

**Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee**  
Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Delivering better services;

**Lancashire Culture and Sport Fund / Crowdfund Lancashire**  
(Appendix 'A' - 'C' refers)

Contact for further information:

Julie Bell, 01772 536727, Interim Director of Education, Culture and Skills,  
[Julie.Bell@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Bell@lancashire.gov.uk), Steve Lloyd, 07876 452678, Head of Cultural  
Services, [Steve.lloyd@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Steve.lloyd@lancashire.gov.uk)

**Brief Summary**

Crowdfund Lancashire is the crowdfunding platform that administers the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund. Crowdfund Lancashire and the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund empower Lancashire communities to shape the culture and sport offer where they live, giving community groups autonomy to fund and deliver projects that are of need in their locality. The fund is managed by the Cultural Development Team in Cultural Services.

**Recommendation**

The Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to reflect on the update provided in the report and support the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services:

- i. To continue to reach Lancashire residents and community groups in more areas so all districts have an equitable share of the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund.
- ii. To continue to target under-represented areas and communities through working with district councils and community organisations.
- iii. To prioritise those projects in low-income areas and for under-represented communities.
- iv. To lower the current maximum pledge of £20,000 to £15,000. This would allow the panel to support more projects at higher pledge amounts, meaning more funds could be spread across the county and increasing the likelihood of more projects reaching their crowdfunding target.

## Detail

Crowdfund Lancashire gives anyone a chance to create local culture and sport projects and support the projects which matter most to them. Anyone can contribute towards their community by giving as little as £2 to help bring ideas to life. If it matters to our communities, it matters to Lancashire County Council, who will support eligible projects with a pledge from the £500,000 Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund (LCSF).

To be eligible for this fund, a project must:

- support cultural or sporting activity of benefit to the wider community.
- contribute to improving quality of life for Lancashire residents through culture or sport.
- involve the public as audience or participants.

If the project is to fund a capital project, the project should still have a tangible benefit. Priority is given to projects that improve access to culture and sport, contribute to the county council's corporate priorities and to projects that enable free or low-cost activity for public benefit. The fund is split across two funding rounds per year.

## Funding strands

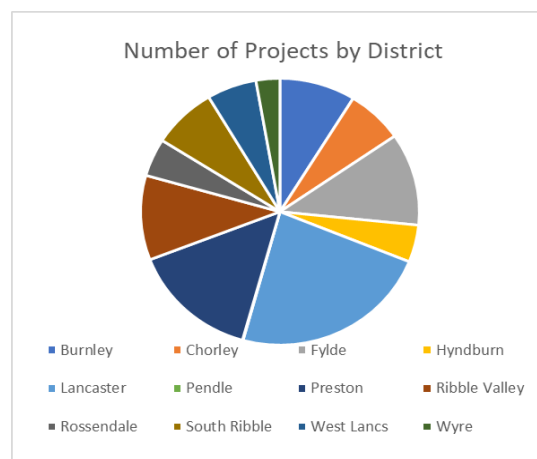
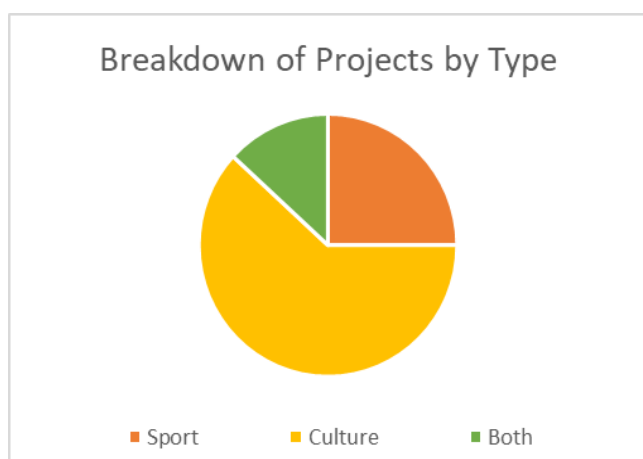
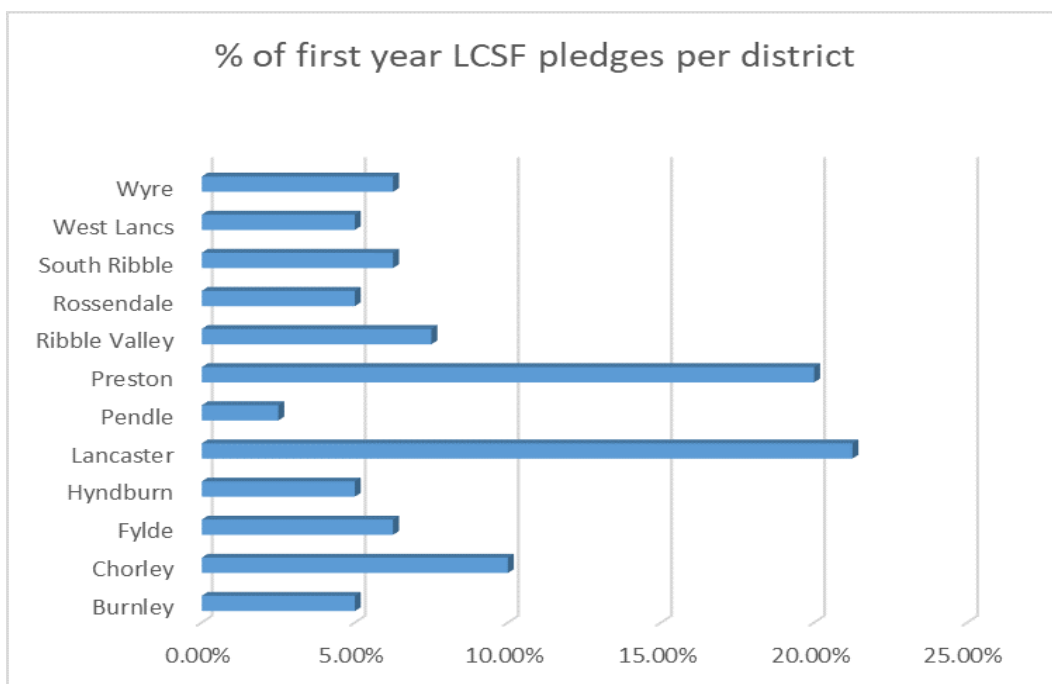
- Community organisations could get a **pledge of up to £20,000 (or a maximum of 50% of target)** towards a crowdfunding campaign.
- Town and parish councils are also encouraged to apply for a pledge of **up to £5,000 (or a maximum of 50% of target)**.
- Businesses and individuals with ideas to boost the culture and sports offering in their area could get **up to £1,500 (or a maximum of 50% of target)** to make it happen.

## First year in numbers

See **Appendix 'A'** for a full list of projects supported by the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund in the first year:

- **82** projects completed crowdfunding and reached 100% or more of their project target
- **£544,384** overall spend of the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund
- **£838,585** overall leveraged by the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund
- **£1,382,969** overall raised for community projects across Lancashire
- **540,529** projected participants and audience members
- **1370** people engaged by the Cultural Development team.
- **56** sessions delivered by the Cultural Development team.





## First Year Overview

Across the first year of Crowdfund Lancashire and the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund, over £1.3m has been spent on community projects in Lancashire. This has provided opportunities for more community cohesion, a reduction in social isolation and an improvement in the health, wellbeing and cultural experience of Lancashire residents. Crowdfund Lancashire works in partnership with Spacehive, the UK's leading community fundraising platform, which helps communities raise funds to improve their local areas. Spacehive offer a comprehensive service hosting the Crowdfund Lancashire platform, providing a technical support team as well as specialist expertise in crowdfunding and project management for communities.

The funding for the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund was secured for financial year 2022/23. The process started in March 2022 with the procurement of a crowdfunding supplier. Spacehive was the successful supplier with a significant portfolio of experience working with other local authorities across England. In the financial year



2022/23, Crowdfund Lancashire launched with an introductory round (from here, this funding round will be referred to as 2022 – introductory round). From 2023/24 financial year onwards, the annual fund has been split across two funding windows.

The eligibility criteria for the fund was developed through lengthy consultation with the independent cultural sector, district council colleagues, leisure trusts, Active Lancashire, Arts Lancashire, County Council colleagues in public health, democratic services and economic development, and the Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services. This was to ensure that the criteria reflected the needs and wanted outcomes of the cultural and sport sector in the county. The criteria have been adapted subsequently to reflect learning, address gaps and target identified priority areas over the last 18 months. Through the project creation process on the Spacehive platform, applicants must provide adequate information and explanation to how the project meets the eligibility criteria. Applicants are also required to explain how their project contributes to one of more of the County Council's Corporate Priorities.

Crowdfund Lancashire was launched in December 2022 with over 160 people attending the launch event. Over the succeeding months, the Cultural Development team engaged with the 12 district councils, hosting collaborative events in their localities and attending community forums to spread information about Crowdfund Lancashire. The team also engaged with community wide agencies, such as Active Lancashire, Arts Lancashire, Creative Lancashire, and Lancashire FA as well as local Community Voluntary Services and local frontline teams at libraries, leisure centres and community centres. The team also engaged with the 2 unitary authorities of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen to address support for projects taking place across boundaries. By the deadline for 2022 - introductory round, the team had engaged with over 800 individuals across the county which resulted in 53 projects starting crowdfunding campaigns.

All projects were assessed against the eligibility criteria by the panel to agree suitability for LCSF funding and a pledge amount. The panel consisted of County Councillor Peter Buckley, Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services and Steve Lloyd, interim Head of Cultural Services. All 53 were awarded a pledge from the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund. Of these 53, 50 projects were successful in fundraising 100% of their project target, giving 2022 - introductory round - a 96% crowdfunding success rate.

See **Appendix 'B'** for the eligibility criteria for the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund

Project creators were supported to help identify additional funds from district councils, local and national trusts and foundations, as well as ongoing support with raising off-line pledges through fundraising events and financial support from businesses. The team have close relationships with relevant national and local trusts, foundations, funders and businesses and keep them up to date with projects each round.

At the start of each round, the staff team and Spacehive work closely with the potential project creators and community groups to refine, highlight and pinpoint the project so it is in the best shape it can be before crowdfunding starts. Spacehive ratify costs of the project by asking projects for evidence of quotations and confirm



the project's legitimacy through analysing the need and evidence of event permits, planning permissions and other parties' involvements.

In the first year there was 1 round of funding to award the full year's funding allocation however for subsequent year's the allocation would be split into 2 rounds - with half the funding allocation available in each round. The purpose of this was to be more flexible and reach more people.

2023/24 funding round had the same process applied as the 2022 - introductory round, however as the 2023/24 financial year has two funding windows, there was half the amount of funding to spend in each round compared to the introductory round. 2023/24 also received a high number of project applications. This resulted in the panel awarding pledges that were lower than in the 2022 - introductory round – with some supporting pledges being less than 50% of the project target and therefore project creators having greater than 50% of their crowdfunding target left to be fundraised.

Over the past 18 months, Crowdfund Lancashire has spent £544,384 in pledges from the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund. This has leveraged another £838,585 in additional funding, pledges and donations to these projects. This has resulted in Crowdfund Lancashire and Lancashire County Council receiving a 'Gold standard rating' from Spacehive. Lancashire County Council is the second-largest funding local authority on the crowdfunding platform.

See **Appendix 'C'** for case studies of projects.

## Summary

- For every £1 Lancashire County Council puts into the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund, this levers at least another £1.50 in external pledges to support projects in local communities.
- Crowdfund Lancashire and LCSF supports creative and physical activities within communities where there is little other affordable access, supporting the wellbeing of those communities.
- Crowdfund Lancashire and LCSF galvanises individuals to feel better equipped, confident, and empowered to develop their local culture or sport offer, by supporting them to become constituted groups which provides the opportunity to secure more funding.
- Crowdfund Lancashire and LCSF empowers Lancashire communities to shape the culture and sport offer where they live, giving community groups autonomy to fund and deliver projects that are of need in their locality.
- Crowdfund Lancashire and LCSF enables community groups to be more resilient both in terms of funding and organisational structure, by providing one-to-one support on project management and crowdfunding.

## Plans moving forward

Moving into the next funding window, the team has adapted to the need of the community and the fund, by creating guidance notes and project surgeries to make Crowdfund Lancashire more accessible to a wider section of Lancashire. The team is keen to support and attract more grass-roots organisations and first-time



fundraisers. A maximum annual turnover for organisations has been added to the criteria and a simplified application process for individuals has been introduced.

Over the next year the team will continue to support individuals, community groups and town and parish councils to create and fund their community projects. The team encourage all project creators to put together realistic budgets that can be supported by the crowdfunding model and LCSF, however, with the threshold of £20,000 being an attractive amount, many projects do continue to apply for the maximum £20,000 pledge. With a high demand for this maximum pledge and finite funds available the panel have implemented awarding lower amounts as well as lower percentages of a project's target. For example, all free festivals were awarded 35% of their project target in 2023/1. However, this has led to less projects reaching their fundraising target. Therefore, the panel and team would like to be able to support more groups at 40-50% and suggest that lowering the maximum pledge threshold to £15,000.

The team has also worked with the County Council's procurement team to further encourage additional pledges from the Council's corporate partners. For example, the Council's new social value policy (implemented in Autumn 2023) uses Crowdfund Lancashire as a recommendation for how suppliers can support community projects. The team hope to see projects in future rounds be supported through this policy.

## Appendices

Appendices 'A' – 'C' are attached to this report. For clarification they are summarised below and referenced at relevant points within this report.

Appendix	Title
Appendix 'A'	Projects List
Appendix 'B'	Eligibility Criteria
Appendix 'C'	Case studies

## Consultations

N/A

## Implications:

N/A

## Risk management

### Financial

The services of Spacehive were procured in October 2022 on a 2 + 1 + 1 basis which means the 2 years were agreed to 2024 and after this we can agree to continue on a year-by-year basis for the next two years. The process is currently open for applicants to upload their projects on to the platform until 14th February 2024 after which the cabinet member and head of service will agree the level of support for projects in that round. All projects are first verified by Spacehive.



**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**  
**List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A	N/A	N/A
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

