses engaging with the network in total. The support was well received, with very positive feedback from businesses about the events and workshops.
- The **Digital Connectivity Project** provided funding for a project officer at Denbighshire County Council to support businesses across the county to enhance their internet connectivity. Despite challenges identifying and reaching businesses with poor connectivity, a total of 68 businesses engaged with the support (against a target of 40).
- The **Net Zero project** aimed to support businesses on industrial estates across Denbighshire to introduce renewable or low energy solutions. However, this project ended early in October 2025 due to contractual issues.

People and Skills Fund

A total of 11 projects were funded, covering those supporting young people and adults across Denbighshire to develop skills, improve wellbeing and progress toward education or employment.

Despite the relatively short timescales for delivery, the projects performed well in achieving the overall Fund targets. In total, 271 events or activities were supported and 366 people reached.

Project teams were complimentary of the Cadwyn Clwyd staff regarding management of the fund, highlighting their support and encouragement during the project set-up, delivery and closure stages.

Outcomes and impact

Across the three strands of activity, a range of positive outcomes were achieved for businesses and individuals.

- **Prosperous Denbighshire Fund:** Grant beneficiary feedback indicates that relatively modest capital investments enabled businesses to make meaningful improvements to their operations and strengthen their resilience and potential for future growth. There was a clear need for the grant funding, with feedback suggesting that the programme enabled businesses to undertake investments that were either not possible or significantly constrained without grant funding support.
- **Collaboration Fund:** The Denbighshire Enterprise Network and Digital Connectivity projects supported businesses to grow, develop and improve operations. The assets and businesses database developed through the Denbighshire Enterprise Network represents a strong foundation on which future business networking activity in the county can be built.
- **People and Skills Fund:** Participants of project activities achieved a range of outcomes, including increased confidence, skills and wellbeing and transitions into volunteering, learning or other opportunities.

In enabling these outcomes, the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Fund has supported strategic priorities at a regional, national and UK level, including the UK SPF aims and relevant

priorities within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Denbighshire Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, evaluation evidence indicates that management of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund has been highly effective and that the project has delivered meaningful benefits for businesses and people across the county. The programme exceeded most of its output and outcomes targets and generated a range of positive impacts relating to productivity, resilience, business development, and enhancing skills and employability.

The evaluation findings have informed a range of project specific recommendations related to clarifying certain aspects of the grant application form, eligibility requirements, promotional activities and timescales, and capturing longer-term outcomes.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF): 2025 - 26

Denbighshire Supporting Business Key Fund

£1,664,862

**INVESTMENT IN
LOCAL
BUSINESSES AND
PEOPLE**



61 **BUSINESSES
RECIEVED GRANTS**

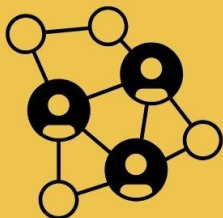
12 **PEOPLE AND SKILLS
FUND PROJECTS**

including those supporting young people and adults to develop skills, improve wellbeing and progress toward education or employment.



**ACROSS 10
ORGANISATIONS**

78 **BUSINESSES ENGAGED
IN THE DENBIGHSHIRE
ENTERPRISE NETWORK**



*"Interesting speakers
and made several
contacts that will lead to
future conversations."*

DEN member

**LOW/ZERO CARBON
INFRASTRCTURE
INSTALLED**

8



including solar panels,
electric vehicle charging
points and battery
storage systems

68 **BUSINESSES
SUPPORTED TO
IMPROVE INTERNET
CONNECTIVITY**

including installing
equipment to use 4g or
satellite internet connections
and applying for grants to
pay for these upgrades



Cyngor
**sir ddinbych
denbighshire**
County Council



**Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU**

**Funded by
UK Government**



Contact: admin@cadwynclwyd.co.uk 01490 340500

9 BUSINESSES IMPROVING DIGITAL SYSTEMS AND MARKETING



including upgrades to websites, online services, marketing materials, branding and digital promotion.

18 BUSINESSES MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO PREMISES



including workshop upgrades, hospitality refurbishments, installation of new consulting rooms for healthcare services and improvements to tourism accommodation facilities

11 JOBS CREATED AS A RESULT OF THE SUPPORT

"Without the grant we simply wouldn't have been able to launch the business at this stage. The funding enabled us to invest in the infrastructure needed to get the business up and running." Grantee



JOBS SAFEGUARDED AS A RESULT OF SUPPORT

73

"The grant has already improved our financial resilience, safeguarded existing jobs, and created new employment opportunities. It feels as though we are on the runway, ready to take off into a new era of growth." Grantee



23 BUSINESSES PURCHASING NEW EQUIPMENT OR MACHINERY

including equipment to increase productivity and efficiency, bring services in-house, and improve quality control.



ENTERPRISES ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES OR PROCESSES

46

"The new equipment has significantly improved the efficiency of our production process and allows us to deliver work more quickly and consistently." Grantee



376 PEOPLE WITH INCREASED EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

"All who participated said their mental health had improved and they felt stronger and able to make more informed life choices." Project lead



Cyngor
sir ddinbych
denbighshire
County Council



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Llywodraeth y DU

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1. Introduction and methodology

York Consulting was commissioned to undertake an evaluation for Cadwyn Clwyd of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund. The project received £2,125,995 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2025 – 26. The £900 million UK SPF 2025 – 26 providing transition funding following the UK SPF 2023 – 24, which aimed to support local investment, kickstart economic growth and promote opportunities in all parts of the UK.

The project was designed to support Denbighshire County Council's Prosperous Businesses theme and the UK SPF supporting local business agenda, with the aim of boosting productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards, particularly for micro and small businesses. It included three components:

- **Business Grant Scheme (Prosperous Denbighshire Fund):** Financial support for micro and small businesses to encourage innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions.
- **Business Networks Key Fund (Collaboration Fund):** Encouraging collaboration among business groups, chambers of trade, and social enterprises to develop collective economic benefits.
- **People and Skills Key Fund:** Grant funding to support post-16 economically inactive and year 11 school pupils to gain employability skills.

Key requirements of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the appropriateness of the project strategy in achieving UK SPF priorities, Local Authority aims and other relevant strategies.
- Assess the summative progress and performance of the outputs and outcomes achieved.
- Assess the operational and administrative effectiveness of the projects.
- Identify any sub-optimal aspects of delivery and recommend actions to address the issues identified in future programmes.
- Assess the extent to which value for money has been achieved.
- Assess the strength of counter-factual arguments (i.e., what the likely scenario would have been without the project funding being available/invested).
- Assess the contribution of the project to operational themes such as Welsh Language, Net Zero, Equal Opportunities.
- Recommend whether any wider strategic or operational changes are needed in the context of any successor projects or interventions.

Overview of Denbighshire

The last Census showed that Denbighshire had a population of 95,800 as of 2021, an increase of 2,066 since the previous Census. Major towns and settlements are divided between two key towns on the coast, Rhyl and Prestatyn, and a number of settlements in the rural hinterland - Denbigh, Ruthin, Llangollen, Corwen, St Asaph with St Asaph - bridging the two geographic areas. Denbighshire has a strong Welsh cultural identity, with many residents speaking Welsh, most particularly in the rural areas. Whilst across the county 22.5% speak Welsh, in some communities the percentage is over 50%.

Denbighshire's economy is diverse, with traditional industries like farming coexisting alongside modern technology and tourism. Future growth may depend on infrastructure development, investment in skills, and sustainable economic strategies. The county has a strong agricultural base, with farming playing a key role in the local economy. The county's rural landscape supports livestock farming, particularly sheep and cattle, as well as some dairy farming. Tourism is a major economic drive with several historic sites, and coastal attractions.

Denbighshire has a strong manufacturing sector, with several industrial estates supporting a variety of businesses. St Asaph Business is home to high-tech industries, including optoelectronics and advanced manufacturing whilst Rhyl, Ruthin and Denbigh have a range of manufacturing and engineering companies.

The service sector, including healthcare, education, and finance, is also a key employer whilst public sector jobs form a significant part of the economy. The county is also a focus for renewable energy projects, particularly wind energy. There are good transport links, including the A5 and A55 expressway and strong railway connections which support economic activity by linking Denbighshire to the rest of North Wales, Cheshire, and beyond.

The county faces key challenges, which the Denbighshire Key Fund seeks to respond to. These include rural depopulation, seasonal tourism employment, economic disparities between coastal and inland areas, and significant levels of deprivation in pockets of the economy, including West Rhyl, which has the highest level of deprivation in Wales¹.

Nevertheless, there are also key opportunities across the county, including growth in digital businesses, sustainable tourism and further investment in renewable energy and advanced manufacturing.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology included a review of key documents, analysis of management information, a survey of grant recipients with in-depth follow-up consultations and further consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers.

Document review

A document review was undertaken to inform the evaluation fieldwork and reporting. The following documents were reviewed:

- Cadwyn Clwyd's SPF Project Continuation bid documentation.
- Promotional materials, application forms, guidance documents, Invitation to Tender documents and successful proposals for commissioned work.
- Data-collection mechanisms developed for the monitoring of outputs, outcomes and impact.
- Relevant strategy documents, including UK SPF guidance², the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act³ and the Denbighshire County Council's (DCC) Economic Strategy 2025 - 2035⁴

¹ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019

² UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: Technical note

³ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials

⁴ Economic strategy 2025 to 2035: Towards a more prosperous Denbighshire

The insight drawn from the document review and inception meeting was instilled into the logic model for the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund (Figure 2.1).

Management information analysis

Analysis of management information was carried out to understand the project's performance against targets. This involved reviewing:

- Grant award panel meeting minutes.
- Quarterly progress reports.
- Project claim forms and data.

Fieldwork

Table 1.1 summarises the fieldwork completed during the evaluation of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund between October 2025 and March 2026.

Table 1.1: Summary of completed fieldwork

Component	Fieldwork
Consultations with stakeholders	Consultations with delivery staff from Cadwyn Clwyd and stakeholders at Denbighshire County Council
Survey of Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients	Distributed to all 61 grant recipients. Received 58 responses with 40 agreeing to participate in a follow-up interview.
Interviews with Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients	Completed interviews with 19 Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients
Collaboration Fund	Interviews with delivery staff for the Denbighshire Enterprise Network and Digital Connectivity Project A review of management information and beneficiary feedback from the Denbighshire Enterprise Network
People and Skills Fund	Evaluation workshop with 11 project delivery staff, involving discussion of each project and sharing of experiences

2. Project design

Delivery model

The project was strategically led and managed by Cadwyn Clwyd, working with key partners, including DCC and Business Wales, as well as sub-contractors delivering specific elements such as Collaboration Fund projects. Delivered between April 2025 and March 2026, the project included three key components:

- Prosperous Denbighshire Fund
- Collaboration Fund
- People and Skills Fund.

Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

The Fund provided financial support for micro and small businesses to encourage innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions. The grants were offered at two levels:

- **Larger projects:** 70% capital and revenue grant, with a maximum total project spend of £50,000 (£35,000 grant funds and £15,000 applicant cash match funding).
- **Micro business start-up & small business grant:** Up to 100% revenue grant with a maximum total project spend of £2,000.

The focus of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was on micro and small businesses (those with a turnover less than £10.2 million and a balance sheet less than £5.1 million, or businesses with fewer than 50 employees), which representing 90% of businesses in Denbighshire. The project covered the entire county of Denbighshire, with Cadwyn Clwyd staff working across different locations, including remote, office-based, and community settings.

In addition to providing grant funding, the project offered a wrap-around support function, including project officer support and guidance from Cadwyn Clwyd, and support from Business Wales to help businesses access the grants.

Collaboration Fund

The aim of the Business Collaboration Fund was to promote and support networking and collaboration, through interventions that bring businesses together within and across sectors to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth. Two strategic collaboration projects for the 2023 – 24 SPF were continued for the UK SPF 2025 – 26 transition project – the Denbighshire Business Networks and Net Zero projects (with the latter aiming to expand its target areas to other industrial estates in the county).

People and Skills Fund

The People and Skills Key Fund provided funding for interventions around employability and skills⁵ focusing on the UK Government missions to kickstart economic growth, break down barriers to opportunity and make Britain a clean energy superpower. It focused on the sub themes of:

- Supporting people to progress towards and into employment.

⁵ UK Government, Denbighshire County Council and Cadwyn Clwyd, 2025, Prosperous Denbighshire - A UK Shared Prosperity Fund project supporting business innovation and economic development in Denbighshire Guidance Notes 16th April 2025

- Support for young people who are or at risk of being NEET.
- Essential skills, including numeracy, literacy, English for speakers of other languages, and digital.
- Employment related skills.

Aims and objectives

In alignment with the UK SPF's goal of strengthening the private sector, the business support project objectives were to:

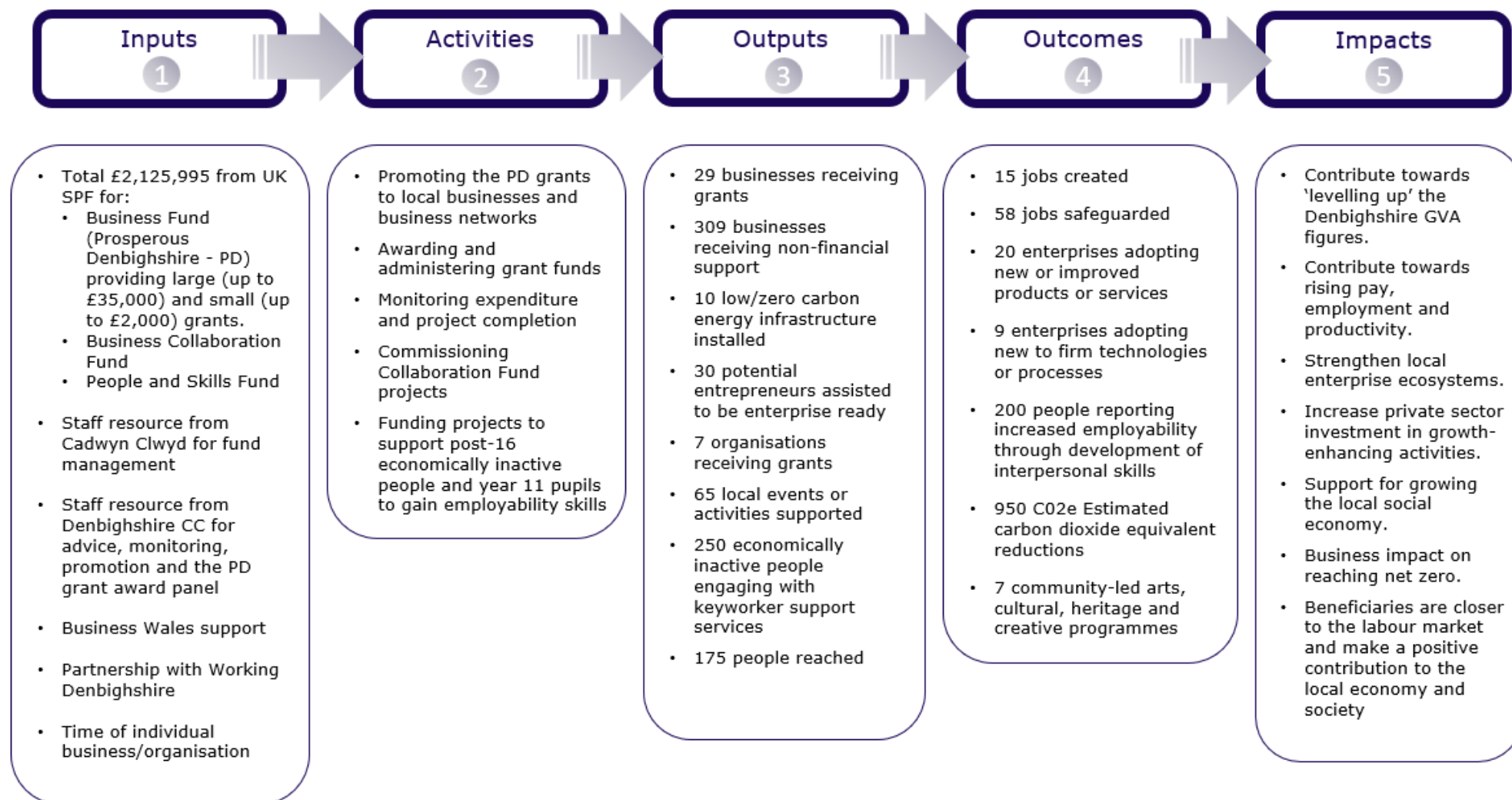
- Create jobs and boost community cohesion by investing in industries, supporting startups, and improving retail, hospitality, and leisure facilities.
- Encourage networking and collaboration among businesses to share knowledge and drive innovation.
- Increase private sector investment in productivity-enhancing activities, energy efficiency, low-carbon solutions, and export growth.

The People and Skills Key Fund aimed to deliver on Denbighshire's mission to support post-16 economically inactive and year 11 school pupils to gain skills to enable them to access employment.

Logic model

The project logic model (Figure 2.1) was developed by York Consulting and informed by a review of project documentation and conversations with key stakeholders. It sets out the activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project. The logic model was used to develop the evaluation questions which informed the design of evaluation research tools and analysis of project data.

Figure 2.1: Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund Logic Model



Key progress indicators

The key progress indicators outlined in the SPF bid are set out in the following tables. They include target outputs and outcomes across the three strands of activity.

Figure 2.2: Planned outputs

Output indicator	Target
OP09 Enterprises receiving grants	29
OP10 Enterprises receiving non-financial support	309
OP06 Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	10
OP12 Local events or activities supported	65
OP14 Inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	250
OP17 People reached	175
OP25 Organisations receiving grants	7

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, March 2026

Figure 2.3: Planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target
OC08 Jobs created as a result of support	15
OC09 Jobs safeguarded as a result of support	58
OC11 Number of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	20
OC12 Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	9
OC26 Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF	200
OC27 Estimated carbon dioxide equivalent reductions as a result of support	950
OC19 Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	7

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025

Project budget

The project was awarded £2,125,995 in SPF funding. Figure 2.4 outlines how the project budget was allocated.

Figure 2.4: Denbighshire Supporting Local Business Key Fund project budget

Cost	Amount
Grants – Prosperous Denbighshire	£1,052,929.38
Grants – Business Collaboration Fund	£165,217
People and Skills Fund	£446,715.62
Project delivery – staff costs	£211,398
Project management, administration and evaluation	£123,264
Marketing and publicity	£20,000
Overheads – accommodation	£84,806
Evaluation	£21,665
Total	£2,125,995

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Prosperous Denbighshire Management Information April 2026

3. Effectiveness of project delivery

Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

Staffing

The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was delivered through a partnership between Cadwyn Clwyd, DCC and Business Wales, combining grant administration with business support and advisory services. The key elements of the delivery model and stakeholders involved are outlined below.

- **The day-to-day management of the fund** was primarily undertaken by Cadwyn Clwyd, with the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund manager taking a lead role in coordinating the programme, managing applications and overseeing the assessment process. The delivery team was supported by additional Cadwyn Clwyd staff who assisted with application reviews, compliance checks and project monitoring. This internal support structure ensured that applications were assessed thoroughly and that programme requirements were met within the relatively tight delivery timescales associated with the fund.
- **Direct support to applicants and grantees** was provided by Cadwyn Clwyd staff throughout the process, including guidance on eligibility, advice on preparing applications, and assistance with developing business plans and financial projections where required. This hands-on support was particularly important for smaller businesses and sole traders who may have had limited experience of accessing grant funding.
- **Business Wales played a complementary role by providing specialist business support** to applicants, particularly in relation to the preparing business plans and cashflow forecasts. In many cases, applicants were referred to Business Wales as part of the application process to ensure that their proposals were supported by robust financial planning. This helped strengthen applications and ensured that businesses were well prepared to implement their projects.
- **Denbighshire County Council participated in the assessment panel**, which reviewed applications and ensured that projects aligned with the strategic priorities of the fund and wider economic objectives for the county. This collaborative approach supported transparent decision-making and helped ensure that funding was directed towards projects demonstrating clear strategic fit and value for money.

Overall, the delivery model combined local knowledge, experienced programme management and integrated business support, enabling the fund to be delivered effectively within a relatively short timeframe while maintaining a strong level of support for applicants throughout the process.

"[Project officer] has been extremely helpful throughout. We applied quite late but she supported us for around 10 hours during the process and helped us get everything completed in time. We can't thank Cadwyn Clwyd enough for all the support." – Prosperous Denbighshire grantee

Promotion and engagement

Promotion of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was delivered through a combination of direct engagement with local businesses, partnership working and existing communication channels. The delivery partners worked collaboratively to ensure that businesses across Denbighshire

were aware of the funding opportunity and had access to information and support throughout the application process. Key elements of the approach to promotion included:

- **Use of DCC's communication networks**, including promotion through the council's business newsletters and mailing lists. This ensured that businesses already engaged with local authority business support services were informed about the opportunity at an early stage. In addition, officers involved in delivering other local business support initiatives, such as town centre improvement programmes, also promoted the fund to businesses within their networks.
- **Cadwyn Clwyd's established relationships with local businesses and enterprise networks**, which enabled information about the fund to be shared quickly across the county. This local presence helped reach a wide range of businesses, including microbusinesses and sole traders operating in rural areas who may not always engage directly with formal business support programmes.
- **Drop-in sessions and direct conversations with prospective applicants**. These sessions provided businesses with an opportunity to discuss project ideas, understand eligibility criteria and receive guidance on the application process. While attendance at these sessions was somewhat lower than in previous rounds of the programme, they still provided a useful opportunity to offer direct advice to businesses considering applying.

The programme also benefited from existing awareness within the local business community, as previous rounds of funding had helped establish the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund as a recognised source of business support. As a result, there was strong interest in the programme prior to its official launch, and the delivery team reported a high level of demand once applications opened.

Looking ahead, delivery partners noted that future rounds of the programme could potentially benefit from a more targeted approach to promotion, for example focusing outreach activity on specific sectors, towns or business parks. This could help ensure that awareness of the fund continues to reach a diverse range of businesses across the county.

Overall, the promotion and engagement activities undertaken by the delivery partners helped ensure **strong awareness of the programme and generated a high level of interest** from businesses across Denbighshire.

Application and award process

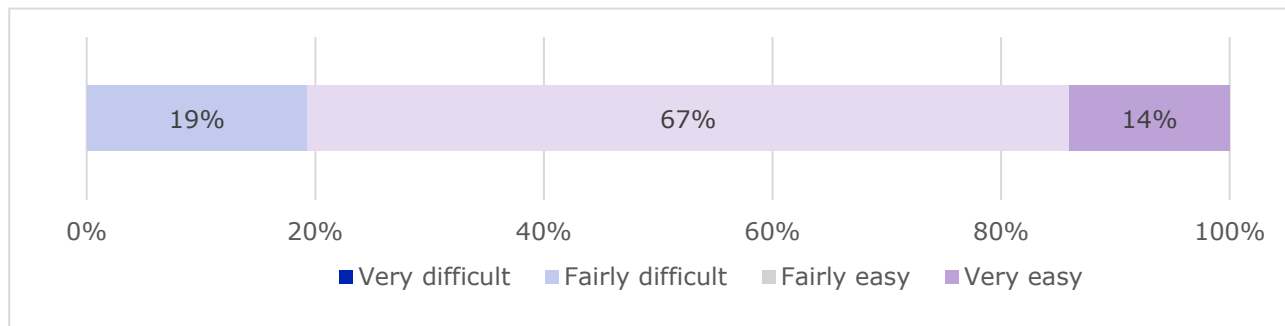
Applications to the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund were managed through an online submission system, which provided a structured process for applicants to submit project proposals and supporting information.

Applicants were supported throughout the process by the Cadwyn Clwyd delivery team, who provided guidance on eligibility requirements and application completion. In many cases, staff worked directly with applicants to review draft applications, clarify information and ensure that the required documentation was submitted. This support helped reduce potential barriers for smaller businesses and sole traders who may have had limited experience of applying for grant funding.

Overall feedback from beneficiaries indicates that **the application process was generally perceived as clear and well supported**. Survey responses suggest that applicants found the

process relatively straightforward (Figure 3.1), particularly when supported by the advisory guidance provided by Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales. Many businesses commented positively on the responsiveness of staff and the practical support they received during the application stage.

Figure 3.1: How would you rate the application process for this funding?



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire evaluation survey, March 2026. Total respondents: 57

While some applicants noted that preparing the necessary documentation could be challenging, particularly within the short timeframe available, most respondents felt that the support provided helped them successfully navigate the process. In several cases, businesses also highlighted that developing a business plan or financial forecast as part of the application process was a valuable exercise that strengthened their business planning more broadly.

"Amazing support throughout the whole application process. I found the telephone appointment regarding the business plan and cashflow very useful – I had never undertaken this properly before, and although it was challenging it was really beneficial." - Prosperous Denbighshire grantee

Award process

Once applications were submitted, they were reviewed by the delivery team to ensure that they met the programme's eligibility criteria and provided sufficient supporting evidence. Applications were then presented to an assessment panel, which included representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd and Denbighshire County Council. The panel assessed applications against agreed criteria, including strategic alignment with the aims of the programme and value for money considerations.

This panel-based approach provided an additional layer of oversight and helped ensure that funding decisions were transparent and consistent. Given the high level of demand for the fund, the panel also played an important role in prioritising projects that demonstrated the strongest alignment with the programme's objectives.

Overall, the evidence suggests that **the application and assessment process was effective in supporting businesses to access funding** while maintaining a structured and transparent approach to decision-making.

Support from Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales

A key feature of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was the combination of grant funding with practical advisory support for applicants, delivered primarily through Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales. This integrated approach helped ensure that businesses were not only able to

access funding, but were also supported in developing robust project proposals and strengthening their wider business planning.

The delivery model was particularly valuable for microbusinesses and sole traders, many of whom may have had limited prior experience of applying for grant funding. By providing accessible and responsive support, Cadwyn Clwyd helped reduce barriers to participation and enabled a wide range of businesses to engage with the programme.

Business Wales provided complementary support, particularly in relation to business planning and financial forecasting. Applicants were often referred to Business Wales advisers to help develop or refine business plans and cashflow projections where required. This support helped ensure that project proposals were underpinned by sound financial planning and that businesses were well prepared to implement their investment projects.

Feedback from the beneficiary survey indicates that the support provided was highly valued by applicants, with almost all survey respondents identifying the support from Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales as 'very helpful'. Many respondents described the guidance they received as clear, practical and responsive.

Several respondents also noted that the advisory support provided benefits beyond the immediate funding application. In some cases, the process of preparing a business plan or financial forecast helped businesses clarify their strategic direction and identify opportunities for future growth.

"We are profoundly grateful to Business Wales and Cadwyn Clwyd for their readily available support. This grant has transformed our vision into reality and allowed us to expand our services while strengthening our financial resilience." - Prosperous Denbighshire grantee

Overall, the evidence suggests **that the combination of accessible grant funding and tailored advisory support was an important factor in the success of the programme.** The support provided by Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales helped ensure that applicants were able to navigate the application process effectively while also strengthening their capacity for longer-term business development.

Outputs

The project surpassed targets for enterprises receiving grants and non-financial support by a large margin (Table 3.1). The number of low/zero carbon energy installed was also above target.

Table 3.1: Prosperous Denbighshire Fund – Progress against planned outputs

Output	Target	Actuals
Enterprises receiving grants	29	61
Enterprises receiving non-financial support	29	61*
Number of low/zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	10	13

*Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2026. *The total figure for enterprises receiving non-financial support across the Denbighshire Supporting Business SPF project is 309. This figure includes outputs from the Collaboration Fund element.*

Types of project funded

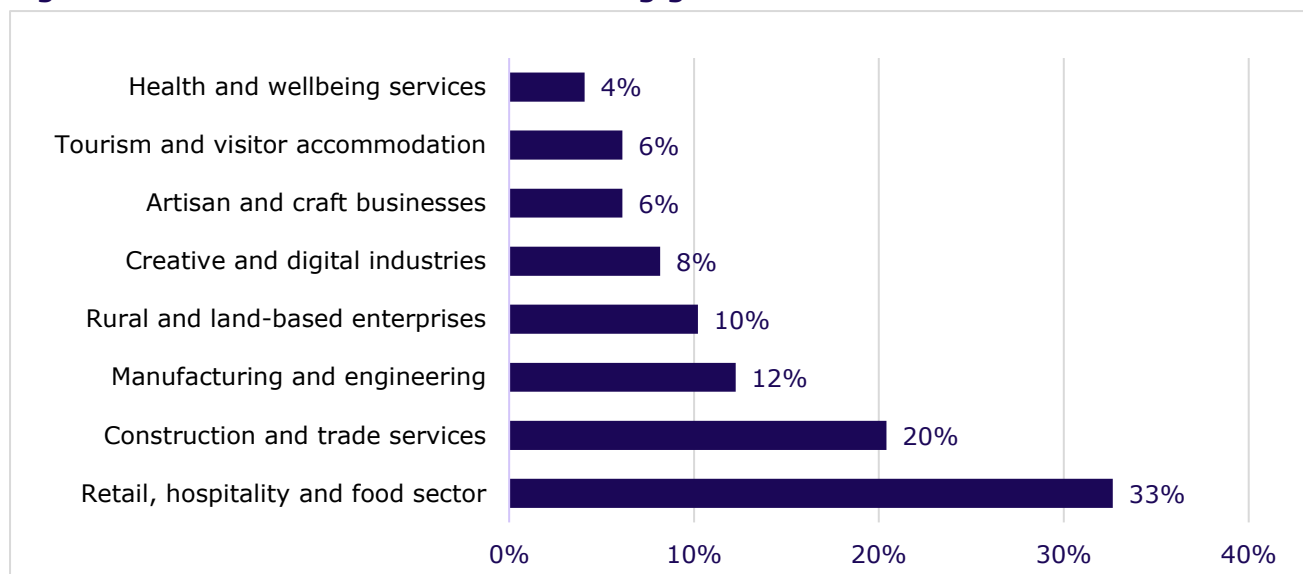
The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund supported a wide range of projects across multiple sectors of the local economy, reflecting the diverse nature of Denbighshire's business base. The grants primarily supported capital investment, business modernisation, premises improvements and service diversification, enabling businesses to improve productivity, expand services and strengthen their resilience.

- **Machinery and equipment purchases (23 businesses):** The largest category of investment related to the purchase of machinery, specialist tools and production equipment. Businesses across sectors such as construction, manufacturing, creative industries and hospitality invested in equipment that enabled them to increase productivity, improve efficiency or bring services in-house. In several cases, businesses reported that the new equipment allowed them to reduce outsourcing costs, improve quality control and increase production capacity.
- **Premises improvements and building works (18 businesses):** A significant number of projects involved improvements or expansion of business premises. These included workshop upgrades, hospitality refurbishments, installation of new consulting rooms for healthcare services and improvements to tourism accommodation facilities. These investments enabled businesses to increase customer capacity, improve working environments and introduce new services.
- **Sustainability investments – renewable energy and low carbon technologies (15 businesses):** Several businesses used the funding to install sustainability measures such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging points or battery storage systems. These investments contribute to reducing operating costs while supporting wider environmental and net zero objectives.
- **Digital systems and websites (5 businesses):** A smaller number of projects focused on upgrading digital systems, websites or online services. These investments enabled businesses to improve marketing reach, develop online sales capability and streamline business operations.
- **Marketing and promotional activity (4 businesses):** Some businesses used funding to improve marketing materials, branding or digital promotion, helping them attract new customers and strengthen their market presence.
- **Other sustainability improvements (6 businesses):** In addition to renewable energy investments, some projects supported other sustainability improvements such as energy-efficient equipment, waste reduction measures or improvements to resource efficiency.

Sector spread

The funded businesses represent a broad cross-section of Denbighshire's economy. Analysis of the project dataset shows that the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund supported businesses across a diverse range of sectors, reflecting the structure of the county's local economy (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Sector of businesses receiving grants



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire evaluation survey, March 2026.

Size of businesses supported

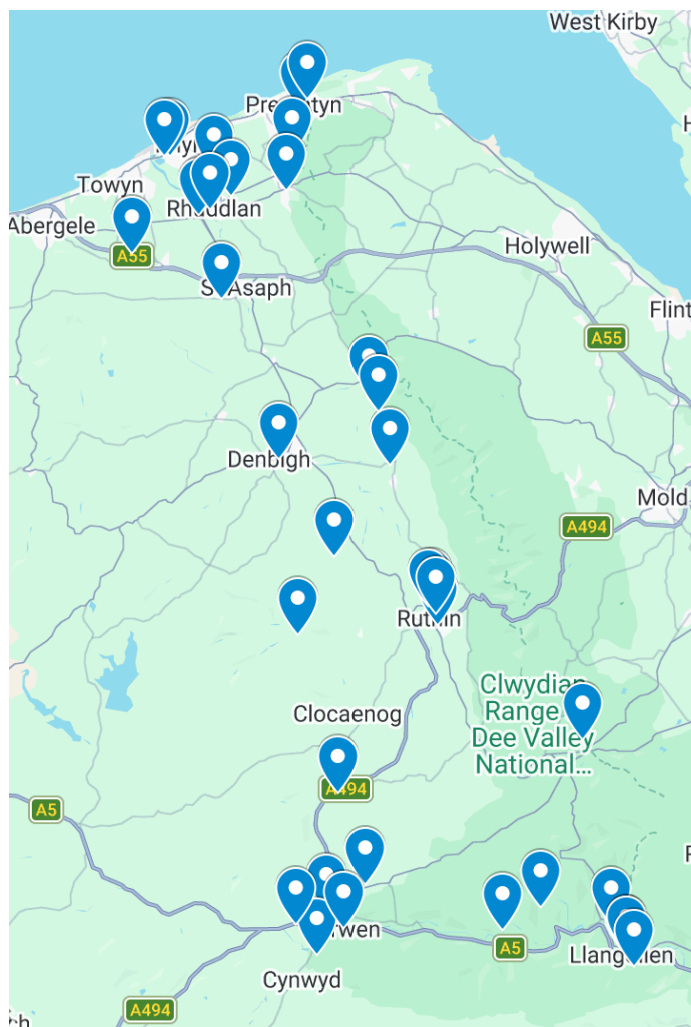
The programme overwhelmingly supported microbusinesses, with 44 of the 58 grant recipients employing fewer than 10 people and 4 sole traders supported. A further 8 grant recipients were small businesses, employing between 10 and 49 people. As with the sector spread, this reflects the structure of Denbighshire's local economy.

This distribution highlights the role of the programme in supporting micro and small enterprises, which often face greater barriers in accessing investment capital but form the backbone of Denbighshire's local economy. For many of these businesses, relatively modest levels of capital investment can deliver significant improvements in productivity, resilience and growth potential.

Geographical distribution

The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund supported businesses across the full geographic area of the county, covering both the coastal towns and the rural hinterland (Figure 3.3). Projects were located in key settlements including Rhyl, Prestatyn, St Asaph, Denbigh, Ruthin, Llangollen and Corwen, as well as a number of smaller villages and rural locations.

Figure 3.3: Geographical distribution of funded businesses



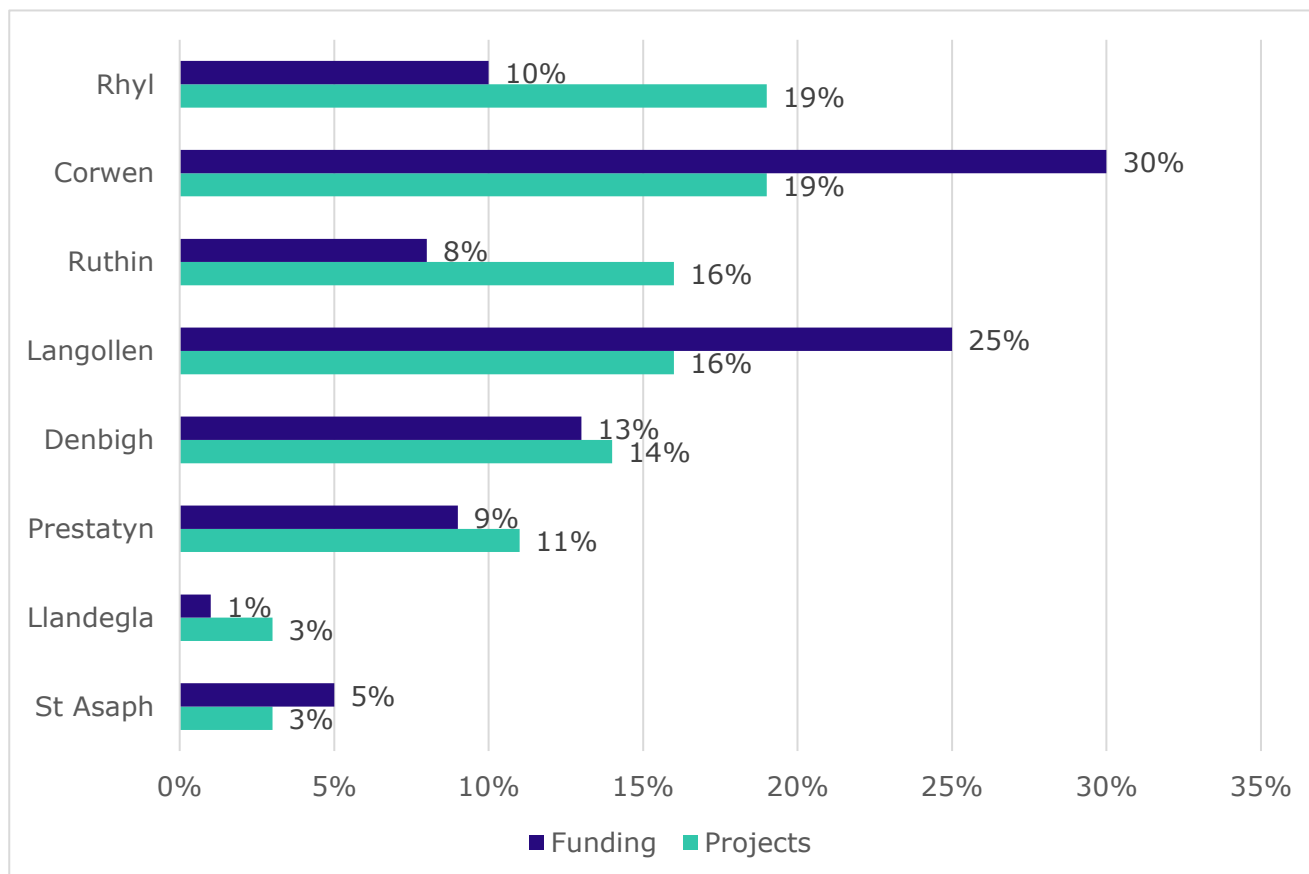
Source: Cadwyn Clwyd – Prosperous Denbighshire applicant data February 2026

The geographic spread of projects broadly reflects the structure of Denbighshire's economy, where a higher concentration of businesses are located in the larger coastal settlements while smaller enterprises operate throughout the county's rural areas. As a result, a greater number of funded projects were located in the more densely populated coastal towns, which also accounted for a significant share of the overall value of grants awarded.

However, the postcode analysis also shows that a meaningful proportion of both projects and funding value was directed towards businesses in inland and rural areas (Figure 3.4). These projects included tourism businesses, small manufacturing and craft enterprises, rural service providers and local hospitality businesses. Supporting businesses in these locations is particularly important given that rural enterprises often face greater challenges in accessing investment and business support.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the **Prosperous Denbighshire Fund achieved a good geographic spread of projects and grant investment across the county**, supporting businesses in both urban and rural areas. While a larger share of funding was naturally concentrated in the main economic centres where business density is higher, the programme also ensured that investment reached smaller communities across Denbighshire. This balanced distribution of projects and funding value helped strengthen the local business base across a range of locations and contributed to economic resilience throughout the county.

Figure 3.4: Geographic distribution of projects and funding



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire evaluation survey, March 2026

Challenges and enablers

Evidence from both beneficiary feedback and discussions with the delivery team highlights a range of factors that enabled the successful delivery of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund, alongside a number of operational challenges encountered during implementation.

Key enablers highlighted included:

- **The hands-on support provided to applicants throughout the programme.** Businesses consistently reported that guidance from Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales was highly valuable in helping them complete applications, develop business plans and prepare financial forecasts. This advisory support helped applicants navigate the requirements of the funding programme and increased the overall quality of applications submitted.
- **The collaborative working relationship between Cadwyn Clwyd, Denbighshire County Council and Business Wales** also strengthened delivery. Stakeholder involvement in the assessment process ensured that projects funded were closely aligned with the priorities of the programme and the wider economic objectives of the county.
- **Use of the Submit application system** was also identified as an effective enabling tool. Delivery staff noted that the system allowed applications to be reviewed and amended with applicants in real time, including during phone discussions, which helped resolve queries quickly and improve the completeness of submissions.

- **Strong demand from the business community.** Awareness of the fund had increased compared with previous rounds, leading to a high volume of applications and significant interest from businesses across Denbighshire. Demand for the fund exceeded available resources, with funding requests reaching approximately double the available budget.

Despite the overall success of the programme, a number of challenges were identified during delivery. These included:

- **Tight programme timescales,** identified as the most significant challenge, created pressure for businesses to prepare applications and for projects to be completed and claimed within a relatively short delivery window. The compressed timeframe also created challenges in evidencing some longer-term outcomes. In particular, demonstrating productivity improvements and job creation within the programme period proved difficult, as these impacts typically emerge over a longer timeframe following investment.
- **The level of demand for the fund,** which created pressures within the delivery process. Applications exceeded available funding by a considerable margin, meaning that some applications had to be rejected despite demonstrating merit. Decisions were therefore strongly influenced by value for money considerations and alignment with programme priorities.
- Some applicants experiencing difficulties interpreting certain elements of the application process or evidencing specific aspects of the programme requirements. However, these issues were generally mitigated through the advisory support provided by programme staff.

Case study 1: Ivy Wood Coffee – Llangollen

- **Business:** Ivy Wood Coffee
- **Location:** Llangollen
- **Sector:** Hospitality / Food and Drink
- **Business size:** Microbusiness

Ivy Wood Coffee is an independent coffee shop based in Llangollen. The business had experienced growing demand for its products, particularly its homemade baked goods. However, the owner reported that existing equipment and kitchen capacity were becoming a constraint on further growth.

Support from the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund enabled the business to invest in new equipment and improve its production space. This investment has significantly increased the business's capacity to prepare baked goods and other products, allowing it to operate more efficiently and meet customer demand.

Without the funding, the business indicated that it would likely have had to reduce its opening days due to the pressures associated with producing baked goods with limited equipment. Instead, the investment has enabled the business to expand its operations and increase opening days.

The improved facilities have also created opportunities for the business to employ additional staff. At the time of the evaluation, the business had already begun trialling new staff members to assist with baking and service. This expansion is expected to allow the business to produce a wider range of products and support continued growth.

Overall, the funding has enabled the business to move from a position where it was considering scaling back operations to one where it is able to grow and expand its offer to customers.

Collaboration Fund

The three Collaboration Projects supported were:

- Denbighshire Enterprise Network
- Digital Connectivity Project
- Net Zero project

Cadwyn Clwyd developed specifications for the projects based on dialogue with stakeholders about local business needs. They subsequently managed the tendering and recruitment process for selecting organisations/individuals to deliver the projects.

Denbighshire Enterprise Network

The Denbighshire Enterprise Network was delivered by Lafan – a business consultancy based in North Wales. The contract was awarded in May 2025, with initial work focussed on developing new branding, marketing and communication materials for the network. Despite the previous UK SPF 2023 – 24 delivering a similar business networking project, the assets and business database developed by the previous contractor were not available to Lafan, meaning more time than initially expected was spent on project set-up.

Activities

As part of the Denbighshire Enterprise Network, Lafan delivered a range of activities to support and connect businesses across Denbighshire. These included:

- **Networking events** with a focus on a particular sector (such as manufacturing or tourism) and/or topic (such as social media, building a team, or the circular economy). These events often included a guided tour of local businesses followed by a facilitated workshop or networking session.
- **Workshops**, delivered online or in-person, covering topics such as building a brand, AI, loans, investments and grants, employment law, digital tools and services, and creating digital content. In the latter stages of the project, two webinars were also delivered connecting businesses in Denbighshire with towns in South Wales and Canada.
- **A start-up course**: a 6-week programme for aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs, including tailored workshops, one-to-one and group support, and networking opportunities.
- **Start-up grant**: Course participants were offered the opportunity to apply for a small start-up grant, funded through the Denbighshire Enterprise Network. Businesses had to be new start-ups (trading less than a year) to be eligible. There was a maximum £2,000 grant available, with £500 match funding required.
- **Two business shows** – in Rhualt (focussed on food, environment and tourism) and Ruthin (focussed on green growth and technology), providing opportunities for businesses to exhibit to, learn from and make connections with other local businesses.

In addition to these activities, a regular Denbighshire Enterprise Network newsletter was shared with businesses in network and with other local business networks.

Engagement

The network was promoted through varied channels, including social media, news articles and word of mouth. Businesses were invited to complete Lafan's diagnostic tool upon first joining (although it was not a requirement), which enables an assessment of the business's current capabilities and future needs across a range of areas, from HR and leadership to marketing and sales. The aim of the tool was twofold: to support strategic planning for the business and for Lafan to understand key support needs.

As of the beginning of March 2026, the Denbighshire Enterprise Network had attracted 78 local businesses as members. This included businesses engaged with the workshops and networking events, as well as participants of the start-up course. The membership had the following profile:

- Businesses covered a wide variety of sectors, from service and retail businesses to manufacturers.
- Most were micro-businesses, with some small businesses and only a few larger employers. This was attributed partly to the local business profile and partly to the view that larger firms are often less inclined to seek external support.
- In keeping with the project brief, there was a spread of businesses across the county with clustering around Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh, Ruthin and St Asaph.

The delivery team suggested that the common factor amongst network members was the mindset of the individual, particularly those in personal or business transition and therefore open to new ideas, rather than there being a common business type.

As shown in Table 3.2, Denbighshire Enterprise Network activities were generally well attended, although around one-third of events and workshops had fewer than 5 attendees. There were no discernible trends in factors influencing attendance rates, with online and in-person events having a similar range in attendance figures, and no clear pattern in terms of topics generating higher or lower attendance.

Table 3.2: Business engagement by DEN activity

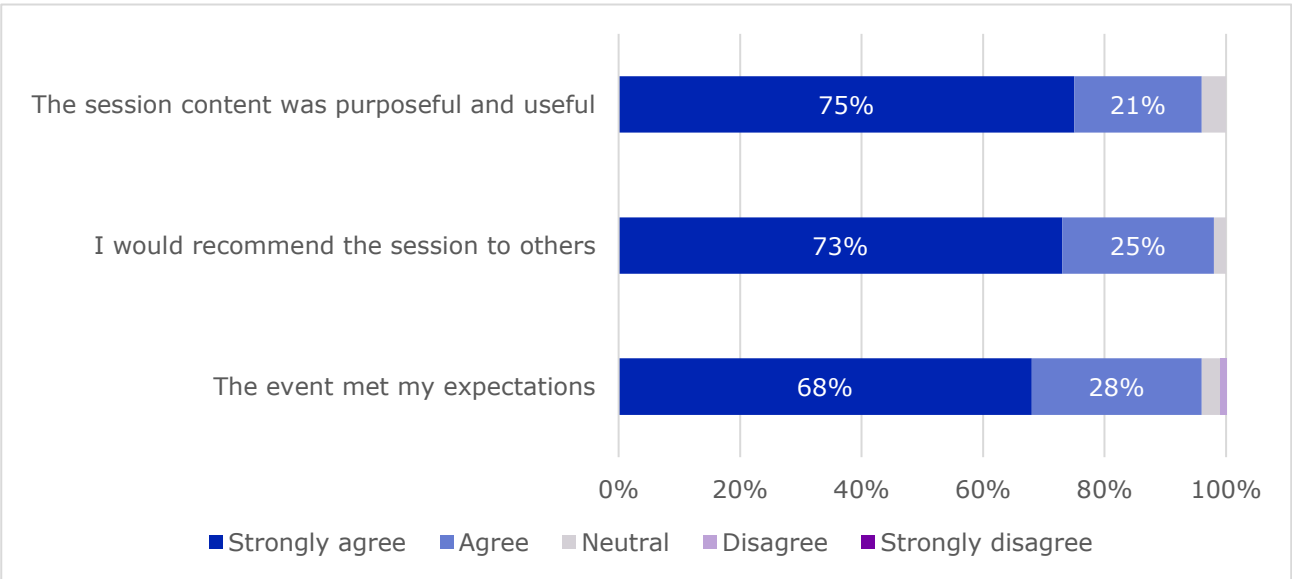
Activity	Number of businesses engaged
Networking events	Range per event: 4 - 15
Workshops	Range per session: 4 - 13
Start-up course	37
Start-up grant	6 applied, 5 approved (total grant value £7,259)
Business shows	Rhuallt: 45 Ruthin: 40

Source: DEN monitoring data (Lafan) March 2026 and Cadwyn Clwyd management information April 2026.

Effectiveness of delivery

The range of businesses participating in the network and generally good attendance at events indicates effective promotion and engagement with local businesses by Lafan. Survey feedback gathered after events and workshops also indicates that the support has been very well received (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: DEN post-event evaluation feedback



Source: DEN feedback data, February 2026

Some challenges were experienced, mainly related to not having access to the previous contractor’s business database or use of their branding or materials, despite Lafan’s

expectation that there would be continuity between the two projects. As a result, the first months were spent creating new branding, communications, and marketing materials from scratch. This, combined with the summer holiday (typically not a good time to engage businesses), meant that what was planned as 9 months of activity had to be delivered over just 6 months.

Despite these challenges, several factors supported effective delivery, including:

- The delivery team's flexibility in adapting the delivery plan over time, including reshaping elements of the original brief (in dialogue with Cadwyn Clwyd) where this was deemed beneficial.
- Use of high-quality contributors and facilitators, which enhanced workshop value and credibility, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from participants.
- A commitment to covering the whole county, ensuring inclusive access and contributing to a good spread of business types and locations.

Overall, delivery of Denbighshire Enterprise Network has been **very successful**, despite challenging timescales. A good range of businesses have engaged and most events were well-attended, with businesses overwhelmingly finding the activities of value.

Digital Connectivity Project

This project provided funding for a project officer at DCC to support businesses across the county to enhance their internet connectivity.

The project officer described the level of need for the project in Denbighshire, with internet connectivity issues particularly effecting businesses in rural areas of the county. These issues can significantly affect practical aspects of business, from conducting online sales and using accounting software to processing card payments and meeting digital reporting requirements the farming sector.

Support on offer for businesses included the project officer:

- Conducting a diagnostic assessment, with accompanying report detailing the business's internet connection quality.
- Providing information about whether businesses were included in planned upgrade schemes and the likely timescales for improvements. This advice would include the caveat that Openreach is permitted to exclude up to 25% of properties (often rural) from upgrades, so businesses were encouraged to explore alternative options even if their area was scheduled for upgrades in the future.
- Giving advice on 4G and satellite connectivity options, including the use of external antennae.
- Signposting to available grants for purchasing equipment to upgrade to 4G or satellite internet options.

Engagement with businesses

A key element of the project was identifying businesses in need of support and contacting them with information about the support offer. The project officer used two main approaches for identifying and reaching businesses:

- **A data-driven, targeted approach:** This involved using CMR data⁶ to identify priority properties expected to have poor connections, though delays in data release forced reliance on older information (May 2025 data instead of September 2025), which was not ideal. This generated a list of 3,500 highest priority properties, which was then cross-referenced with council tax business rates data to identify which properties represented businesses with poor quality connection, generating a list of 1,451 businesses to target through a mail shot.
- **Broader outreach:** In addition to the above target approach, the project officer planned events with the DCC tourism officer to reach more businesses and contacted organisations such as the Farmers Union and Young Farmers to speak at meetings (recognising farms typically suffer from very long cable runs and poor connectivity). They also attended Denbighshire Enterprise Network meetings to promote the support offer, although these being online meant the potential to reach those with poorer connections via this channel was limited.

As of March 2026, 68 businesses had engaged with the support, out of a target of 40.

Challenges & enablers

The project officer described various challenges in delivering the project, including:

- Difficulty getting updated or accurate CMR data, and datasets overestimating the quality of connections, meaning some businesses in need of support may have been missed from the targeted list.
- Limited channels for reaching businesses identified as needing support, as most council communication channels are online, which is ineffective for reaching those with poor internet access.
- Property data could not be cross-referenced with named council tax data, meaning letters were addressed only to 'The occupier', which potentially increased the likelihood they would not be opened. Furthermore, Denbighshire County Council currently does not display the council logo on the outside of the envelope, increasing the chance that recipients may consider the letter to be spam.

Despite these challenges, the project officer's existing experience delivering similar projects supported effective engagement with almost 70 businesses, who subsequently benefited from the support (see Outcomes section for further details).

Net Zero Project

This project aimed to build on the successful delivery of the previous UK SPF 2023 – 24 Colomendy Net Zero project, which supported businesses to work towards net zero, by expanding the support model to other industrial estates in the county. One Earth Education began delivery of the project in July 2026, however, delivery was stopped in October 2026 due to contractual issues.

People and Skills Fund

A total for 13 expressions of interest were received. This resulted in 12 projects across 10 organisations that were considered by the People & Skills funding panel that took place at

⁶ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-statistics-and-data/cmr>

Denbighshire County Hall on 16th July, with allocation approved in principle for the 12 projects. One project was approved for funds but pulled out before their project started.

The following 11 projects were selected for funding (funded organisation and **name of project**):

- Agrication - **Denbighshire Farm Forwards**
- Denbigh High School - **Denbigh HS Community Project**
- GLLM - **Supportive Steps**
- Outdoor Learning Llangollen (Bryntysilio) - **The Entrepreneur**
- Prestatyn High School - **Entrepreneurship in Action**
- Prestatyn High School - **Community Campus**
- RCS - **Coach to Work 100**
- ReSource Denbighshire CIC - **Aspire**
- ReSource Denbighshire CIC - **Grow Green Skills**
- Stepping Stones North Wales - **Next Steps Towards Better Futures**
- West Rhyl Young People's Project (WRYPP) - **Camau Cymuned/Community Steps.**

Projects' planned coverage ranged from supporting young people and adults across Denbighshire to develop skills, improve wellbeing and progress toward education or employment (Table 3.3). Offers included agricultural and green-skills training, NEET prevention projects, employability courses, coaching for new employees, and personalised support for disabled learners. Several initiatives provided accredited qualifications, work-based learning, community café projects, outdoor and residential programmes, vocational profiling, digital media training and therapeutic services. Specialist counselling and skills development were offered for adult survivors of childhood abuse. The total value of all projects at the application stage was £364,734 with a range from £12,811.68 to £66,434.

Table 3.3: Key characteristics of projects

Project	No. planned economically inactive people ⁷	Description	Planned value ⁸
Denbighshire Farm Forwards	20 (60) ⁹	Practical agriculture project building young people's skills, wellbeing, confidence, and future aspirations.	£38,875.00
Camau Cefnogol - Supportive Steps	50	Wraparound learner support preventing dropout and strengthening resilience for vulnerable college learners.	£43,707.56
Coach to Work 100	0 (20) ⁴	Coaching new employees to build resilience, confidence, skills, and long term employment success.	£12,811.68
Aspire	15	Person centred programme raising aspirations through vocational profiling, accredited training, and progression support.	£66,434.00

⁷ OP4 Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services

⁸ Cost at Full Application

⁹ OP17 Number of people reached

Stepping Stones	30	Therapeutic counselling and skills based activities supporting adult survivors to rebuild confidence.	£21,900.00
The Entrepreneur	160	Outdoor residential using adventure learning to develop entrepreneurial, teamwork, and leadership skills.	£57,900.00
Entrepreneurship in Action	10	Students run community café gaining workplace skills, qualifications, and employability experience.	£16,532.72
Community Campus	5 (100) ⁴	Work based accreditation and supported experience helping young people progress toward meaningful employment.	£23,756.18
Grow Green Skills	20	Hands on green skills programme teaching sustainable construction, eco design, and circular economy concepts.	£28,400.00
Camau Cymuned/Community Steps	20	Outdoor activities and digital media training building life skills through drop in engagement.	£29,382.78
Denbigh HS Community Project	25	Employability training and practical community projects developing skills and supporting at risk students.	£25,035.00

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2026

Project delivery

Given the relatively short timescales for delivery, the projects on the whole have performed well in achieving the overall Fund targets. The full project budget was allocated, although variations occurred due to 1 project not going ahead, 1 over delivering and 3 under-delivering on budget. Therefore, a small underspend (£31,299.92) was also allocated (Table 3.4) at a later stage to 5 projects.

Table 3.4: People and Skills Fund allocation of underspend

Project	Description	Value
Agrication	Run additional cohort for 7 weeks. 10 beneficiaries ringfenced (mixed of existing and new beneficiaries).	£7,500.00
Denbigh HS	Allocate for under stated quotes so project can pay in full for their training provision.	£9,278.82
Outdoor Ed Llan	Run a 'lite' version of Confident Denbighshire residential within the February half term week for a women only cohort of up to 8 (and includes child-care).	£11,150.00
Stepping Stones	Additional support to minimum of 10 beneficiaries	£800.00
Resource Denbighshire	Cohort 2 oversubscribed so run an additional cohort 3 for 8 weeks. 8 new beneficiaries to clear their waiting list. Total cost for the cohort would be £5,500 however they are willing to absorb difference.	£2,500.00

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2026

Fund level performance against outputs targets has been overwhelmingly successful (Table 3.5). All the targets were considerably over-achieved. Some variation existed between individual project performance against some output targets, mainly due to project specific reasons.

Table 3.5: People and Skills Key Fund performance against output targets

Output	DCC Targets	Total Claimed
Number of local events or activities supported	65	271
Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	250	360
Number of people reached	175	366

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2026

Reflections on delivery

Project teams were complimentary of the Cadwyn Clwyd team regarding management of the fund, highlighting their support and encouragement during the project set-up, delivery and closure stages.

Aspects of delivery that worked well for projects are outlined below.

- **Start-up.** Several projects reported smooth mobilisation due to experienced staff, established referral networks, and existing organisational relationships. Good marketing, proactive outreach, and positive engagement from beneficiaries helped build early momentum. Many partners were responsive and enthusiastic, enabling quick recruitment and committed participation. Well-prepared delivery teams, effective onboarding processes, and clarity around programme aims also contributed to a strong foundation for delivery, allowing projects to begin with confidence and clear expectations
- **Delivery.** Project delivery was strengthened by strong partnerships, enthusiastic engagement from participants, and highly supportive staff. Many projects benefited from effective collaboration with schools, additional learning needs (ALN) teams in schools, and community organisations, enabling smooth set-up and tailored provision. Small group or 1:1 approaches created safe, inclusive environments where beneficiaries felt comfortable, supported, and able to engage. Creative, flexible delivery methods and high-quality staffing further contributed to positive experiences and strong project impact across diverse cohorts.
- **Close.** Projects highlighted effective administration and clear milestones supported smooth closure where applied. Positive feedback from participants, schools, and partners reinforced the value of the programmes.

Some of the challenges faced by projects across the different phases of the project included:

- **Start-up.** There was some confusion around commissioning, finance procedures, and reporting requirements, although many projects have worked with Cadwyn Clwyd before and they recognised improvements in programme design and management.
- **Delivery.** Common challenges included delays in start-up phases, slow referrals, and difficulties engaging participants early. Several projects struggled with transport issues, school timetable constraints, and difficulties coordinating delivery with schools or external agencies. Administrative burdens, unclear processes, and late involvement of finance or commissioning teams created inefficiencies. Personal circumstances, mental-health-related barriers, and inconsistent attendance also reduced participation. Tight project timescales prevented fuller progression, while late referrals left insufficient time for meaningful impact

for some participants. Some programmes also lacked suitable physical spaces or had insufficient cohort sizes for planned activities.

- **Close.** Project close-down was hindered by tight timescales, unfinished courses, and limited capacity to gather full feedback or outcomes before deadlines. Some participants joined too late to benefit fully, while others disengaged due to personal circumstances, making final evidence collection difficult. Reporting requirements and challenges obtaining client declarations slowed closure. Several projects noted missed opportunities to provide progression guidance or reconnect with individuals needing further confidence-building. Constraints such as equipment wear-and-tear not being claimable and delays in partner delivery also affected projects at closure.

Aspects of effective fund management from the Cadwyn Clwyd team included:

- **Programme set-up and processes:** A robust EOI process (via an Excel template) proved to be a more flexible process and effective communication tool with the Panel, for quick decision making about which project ideas to move forwards into detailed planning. Timely support and decision making from the Panel enabled agreement for project scope and costs in principle. The more robust onboarding process once projects had been agreed was more effective compared with previous years. The Submit system was felt to be working well to support the team with collaboration, data management and project monitoring.
- **The collaborative approach** taken within the programme (cross referrals between projects), and externally within the wider Working Denbighshire Portfolio helped to maximise support for beneficiaries and improve value for money. Making connections and supporting partnership engagement with other external local organisations was an important aspect of this year's delivery e.g. with foodbanks and the Salvation Army, supporting referral pathways into their projects for their eligible clients has generated a legacy for Denbighshire arrangements going forwards.

Despite these successful and effective aspects of fund management, there were also some key lessons learnt. These included:

- Scoping of a couple of the projects resulted in unnecessarily complex costings and progress reporting, which created complications.
- A need for better understanding of the definitions of outputs and outcomes to improve the design of operational data and make monitoring and performance measurement more effective.

4. Outcomes & impact

Business support projects

The table below demonstrates the overall outcomes achieved across the Prosperous Denbighshire and Collaboration Fund projects. Most outcome targets were either met or surpassed, including targets for enterprises adopting new or improved products or services and new to firm technologies or processes being surpassed by large margins.

The target outcome for estimated carbon dioxide equivalent reductions was not met, due to the Net Zero Collaboration Fund project ceasing delivery. However, 8 projects funded through the Prosperous Denbighshire fund installed low or zero carbon infrastructure. This means the project as a whole likely contributed to carbon dioxide reductions, but it was beyond the scope of the grant funding requirements for businesses to calculate the estimated reduction.

Table 4.1: Support Denbighshire Businesses project outcome targets and actuals

Outcome	Targets	Actuals
OC08 Jobs created as a result of support	15	15
OC09 Jobs safeguarded as a result of support	58	75
OC11 Enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	20	45
OC12 Enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	9	51
OC27 Estimated carbon dioxide equivalent reductions as a result of support	950	0

Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2026

Impact of the grant funding

Evidence gathered through the beneficiary survey and follow-up discussions indicates that the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund has generated a range of positive impacts for participating businesses across the county.

- **Improvements in business productivity, operational efficiency and service quality**, as the most frequently reported impacts. Many businesses used the funding to purchase new equipment, upgrade premises or invest in new systems that improved their ability to operate efficiently and meet customer demand. In several cases these investments increased production capacity or reduced the time required to deliver services.
- **Improvements in sales performance and market opportunities** were also reported. Investments in equipment, facilities and customer experience enabled some businesses to increase output, expand their offer or attract new customers. For hospitality and tourism businesses, improvements to facilities were expected to support higher visitor numbers and improve the quality of the customer experience.
- **Improvements in resilience and long-term sustainability** were also reported by several businesses. The funding allowed businesses to modernise equipment, reduce operating costs and strengthen their ability to compete in challenging economic conditions. In some cases, businesses indicated that the investment had helped safeguard the future viability of the business. Other businesses noted that the funding had helped them take the

next step in their development, enabling them to move from a small-scale operation to a more established and professional business model.

"The investment has allowed us to expand our kitchen facilities and produce more baked goods on site. Without the funding we would probably have had to reduce our opening days, but instead we've been able to grow the business." – Prosperous Denbighshire Grantee

"The new equipment has significantly improved the efficiency of our production process and allows us to deliver work more quickly and consistently. It's helped us increase capacity and improve the quality of our output." – Prosperous Denbighshire Grantee

Some grant recipients also highlighted the wider benefits for local communities and the local economy. Several businesses reported that their investment would enable them to create new opportunities for local suppliers, attract more visitors to local towns, or provide additional services within their communities.

Beneficiary feedback also highlights the importance of the programme for microbusinesses and sole traders, who often face significant barriers when trying to access investment capital. For these businesses, the availability of grant funding provided a critical opportunity to invest in growth.

Overall, the feedback indicates that **relatively modest capital investments have enabled businesses to make meaningful improvements to their operations** and strengthen their potential for future growth.

"Without the grant we simply wouldn't have been able to launch the business at this stage. The funding enabled us to invest in the infrastructure needed to get the business up and running." – Prosperous Denbighshire Grantee

Cross-cutting themes

Evidence from survey responses, interviews and delivery partner feedback demonstrates that the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund has also contributed to wider policy objectives relating to environmental sustainability, the Welsh language and equality of opportunity.

Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability

Many businesses reported that their investment contributed to reducing energy use, improving efficiency or adopting more sustainable business practices. Examples included installing more energy-efficient equipment, upgrading heating systems, improving insulation, and introducing new processes that reduce waste or energy consumption.

In several cases businesses noted that the funding enabled them to implement sustainability improvements much earlier than would otherwise have been possible, helping them reduce operating costs while also improving environmental performance.

Welsh Language

The programme also supported the promotion and use of the Welsh language within local businesses. A number of applicants indicated that they operate bilingually or provide services

in Welsh as well as English. The application process also encouraged businesses to consider how they could support the Welsh language within their operations.

Feedback from the delivery team suggests that while Welsh-speaking businesses found it relatively straightforward to demonstrate their contribution, some applicants required additional guidance on how to evidence their support for the language.

Equal Opportunities

Survey responses indicate that many businesses recognised the importance of providing fair employment opportunities and creating inclusive workplaces. Several businesses highlighted their commitment to inclusive recruitment practices or improving access to services for a wider range of customers.

From a delivery perspective, the programme also supported equal access to funding by providing hands-on support to applicants, ensuring that smaller businesses and those with less experience of grant applications were able to participate in the programme

Case study 3: Rubbertech Ltd – Ruthin

- **Business:** Rubbertech Ltd
- **Location:** Ruthin
- **Sector:** Manufacturing / Industrial services
- **Business size:** Small business

Rubbertech Ltd is an established business based in Ruthin that provides specialised manufacturing and industrial services. The company used support from the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund to invest in new printing equipment that has enhanced its production capabilities.

The new equipment has enabled the business to improve the efficiency and quality of its production processes while also reducing its environmental impact. The investment contributes to the company's wider ambition to reduce its carbon footprint through more efficient production methods.

The business reported that without the grant it would have been necessary to take out a loan and spread the investment over several years. The funding therefore enabled the business to bring forward the investment and implement improvements more quickly than would otherwise have been possible.

As a result of the investment, the business expects to benefit from improved productivity and increased capacity to meet customer demand. The new equipment also supports the company's long-term development by enabling it to expand its range of services.

The company highlighted that the funding had accelerated a key investment decision and strengthened the long-term resilience of the business.

Additionality

Evidence from the survey responses and follow-up interviews indicates that the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund delivered a strong level of additionality. Beneficiaries were asked what would have happened in the absence of the grant funding, and responses were categorised into four broad scenarios.

- **Project would not have happened at all (28 businesses).** This was particularly common among start-ups and microbusinesses with limited financial reserves. In these cases, the grant funding acted as a critical enabling factor, allowing the business to launch new activities or invest in essential equipment that would otherwise have been unaffordable.
- **Would have happened at a slower pace or later date (20 businesses).** These respondents indicated that they would eventually have made the investment but only after a significant delay. Several businesses suggested that the investment might have taken place several years later once sufficient funds had been accumulated. In these cases, the grant funding accelerated business development and enabled businesses to realise benefits earlier than would otherwise have been possible.
- **Would have happened at a lower quality (4 businesses).** These businesses said they would still have undertaken the project but would have chosen cheaper or less effective solutions due to financial constraints.
- **Would have happened on a smaller scale (4 businesses).** These businesses indicated that without the funding they would have had to scale back their plans, purchasing fewer items of equipment or undertaking more limited improvements to their premises. In these cases, the grant enabled businesses to implement a more comprehensive investment that delivered greater operational benefits.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the programme enabled businesses to undertake investments that were either not possible or significantly constrained without grant funding support.

Case study 2: Flower Garden Florist – Denbigh

- **Business:** Flower Garden Florist
- **Location:** Llanrhaeadr near Denbigh
- **Sector:** Horticulture / Retail
- **Business size:** Microbusiness start-up

Flower Garden Florist is a new business specialising in locally grown flowers and foliage. The business aims to provide a sustainable alternative to imported flowers by producing cut flowers grown locally in North Wales.

Support from the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund enabled the business to establish the infrastructure required to start operating, including a propagation greenhouse that allows plants to be grown from seed and used in the business's cut flower garden.

The owner reported that without the funding it would not have been possible to launch the business. The investment therefore played a critical role in enabling the business to move from concept to operational enterprise.

The business model is strongly based on sustainable production practices. By growing flowers locally rather than importing them from overseas, the business aims to reduce the carbon footprint associated with traditional floristry supply chains. In addition, the business promotes environmentally responsible growing methods and seasonal production.

Beyond its economic impact, the business also contributes to the local community by encouraging engagement with locally grown products and promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund therefore enabled the creation of a new local enterprise while also supporting more sustainable approaches to flower production.

Denbighshire Business Network

A key outcome of the Denbighshire Enterprise Network was the **development of new, transferable branding and communications materials**, as well as **a database of businesses**, that can be used in the future regardless of which organisation facilitates the network. This represents a solid foundation on which the Denbighshire Enterprise Network can continue to grow and develop, supporting its longer-term viability and sustainability. The positive feedback received from businesses engaged in the network so far also indicates an effective delivery model to take forward into future delivery.

While difficult to quantify, feedback from members and the delivery team indicates that the project generated valuable connections amongst businesses and built the knowledge, skills and confidence of those engaged. The delivery team also noted that the impact of the network and business support provided become more apparent over a longer period.

Digital Connectivity Project

For businesses engaged with the digital support offer, a **range of positive outcomes were achieved**. These included:

- Businesses applying for grants for new connectivity solutions.
- Businesses upgrading to fibre broadband after discovering (through the project) that their area's connection had recently been upgraded.

- Resolving a complex case where a business could not connect due to building renovation issues. The project officer liaised with Openreach on the business's behalf (Openreach do not deal directly with customers), enabling progress that would not have been possible otherwise.

The project officer reported that these connectivity upgrades have supported various **productivity, capacity and efficiency gains** for businesses, such as improved ability to conduct online sales, use accounting software, and take card payments reliably.

People and Skills Key Fund

People and Skills Key Fund performance against the outcome target was very successful (Table 4.2), with the target for people reporting increased employability surpassed. Some variation existed between individual project performance against the outcome target, mainly due to project specific reasons.

Table 4.2: People and Skills Key Fund performance against outcome target

Output	Target	Actual
Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF	200	376

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2026

Outcomes emerging for participants across the projects included:

- Projects said that participants consistently showed improved confidence, wellbeing, skills, and qualifications, with several programmes reporting full attendance, high completion rates, and meaningful progression outcomes.
- Several projects reported successful transitions into volunteering, continued learning, or follow-on opportunities, demonstrating lasting impact.
- Some projects developed sustainable resources, such as bespoke volunteering guides and frameworks for supported employment, that will benefit future delivery.
- Strong partnerships and ongoing relationships also provided a foundation for continued support beyond the project period.

Some quotes and examples that demonstrate the positive result described above from a few selected projects include:

"By providing mentoring support, learners who access this specialist help achieve at the same level as their peers who haven't." GLLM Camau Cefnogol / Supportive Steps Project

"Pupil outcomes and learnings in terms of self esteem, confidence, and upskill for life beyond school." Denbigh High School project

"All who participated said their mental health had improved and they felt stronger and able to make more informed life choices." Stepping Stones Next Steps Towards Better Futures

"[participant] regained confidence to get out of the house and travel independently... she takes real pride in showing the work she does."

Resource Denbighshire Project Aspire

"Noticeable increase in participants' confidence and self-esteem." WRYPP

Camau Cymuned / Community Steps

Cross-cutting themes

People and Skills Key Fund projects have been delivered bilingually and with a clear focus on equality of opportunity to ensure potential participants are not discouraged from engaging.

Additionality

For the People and Skills Key Fund the support was considered additional by all projects. It enabled them to do things they would not have otherwise been able to achieve. Across the projects, additional activities expanded opportunities for learning, wellbeing, practical skill-building, and progression. These included extra counselling sessions, art therapy, confidence and resilience courses, cookery days, craft and heritage skills workshops, and outdoor education experiences. Several projects offered supplementary volunteering roles, bespoke work-experience placements, and extended mentoring support. Participants accessed Level 2 Food Hygiene, first-aid certificates, ASDAN awards, horticulture sessions, woodworking courses, and creative skills activities. Follow-up events, progression guidance, and sustained volunteering were also enabled. Collectively, these added activities enriched participant outcomes and broadened the impact of each project.

Strategic fit

Table 4.3 outlines the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Fund's alignment with UK SPF objectives, national policies and Denbighshire County Council priorities, demonstrating strong strategic fit.

Table 4.3: Fund alignment with UK, Welsh and country strategic priorities

UK SPF aims: Supporting local business and People & skills	
Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging	- The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund provided capital investment to improve productivity, business resilience and growth potential across a range of SMEs and microbusinesses. Businesses invested in equipment, premises improvements, digital systems and machinery, enabling expansion, improved efficiency and diversification. Examples include manufacturing equipment, construction machinery, digital media equipment and hospitality upgrades. - Investment improved operational efficiency and enabled firms to increase capacity and competitiveness. Examples include reduced outsourcing costs, improved workflow, faster service delivery, higher

	quality products and the ability to expand into new markets or service Overall, the programme supported entrepreneurship, business capability, employment growth and skills development.
National policy: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	
A prosperous Wales	- The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund strengthened local enterprise, supported business investment and enhanced productivity across sectors including manufacturing, retail, tourism and creative industries. - Businesses reported increased turnover potential, improved resilience and greater confidence to invest and grow. Several said the funding accelerated business development by months or years. - Collaboration Fund projects supported businesses to grow and develop, including achieving productivity and efficiency gains from enhanced internet connectivity and upskilling business leaders across a range of topics.
A more equal Wales	Some projects contributed to inclusive employment practices and improved accessibility of services and opportunities. Examples include flexible employment opportunities, inclusive learning environments, support for neurodivergent employees and accessible tourism or accommodation offers.
A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language	- Several businesses incorporated Welsh language and cultural identity into their operations and services. Examples include bilingual websites and marketing, Welsh-language lessons or services, Welsh product branding and promotion of local heritage and culture within tourism businesses. - The Denbighshire Enterprise Network delivered some workshops and events exclusively in Welsh. - All projects used bilingual marketing and communication materials.

A Resilient Wales	Some projects supported sustainability improvements and reduced environmental impact. Examples include solar panels, electric equipment, energy-efficient machinery, reduced transport through in-house production, and locally grown or locally sourced products.
County strategy: Denbighshire Economic Strategy 2025 - 2035¹⁰	
Strategic priority 1: Resilient and competitive	- The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund strengthened the resilience of local businesses through capital investment, improved infrastructure and modernisation of operations. Businesses reported improved productivity, reduced costs, increased operational capacity and stronger competitiveness within their sectors. - Collaboration Fund projects strengthened local business networks and supported vital future proofing of businesses through improved internet connectivity.
Strategic priority 2: Skilled and enterprising	- The People and Skills Key Fund has contributed to the skills of economically inactive people and moved them closer to the labour market. In the case of younger people, the Fund has increased the chances of them securing employment after leaving school. - The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund supported entrepreneurship, start-up development and skills development among business owners. Many applicants were first-time grant applicants who developed business planning, financial forecasting and management skills through Business Wales and Cadwyn support. - Denbighshire Enterprise Network has developed the skills, knowledge and confidence of business leaders and start-up founders.

Added value

Evidence collected and reviewed for this evaluation highlights a number of key success factors that Cadwyn Clwyd and delivery partners have brought to the implementation of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Fund.

Success factors influencing delivery across the three strands of activity included:

- Strong understanding of local economic priorities**, enabling informed commissioning decisions for the Collaboration and People and Skills Fund, as well as robust assessment of applications by the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund grant panel. Together, this resulted in

¹⁰ <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/strategies/economic-strategy/economic-strategy.aspx>

funded projects aligning closely with SPF objectives and the wider economic strategy for Denbighshire.

- **Efficient programme delivery systems**, including the use of the Submit application system and a structured assessment process, which allowed applications and proposals to be processed effectively despite the short delivery timescales associated with the programme.
- **An established delivery infrastructure and experienced staff team**, which enabled Cadwyn Clwyd to manage high levels of demand and support businesses and organisations throughout both the application and claims processes.

In addition, there were some key success factors specific to the successful delivery of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund. These included:

- **Strong links with the local business community**, developed through Cadwyn Clwyd's long-standing presence in Denbighshire, enabling the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund to reach a wide range of microbusinesses and small enterprises across both urban and rural areas of the county.
- **Close partnership working with Denbighshire County Council and Business Wales**, ensuring that the fund complemented existing business support provision and that applicants are able to access appropriate advice and support alongside the grant funding.
- **Hands-on advisory support for applicants**, with Cadwyn Clwyd staff and Business Wales working directly with businesses to develop applications, refine business plans and prepare financial forecasts. This support was particularly important for microbusinesses and sole traders who may have limited experience of applying for grant funding.

Together, these factors indicate that Cadwyn Clwyd's delivery of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Fund provided significant added value.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Overall, evaluation evidence indicates that delivery of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund was very effective and the project has delivered meaningful benefits for businesses across the county. The programme exceeded most of its output and outcomes targets and generated a range of positive impacts relating to productivity, resilience, business development, and enhancing skills and employability.

In enabling these outcomes, the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Fund has supported strategic priorities at a regional, national and UK level, including the UK SPF aims and relevant priorities within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Denbighshire Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035.

Business support

Businesses receiving grants have benefited from the increased investment in a range of ways, from improved productivity, operational efficiency and service quality to enhanced resilience and long-term sustainability.

The combination of grant funding with advisory support from Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales proved particularly effective in enabling businesses to access funding and implement projects successfully.

The grants delivered a high level of additionality, with many businesses reporting that their investment would not have taken place without grant support, particularly among start-ups and microbusinesses with limited financial resources.

While tight delivery timescales created some challenges, the programme demonstrates how targeted grant support can help micro and small businesses invest in growth and strengthen the resilience of the local economy.

Collaboration Fund

There is evidence that the business network and digital connectivity projects brought considerable benefits to Denbighshire businesses, including helping businesses to grow and improve operations. The Denbighshire Enterprise Network has also established a solid foundation on which future business network activities in the county can be built, representing a potential longer-term outcome of project.

It is unfortunate that the net zero project was unable to deliver as intended, especially given the strong outcomes achieved during the previous UK SPF 2023 – 24 Net Zero project. This previous successful delivery suggested the 2025 – 26 project had the potential for significant positive impact across a wider range of geographical areas and businesses in Denbighshire. Nonetheless, Cadwyn Clwyd's management of the contract, including the decision to end the project early, was effective.

People and Skills Key Fund

The People and Skills Key Fund was very successful in delivering the agreed outputs and outcomes across a range of projects which were geographically spread across the county.

The challenge of short project timelines influenced by delayed UK Government commissioning was overcome through efficient programme management by Cadwyn Clwyd and the pragmatic commitment of funded projects.

In addition, Cadwyn Clwyd was able to support effective partnerships between local organisations, using insight and intelligence gained through past project delivery, that would otherwise have not been established.

Recommendations

Given the relative size (and proportionate evaluation focus) of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund in comparison to the other strands of activity, recommendations are largely focussed on this element of the project.

Based on the findings detailed in this report, we would recommend considering the following for any future grant management projects:

- It is recognised that application windows and project delivery timescales are largely constrained by the timescales set by UK SPF and the date at which Cadwyn Clwyd receives grant funding approval. However, given the challenges described regarding short application and delivery windows, providing greater advanced notice of upcoming funding opportunities (where possible), through earlier promotion and marketing activities, could allow businesses more time to consider how the funding could support their development plans in advance of the official grant funding launch.
- Although feedback on the application process was generally positive, comments from grant beneficiaries suggest that some elements of the application form could potentially be refined to improve clarity and reduce administrative burden. In particular, it may be beneficial to:
 - Strengthen the wording around planning permission requirements, ensuring applicants understand what approvals may be required prior to applying.
 - Review the list of ineligible expenditure categories to ensure that these are clearly communicated and aligned with programme priorities.
- Whether additional eligibility parameters, such as a turnover threshold, should be introduced in future funding rounds. This could help ensure that funding continues to prioritise microbusinesses and smaller enterprises that may face greater barriers to accessing investment.
- Given the strong demand for the fund, introducing clearer targeting of specific sectors, locations or types of investment could help maximise the strategic impact of future programmes.
- It was noted that the relatively short delivery timescales made it difficult to capture some longer-term impacts, particularly those relating to productivity improvements or employment growth. Future programmes could consider incorporating follow-up monitoring questions for businesses that have previously received support, enabling the longer-term impacts of earlier investments and support to be better understood.