

## **Appendix 1 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Application Summary**

\*These are extracts from the applications to provide additional information to Committee.

### **Local Business Support**

#### **Aberdeen City Council – Freebie Fortnight**

‘Freebie Fortnight’ proposal will be run in co-ordination with local retail and hospitality businesses to boost city centre footfall, visitor numbers and local spend.

Taking inspiration from First Bus ‘Acts of Kindness’ campaign, the ‘Freebie Fortnight’ promotion would run from 10 – 23 March 2025 (tbc). These dates have been identified to avoid key events in the city calendar ie. Aberdeen Restaurant Week, and holidays/celebrations ie. Mother’s Day, that frequently support increased trade.

The aim is to have around 20 local retailers participating in ‘Freebie Fortnight’. Each will be asked to select an in-store offering of value up to either £5 or £10, to be made available to a set number of customers per day over the period, for free. Customers will need to use a verbal code to access the offering. The funding from UKSPF would meet the cost of this offering, reimbursing each participating business.

The expectation around free in-store offerings, for up to £5, could be a hot drink or baked good for example. For up to £10, could be a lunch deal with soft drink in a restaurant, or a free gift in a retail setting. Participating businesses will have an opportunity to devise their own deal based on stock and deliverability.

A variety of offerings will be ensured, from ‘grab and go’ options which may attract workers and commuters, to sit-down or browsing options which may attract visitors and increase dwell time spent in the city centre. Requiring customers to use a verbal code to access the offering will avoid cannibalisation of regular sales for the participating business. There is also the likelihood of additional spend, with customers purchasing extra items to ‘complement’ the free offering, ie a cake with a coffee. In a retail setting it will be suggested that the free offering is attached to a minimum spend, ie customers spending £10 will receive a £10 voucher to spend next time they return.

There will be a supporting marketing campaign to accompany the ‘Freebie Fortnight’ which participating retailers will be required to engage in.

Through regional partners including Aberdeen Inspired, Business Gateway, Opportunity North East, Our Union Street and the Federation of Small Business, city centre businesses will be offered the opportunity to participate in the promotion. There will be a particular emphasis on targeting businesses adjacent to current city centre works and disruption on Union Street Central and Aberdeen Market. It is expected that funding will support around 20 businesses to take part, and criteria will be set around these being local SMEs, with fewer than 3 stores, rather than national chains. Care will be taken to ensure that the participating businesses are representative of multiple sectors.

This project aligns with Aberdeen City Council’s Union Street Empty Shops Action Plan. A key principle of the Action Plan is that on Union Street, but equally applicable to the wider city centre, new audience and footfall is catered for, and local and regional businesses are embedded at the heart of the city. With only local businesses eligible to participate, and an accompanying marketing campaign, awareness will be raised of our distinctive ‘Aberdeen’ offering through the city centre and it is hoped new customers will be attracted. Also in line with the second principle of the Action Plan, with the

project incorporating businesses from numerous sectors, the ‘functions’ of a city centre beyond a core retail offering will be reinforced.

### **Aberdeen City Council – support for Aberdeen Gift Card via Aberdeen Inspired**

There are over 300 businesses in Aberdeen signed up to the Aberdeen Gift Card. The Card has been announced as the most successful in the UK for the second year running, with almost £830,000 in sales in 2024, and totalling almost £4 million in sales since its launch 5 years ago. Aberdeen Gift Cards can be used in both local independents as well as national chains and offer the opportunity of aggregate spend, in person in the city, and not online. The Gift Card is therefore a major boost to the local economy, local spend and visitor numbers.

To continue this momentum, a key area for growth for the Aberdeen Gift Card is corporate sales. Where organisations and businesses adopt the Gift Card for use as staff gifts, staff benefits and staff rewards, there is opportunity for increased spend and awareness of the Gift Card. For the organisations, adopting Gift Cards as a reward mechanism minimises administration and can achieve CSR objectives.

This proposal is to support Aberdeen Inspired to target corporate sales growth of the Gift Card. Aberdeen Inspired will develop and launch a webpage including video and case study content and increase engagement, at this market. The proposal directly supports delivery of ACC’s Community Wealth Building Action Plan, approved in December 2022, to “encourage use of the Aberdeen Gift Cards by Anchor Institutions to encourage staff to shop locally.”

### **Aberdeen City Council – Travel Trade Tours Development**

Funding is sought for the development of the travel trade tours offered by the Countryside Ranger Service. The Service manages the countryside sites throughout the city including local nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Rangers aim to promote biodiversity in the city, offer educational opportunities to people of all ages and abilities, work with volunteers on conservation and site maintenance and run an exciting outdoor events programme. Last year the service began working with the Tourism Officer to introduce new tours targeted at the travel trade, with cruise tourism being a catalyst for the activity. The initial offer is focused on a seabird safari with potential dolphin spotting, a minibeast safari looking at insects and woodland areas, and a night-time moth-spotting trail. These activities are delivered by the Ranger team and have started to prove popular with tour operators looking for unusual and targeted events for their guests.

If successful, funds would be used for equipment and kit to support the existing programme, expand the offer to include a wider area, and enhance the night-time tour with telescopes – potentially adding new tours enabled by the resource. The tours align to the Destination Strategy developed with VisitAberdeenshire which includes a focus on outdoor and adventure tourism experiences distinct to the region. Cruise visitors are particularly apt as the tours can be delivered locally with guests able to visit the city, have a distinct experience nearby, and return to their ship before it leaves the harbour.