

Evaluation of the Wrexham Community Key Fund (Shared Prosperity Fund)

A report to Cadwyn Clwyd

February 2024



Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU

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AVOW

Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Wrexham



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Executive Summary

Introduction

York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd to evaluate the Wrexham Community Key Fund – a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) initiative focused on strengthening the social fabric of communities through investment in community spaces and relationships. The project received £600,000 in UKSPF funding and was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd and the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW) between June 2023 and December 2024.

The evaluation methodology included a review of key documents, analysis of management information, consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers, and a survey of grant recipients followed by in-depth interviews with a selection of grantees.

Project design

The Wrexham Community Key Fund provided grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 to community groups across Wrexham. The funding was provided to projects aiming to improve public services, restore a sense of community and empower local leaders and communities.

Small grants of between £2,000 and £10,000 and large grants of between £10,000 and £50,000 were available. Capital and revenue funding was available for projects which improved community facilities, sports facilities and green spaces, as well as supporting renewable energy generation, digital infrastructure and cultural activities.

In addition to the grant funding, the project offered wrap-around support, including guidance with applications and procurement processes. This support was provided by two Project Officers, one each from Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW.

Project delivery

The Wrexham Community Key Fund was promoted via Cadwyn Clwyd's and AVOW's existing networks, as well as targeted communication towards community groups covering the whole of Wrexham's geography. The promotion of the Fund was clearly effective, with the number of expressions of interest received (57) more than double the number of grants awarded (28).

A grant funding panel made up of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd, AVOW and Wrexham County Borough Council awarded the grant funding to projects which represented the best value for money in achieving the Key Fund's aims. Nineteen of the 47 applications were rejected, most commonly due to a lack of evidence of benefit to the community or concerns over alignment with UKSPF priorities.

The wrap around support from project officers was crucial for enabling smaller and/or less experienced organisations to access the funding and deliver their projects, particularly where support with procurement was needed. Another factor that enabled the success of the projects was Cadwyn Clwyd's flexibility around the reimbursement of funds.

The major challenge for both project officers and grant recipients was the short delivery timescale. A longer application period would have allowed more support to be given to community organisations, while a longer delivery period would have allowed more flexibility in the face of delayed projects.

The Key Fund exceeded its UKSPF outputs targets, with more than 99% of the grant budget spent to provide 27 organisations with financial and non-financial support (against a target of 18). A total of 24 amenities were created or improved, against a target of 18, and the Key Fund far exceeded the target for the amount of green or blue space created or improved (16,220m² against a target of 30m²).

Outcomes

The Wrexham Community Key Fund exceeded its UKSPF outcomes targets, with the number of people with improved perceptions of facilities at 11,201 against a target of 180 and the number of increased users of facilities at 3,806 against a target of 180.

The success of the Wrexham Community Key Fund was also reflected in the comments of the grantees. In the qualitative consultations, grantees reported increased user numbers, better accessibility for people in the community and improvements to the skills of young people, among other additional impacts.

The funding had particular impact on helping community groups move towards net zero, reduce their energy costs and promote equality of opportunity. The grant funding assisted community groups to make their facilities more accessible to the community and ensure their longevity in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund has been effective, with all outputs and outcomes targets exceeded. Beneficiaries have spoken positively about the project and have valued the support provided. The Key Fund has been successful in meeting its stated aims of spreading opportunities, restoring a sense of community and empowering local leaders and communities.

The evaluation findings have informed a range of project specific recommendations, mainly related to the application process.

1. Introduction and methodology

York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd to evaluate the Wrexham Community Key Fund – a project focused on strengthening the social fabric of communities through investment in community spaces and relationships.

The project received £600,000 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The £2.6 billion UK SPF aims to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, through investment in three priority areas:

- Communities and place.
- Support for local businesses.
- People and skills.

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project aimed to deliver against the communities and place investment priority by providing capital and revenue funding to projects seeking to strengthen community infrastructure and deliver community-based projects focused on access to services and net zero ambitions.

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund and review progress against its intended outcomes and impacts.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology included a review of key documents, analysis of management information, consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers, and a survey of grant recipients followed by in-depth interviews with a selection of grantees.

Document review

A document review was undertaken to inform the fieldwork with stakeholders and grant recipients. The following documents were reviewed:

- Cadwyn Clwyd's SPF bid documentation.
- Promotional materials for the Key Fund, application forms and guidance documents.
- Data-collection mechanisms developed for the monitoring of outputs, outcomes and impact.

The insight drawn from the document review and inception meeting was instilled into the logic model for the Wrexham Community Key Fund.

Management information analysis

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

- Grant applications.
- Grant award panel meeting minutes.
- Quarterly progress reports.
- Project and grant recipient claim forms.

Fieldwork

Table 1.1 summarises the fieldwork completed during the evaluation of the Wrexham Community Key Fund between October 2023 and December 2024.

Table 1.1: Summary of completed fieldwork

Component	Fieldwork
Consultations with stakeholders	Consultations with project officers from Cadwyn Clwyd (1) and AVOW (2).
Survey of grant recipients	Distributed to 28 grant recipients. Received 26 responses (93% response rate) with 22 agreeing to participate in a follow-up consultation.
Interviews with grant recipients	Completed 14 interviews with grantees, including 7 recipients of small grants and 7 recipients of large grants.

2. Project design

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project provided grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 to community groups in Wrexham. The project was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd – a Rural Development Agency providing guidance and support to develop and diversify the rural economy in North Wales – in partnership with the Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham (AVOW) – the County Voluntary Council for Wrexham appointed by the Welsh Government to support third sector organisations. Delivered between June 2023 and December 2024, the project aimed to:

- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in places where this has been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in places lacking local agency.

Two types of grants were available: small grants of between £2,000 and £10,000 and large grants of between £10,000 and £50,000. Groups could apply for capital and revenue funding to support community projects which:

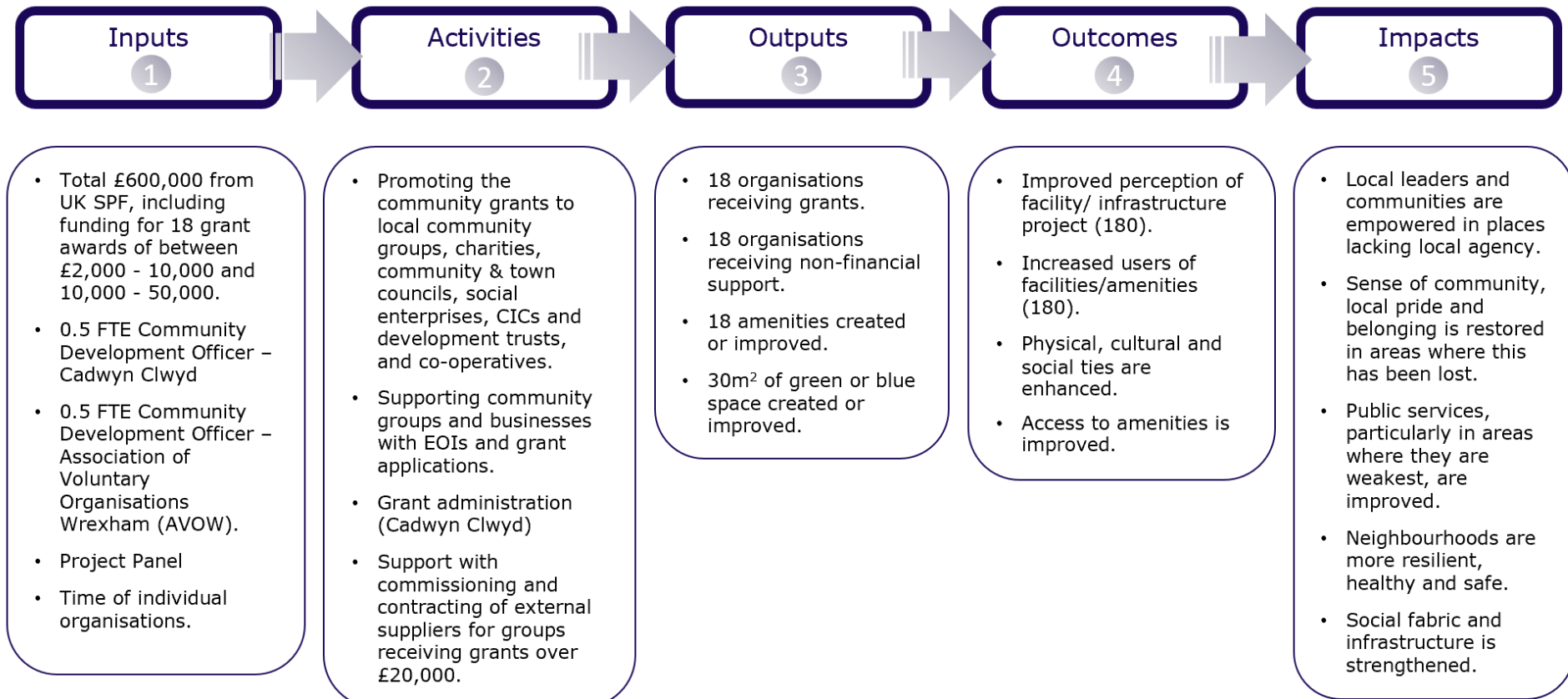
- Provide community spaces for local civil society and community groups to use.
- Enable locally owned renewable energy generation and waste management.
- Create and improve community local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses, and embankments.
- Deliver and support community led local arts, heritage and creative activities.
- Deliver access to services via local sports facilities.
- Provide digital infrastructure within community owned assets and facilities.

A range of organisations were eligible to apply, including voluntary and community groups, community councils and town councils, registered charities, social enterprises, Community Enterprise Companies (CIC), development trusts and co-operatives. In addition to providing grant funding, the project offered a wrap-around support function, including officer support and guidance, to help community groups access the fund and deliver their projects.

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 intended 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: Wrexham Community Key Fund Logic Model



Key progress indicators

The key progress indicators outlined in Cadwyn Clwyd's SPF bid are set out in the following tables. They include target outputs and outcomes, as well as project expenditure.

Table 2.1: Planned outputs

Output indicator	Target
Number of organisations receiving grants	18
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	18
Number of amenities created or improved	18
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	30

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF bid

Table 2.2: Planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure (number of people)	180
Increased users of facilities/amenities	180

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF bid

Project budget

The project was awarded £600,000 in SPF funding. Table 2.3 outlines how the planned project budget was allocated.

Table 2.3: Wrexham Community Key Fund project budget

Cost	Amount
Key fund grants	£500,000
Project delivery staff - AVOW	£33,150
Project delivery staff – Cadwyn Clwyd	£33,150
Marketing and publicity	£1,700
Overheads – accommodation (AVOW & Cadwyn Clwyd)	£8,000
Project management, administration, and evaluation	£24,000
Total	£600,000

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF bid

3. Effectiveness of project delivery

Grant management

Staffing

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project was overseen by a Project Officer from Cadwyn Clwyd, with support from a Project Officer from AVOW. A grant panel, made up of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd, AVOW and Wrexham County Borough Council reviewed the submitted applications and made decisions on grant awards.

Promotion and initial engagement

Both Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW supported promotion of the fund by reaching out to their existing networks of community organisations, including those they had previously worked with. Both organisations also promoted the funding via social media.

AVOW's experience working with smaller, local community groups from across Wrexham allowed for less experienced organisations to access the funding. AVOW completed a mapping exercise of organisations in the local area to enable the sharing of targeted communication with groups outside of AVOW's existing network, ensuring a wide geographical spread of applications. The two delivery partners also worked closely with Wrexham County Borough Council to avoid possible duplication of projects supported through a similar fund linked to communities and place that the local authority was managing.

Of the 14 grantees interviewed for the evaluation, most (9) heard about the funding through their connections with AVOW, while only one community group mentioned finding out about the funding via Cadwyn Clwyd. The remaining groups mentioned other networks, including the North East Wales Multicultural Hub and contacts within Wrexham CBC.

The promotion for the Wrexham Community Key Fund was clearly effective, with the fund receiving more than double the number of EOIs than grants awarded (further details below).

Expression of interest and application

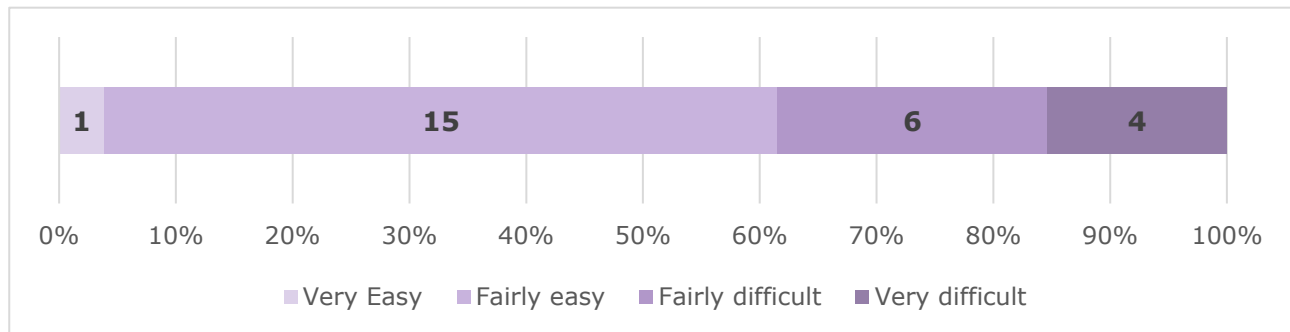
The community groups were asked to complete an initial expression of interest, with a three-week submission window opened following a period of support provided by the two project officers. Assessment of the EOIs was completed by two members of the grant funding panel (one member each from Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW). For the first round of funding, 57 EOIs were received, of which 39 were invited to make applications.

Support was available from Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW for community groups with less experience making grant applications. The project officers provided guidance to these organisations and supported them to make improvements to their applications, which enabled smaller and less experienced community groups to apply successfully for the grants. Through this support, the project officers also built their knowledge of the projects which enabled them to answer any queries from the panel during the grant funding panel meetings.

The grant funding panel received 35 applications during the first funding round, approving 23 projects for funding. Following the grant awards from the first funding round, there was £60,000 in capital funding not allocated. The second round of applications therefore took place following the completion of procurement processes from the first round, receiving a further 14 applications, of which 5 were approved.

As shown in Figure 3.1, the majority of survey respondents (16/26) found the application process either very easy (1) or fairly easy (15). This leaves a significant minority who felt the application process was either fairly difficult (6) or very difficult (4). Commonly cited reasons for difficulty in the application process included duplicated or overlapping questions and the lack of a shorter application for smaller grant amounts. Those experienced with grant applications tended to find the process easier, which highlights the importance of this additional practical support in helping to give smaller, less experienced organisations access to the funding.

Figure 3.1: Ease of the application process



Source: Survey of grant recipients (n=26)

Award process

Applications were submitted to the steering group panel, comprising of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd (1), AVOW (2) and Wrexham County Borough Council (1). The two project officers also sat on the panel in a non-voting capacity. Prior to the meeting, members of the panel scored each application by the following factors:

- Contribution to UKSPF priorities
- Community involvement
- UKSPF outputs and outcomes
- Value for money

Projects above a certain threshold were subsequently discussed at the panel meetings. Of the 49 applications received, 21 were not approved. Many of these applications that were not approved were deemed to be viable projects but lost out to stronger applications in the oversubscribed and competitive process. Common reasons that projects were not approved included:

- A lack of evidence of costing or community support.
- Concerns over alignment with UKSPF priorities, outputs and outcomes.
- Prior receipt of grant funding from other sources.
- Concerns over post-funding sustainability.

Several projects in the second round of grant applications, which was particularly competitive, were praised by the grant panel but were identified as requiring further support before being eligible for funding. AVOW have offered their support to one community group to develop a governance structure to ensure compliance for future grant applications.

Project delivery support

The project officers continued to support the grant recipients throughout the delivery of their projects, which was clearly valued by the grantees. Survey responses indicate that all found the support from Cadwyn Clwyd either very helpful (23/26) or fairly helpful (3/26), and interviewees praised the project officers for their responsiveness.

The project officers split the projects based on the size of the grant, with AVOW supporting the smaller grants and Cadwyn Clwyd support the larger grants. Cadwyn Clwyd provided procurement assistance to those organisations who needed it, supplying template contracts, drafting specifications and uploading tenders to Sell2Wales. Interviewee feedback indicates that this procurement support was particularly valued by those in receipt of larger grants, with these grantees reporting that they would not have felt confident managing the procurement process without the advice and support provided by Cadwyn Clwyd.

"I was over the threshold and had to put [the project] out to tender. I couldn't have done that myself – the support was essential." – Grantee.

Cadwyn Clwyd's flexibility around releasing the grant funding was also valued by grantees, with funds released upfront where there was a clear need. This enabled more ambitious projects to be completed by community groups with limited cash reserves than would otherwise have been possible.

Case study 1 – Agri-Cation CIC

Agri-Cation provides farming education for pupils with additional needs and school refusers. Some activities are delivered in an outdoor classroom, which can get very cold in the winter. After having the grant recommended by AVOW, Agri-Cation applied for grant funding to install windows, doors and a log burner-oven in the outdoor classroom to keep the space warm during the winter months.

The creation of this warm space has meant Agri-Cation can offer new opportunities to the community, including yoga sessions running all year round and outdoor wilderness cooking using the log-burner. Wellness in Wellies – Agri-Cation's programme for supporting people who have experienced trauma – is now working with a local counselling group to provide animal therapy sessions. The increased use of the outdoor learning space also provides extra income, which Agri-Cation intends to reinvest in the facilities to make further improvements in the future.

Outputs

As shown in Table 3.1, the project exceeded all its target outcomes, with 27 organisations receiving grant funding and non-financial support from a target of 18¹. The target of 18 amenities created or improved was also exceeded (24). The target for green or blue space created or improved was far exceeded (16,220m² against a target of 30m²), with most of this progress made by two projects which focused on renovating outdoor spaces.

¹ There were 28 grants awarded, with one organisation receiving two separate grants.

Table 3.1: Progress against planned outputs

Output indicator	Target	Actual
Number of organisations receiving grants	18	27
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	18	27
Number of amenities created or improved	18	24
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	30	16,220

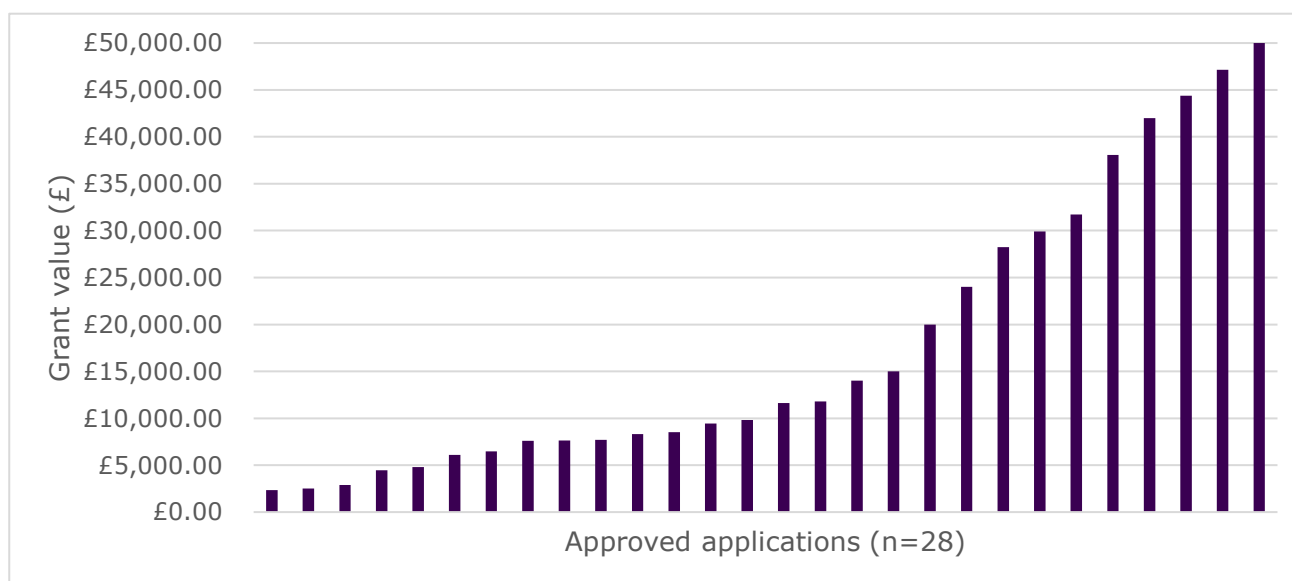
Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund – SPF claim form February 2025

The Wrexham Community Key Fund has supported a wide array of organisations, from community councils, music and arts charities, sports organisations, children’s centres and more. The grant funding also supported a variety of different types of projects, ensuring that the widest possible range of local residents in Wrexham benefitted from the funding. The funded projects can be categorised as follows:

- Improvements to outdoor spaces (11 projects)
- Improvements to church or village halls (8 projects)
- Cultural projects, including in music and the arts (5 projects)
- Improvements to other community facilities (3 projects)
- Funding carbon reduction advice for community groups (1 project)

Within the grant budget there was a small underspend of £3,519.89, with £496,480.11 spent out of £500,000. Figure 3.1 outlines the distribution of the amount awarded to each community group. Many of the supported projects required less than the full amount of the small or large grant, meaning that a larger number of organisations could be supported with smaller amounts of funding per grant than initially envisaged.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of approved projects by value



Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund - Outputs & outcomes February 2025

Figure 3.2 shows the geographical spread of the projects funded by the Wrexham Community Key Fund. The distribution of projects demonstrates that communities across Wrexham County Borough have been supported. There is not a particular focus on the City of Wrexham (8 projects), with the remaining projects well distributed throughout the County.

Figure 3.2: Geographical distribution of projects²



Source: YCL analysis of funded organisations, February 2025.

Challenges and enablers

Challenges described by Wrexham Community Key Fund stakeholders and beneficiaries included:

- **Short timescales:** Project officers and grant recipients alike identified short timescales – during both the application and delivery phases – as challenging. An extended application period would have provided Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW more time to support organisations with their grant applications, possibly resulting in fewer applications being identified as under-developed.
- **Proportionality of grant application and claims processes:** Some grant recipients found the length of the application form and extent of the monitoring and claims processes to be disproportionate to the amount of grant funding they received. Duplication of information in the application process was highlighted by a minority of grant recipients in the qualitative interviews, and some found the monitoring and claims process overly burdensome where a high number of products had been purchased with the grant funding. The most common suggestion for improving the grant processes was to produce more guidance for the application process, by creating an example application or a guide for completing the forms.

² Note that two of the projects could not be narrowed down to specific locations. WCD Young Carers delivers its programmes across Wrexham, Conwy and Denbighshire and its Silent Disco project has been delivered across Wrexham County Borough. Similarly, Paallam Arts delivers their activities across Wrexham County Borough.

"There could've been different levels of monitoring depending on the amount awarded" – Grant recipient.

Enablers described by Wrexham Community Key Fund stakeholders and beneficiaries included:

- **Wrap-around support:** Grant recipients clearly valued the support provided by the project officers throughout the application process and project delivery. Of the grant recipients responding to the survey, all found the support from Cadwyn Clwyd either very helpful (23/26) or fairly helpful (3/26). Interview feedback indicates that the support enabled those with less grant application experience to access and make full use of the funding. Organisations with larger grants were supported through the procurement process, while those with limited cashflow were able to receive their grant up-front or have it repaid in stages.

"They gave me loads and loads of support. Any time I needed additional resourcing they were always there. I couldn't have done it without them."
– Grantee

- **Partner relationships:** The strong working relationship between Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW facilitated successful delivery, which was crucial given the short timescales. Processes, relevant documentation and promotional activity were established quickly at the start of the project, which allowed sufficient time for community organisations to apply to the fund and deliver their projects. The two delivery partners also worked closely with Wrexham County Borough Council to avoid possible duplication of projects supported through a similar SPF fund linked to communities and place that the LA was managing.
- **Promotion:** The promotion of the fund was wide ranging and effective, as evidenced by the 58 expressions of interest (for an initial target of 18 awards). Both AVOW and Cadwyn Clwyd clearly have strong relationships with local community groups that enabled this level of engagement with the fund. Additionally, to ensure applications from across Wrexham, the project officers targeted communications beyond their existing networks to organisations across the borough.

4. Outcomes & impact

Progress against outcome targets

As shown in Table 4.1, the targets for both the number of new users and number of users with improved perceptions of the facilities supported by the grant funding have been far exceeded. The figure for the improved perceptions outcome is based on the numbers of people that organisations reported as using the facility/infrastructure during the year, rather than data measuring perceptions over time. It is also worth noting that two projects account for 7,690 of the total number of people with an improved perception of facilities. Nonetheless, the outcomes achieved are considerably higher than what was initially anticipated, demonstrating the wide reach of the funding. The larger than expected number of projects supported (see Table 3.1) may have also contributed to success against the planned outcomes, with more users able to access a greater number of supported facilities.

Table 4.1: Progress against planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target	Actual
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure (number of people)	180	11,201
Increased users of facilities/amenities	180	3,806

Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund – SPF claim form February 2025

Impact of the funding

The success against the outcomes targets was corroborated through the survey of grant recipients, with the primary impacts that grantees identified being increased participation and an increase in the quality of experience for users:

- Increased opportunities for community organisations/members (8)
- Improved quality of experience for community members (8)
- Improved operation of your organisation (3)
- Increased sense of community spirit (2)
- Expanded organisation membership/participation (2)
- Increased opportunity for community members (2)

It is worth noting that survey respondents were asked to identify the primary impact of the funding by selecting only one option from the above list. Interview feedback suggests that for many projects, the funding had a range of impacts, such as both increasing opportunities for existing participants whilst also expanding organisational membership or participation.

Case study 2: Llay Community Church

The Pastor of Llay Community Church was recommended to apply for the Wrexham Community Key Fund by a member of his congregation. With the funding, they completed three streams of work to improve the community hall: external ground work, tarmacking the car park, insulating the road space, and converting a storage room into a café.

Cadwyn Clwyd provided support throughout the grant funding process, including support with the application and putting pieces of work out to tender.

The work has enabled the Church to increase its presence at the centre of the community. Several new programmes have started since the renovations, including youth work, adult study groups, senior groups and a charity using the space for training.

Further impacts of the work include reducing the monetary and carbon costs associated with heating the building, making the car park more accessible and increased capacity for the services run out of the church to engage local Welsh speakers.

Interviews with 14 of the 28 grant recipients provided further insight into the variety of impacts realised as a result of the funding. These included:

- Provision of local playing fields for seven secondary schools in Wrexham and across the border, enabling better quality PE lessons for local pupils.
- Upskilling young carers to deliver silent disco sessions as part of a social enterprise, combining social events with a sense of ownership and improved skills for young carers.
- Improved accessibility, safety and comfort in community facilities, enabling continued and increased attendance at new and existing events in community facilities.
- Enabling organisations to develop technical drawings and costings to go towards a planning application for building restoration.
- New avenues of support for vulnerable groups, including animal therapy, strengthened relationship with a domestic abuse group, and improved food bank kitchen facilities.

"The grant has taken us a step forwards to start restoring the building." – Grantee.

"We've received enormous positive feedback, and it's already made a massive difference. There's definitely been an uptake in use." – Grantee

There was evidently a clear need for the grant funding within the community. Demand was high, as indicated by the project being oversubscribed. Survey feedback from grantees also suggests the funding was highly valued by the participating community groups, with all 26 survey respondents rating the value of the funding to their organisation as 'very important'. In addition, all interviewees reported that they would not have been able to deliver their projects without the funding, due to having no or limited other funding available within their organisation and/or no other external funding sources being available. Together, these findings suggest a high level of additionality and that the project filled a clear gap in funding availability in Wrexham and the surrounding areas.

"We wouldn't have been able to do anything [without the funding]. Our reserves were right down. The funding was what we asked for and more."
– Grantee.

Impact on Welsh language

The qualitative interviews with grant recipients did not highlight a significant contribution to the promotion of the Welsh language amongst the projects funded. Although some of the organisations have a small number of Welsh-speaking members and existing bilingual signs or materials, there was no mention of any project activities that impacted the Welsh language directly.

Nonetheless, Cadwyn Clwyd actively promoted the Welsh language throughout delivery of the project, including:

- Producing bilingual promotional materials and communication about the fund.
- The project officer, as a first language Welsh speaker, supporting groups in their preferred language.
- Offering advice to grant recipients on Welsh language requirements and signposting groups to other sources of support.

Impact on net zero

The interviews revealed several projects that made an impact on progress towards net zero. Several of the funded projects aimed to improve the use of energy in community buildings, with four projects making improvements to their heating systems or installing other energy efficiency improvements. Four other projects also mentioned the use of sustainable construction practices, including reusing a shipping contractor and using local suppliers.

Impact on equality of opportunities

Many of the interviewed grant recipients mentioned improvement in equality of opportunities as a result of the grant funding. There were several projects that focused on ease of access, allowing a greater number of users with various individual needs to access community facilities. Most grantees also commented that the grant funding helped them to increase capacity and keep costs low, ensuring that as many people as possible could access the activities.

"The project has definitely promoted equality of opportunities. It's such an inclusive activity." – Grantee

Case study 3 – Silent Disco Project

Flamingo Lounge Inclusive Events and WDC Young Carers joined forces to apply for a grant to buy silent disco equipment. They heard about the funding via social media and saw an opportunity to deliver the silent disco project they had been planning for some time.

Cadwyn Clwyd supported with the application process, answering any queries and providing feedback where required. They also assisted with challenges that the project encountered during delivery, for example, providing money up-front to purchase the equipment.

The silent disco equipment has brought a variety of community groups and charities together to put on events. WDC Young Carers have done sessions with AVOW and had a request from Wrexham Senedd to loan the equipment.

Delivery against UKSPF aims and local policy

The Wrexham Community Key Fund aimed to align with the following UKSPF aims:

- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

The delivery described above saw these aims being achieved, with projects spread across Wrexham (Figure 3.2) transforming community facilities and providing new opportunities for members of local communities. The supported projects have provided new and more plentiful opportunities for residents of Wrexham to access social, educational, cultural and sporting activities, as well as providing easier access to essential services like food banks.

"The people who have been here from day dot appreciate the more comfortable environment." – Grantee.

The Wrexham Community Key Fund is also well-aligned with Wrexham Council's strategic priorities³, particularly in relation to:

- **Improving the environment and access to green space.** For example:
 - The Erddig and Chirk Castle Mindful Meadow was funded to make the space more accessible, including equipment for groups with autism and refurbishing a toilet for use by members of a domestic abuse survivors' group. This has enabled greater use of this green space by a wider variety of community groups.
 - For the Pedal Power project, local people painted unusable bikes for installation as artwork in a local park, raising awareness of Cycling4All's work enabling disabled people to access cycling. The bikes will be used yearly in Wrexham's decorated bike trail.
- **Improving access to support and services for the most vulnerable.** For example:
 - Jubilee Beau's Access for All project installed an automatic gate at the entrance of the equestrian centre. This increased accessibility for members of the community who

³ [Our council priorities | Wrexham County Borough Council](#)

spend therapeutic time with the ponies, including those who are isolated or have poor mental health.

- St Mark's in Caia Park, an area of high deprivation, where the Church operates a food bank and children's activities for local residents. The project has made the building more accessible, fixing the roof, making energy efficiency improvements and installing new kitchen facilities.
- **Promoting good health and wellbeing.** For example:
 - The Erddig Nordic Walkers purchased a storage container to house their walking poles, gazebos and work benches following a break in of their previous storage facility. This has enabled the group to continue their walks safely, promoting exercise and tackling isolation amongst its 280 members.
 - The Plas Kynaston Play Facility was developed to provide seating for the football pitch, build a new pathway and extend the pitch. This has enabled seven local schools to make use of the facility for PE lessons and improve the facilities for local football teams.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Management of the Wrexham Community Key Fund has been highly effective across all areas of delivery. This is despite challenging delivery timescales. Successful delivery has been enabled by an effective partnership between Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW and the strong connections that both partners have with a wide range of local community organisations.

The model of wrap-around support adds significant value to the grant management process. Grantees clearly value the support provided during the application process and delivery of their projects. This has enabled smaller community groups and organisations with limited prior experience of grant applications to access the funding, including accessing larger grant amounts where external procurement of services is required.

The project has exceeded its target SPF outputs and outcomes, in part due to the high demand for the grant funding leading to a greater number of lower value grants being awarded than initially intended. The funding has had a variety of positive impacts for participating organisations, such as organisations increasing their reach and the range of opportunities they can offer community members, enabling progression of larger scale projects and creating opportunities for future grant funding applications. There is also evidence that funded projects have had a positive impact on equal opportunities and progress towards net zero.

There was evidently a need for the grant funding within the community and grantee feedback suggests a high level of additionality, with the project filling a gap in funding availability locally. It has evidently met the SPF objectives of enhancing physical, cultural and social ties and access to amenities and community-led projects, whilst also contributing to Wrexham CBC strategic priorities.

Recommendations

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

- Reviewing the application process to ensure that application forms are as streamlined as possible, with consideration given to creating shorter application forms where smaller amounts of funding are being requested.
- Producing a guidance document to support potential grantees with completing the application form, including providing good practice examples.
- Given the high demand for the grant funding and effectiveness of delivery, including the wrap around support model, there is evidently scope for Cadwyn Clwyd and AWOW to manage grant funding of a larger volume in the future. This would enable a greater number of local organisations to benefit from both financial and non-financial support.