

## **Luton Airport DCO application 2023**

### **Letter of support for the DCO application on behalf of Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2023**

Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation (BLCF) have worked in partnership with LLAL (Luton Rising) for the last 15 years supporting delivery of their ambitious and needs driven Community Funds. Over the last 4 years we have been contracted to support their CSR work and to ensure a significant amount of their Community Fund is used to support charitable and community works across Luton and neighboring communities, those impacted most by the airport's activity and those communities most in need or at risk.

Since 2019 and the launch of the Community Investment Fund (CIF) programme in early 2020, we have managed and awarded £13,433,203 in Luton Rising funding. This has been through managing and assessed 392 applications, resulting in 296 grants being awarded and reaching 964,069 beneficiaries.

The Community Funding Programme sets out the challenges, opportunities and uniqueness of Luton's communities and its people and Luton Rising's funding criteria (as developed with BLCF) sets out and aligns to the key priorities it aims to address and which support the Luton 2040 vision. Further its CIF programme support core charities across the town with regular funding to deliver vital community services against need and within a systems thinking approach to provision. The role of BLCF is to ensure that the aims and priorities of Luton Rising are addressed across its communities and to act for Luton Rising to ensure delivery of impactful work and programmes. Its 3 further funds, Small Grants, Luton Youth Fund and Near neighbours does even more to support grassroots provision, new and developing areas of need and to break down barrier to accessing support especially from those with lived experience of racial inequality. From these 3 funds we can clearly see the impact of the work of Luton Rising against the 5 priorities.

#### **1. Protecting the most disadvantaged in our town**

In 2021-22 we awarded 5 grants across our Small Grants, Near Neighbours and Luton Youth Fund that addressed the primary issue of health and serious illness, benefiting 3602 people and our data for 2022-23 shows that health and wider determinant of health, including access to good food, mental health support and community activities remains some of the most important issues for Luton and we reported £100,589 of support benefiting 11,115 people from Small Grants and Near Neighbours funds. Luton Rising recognise the complex nature of poverty and that health, access to education, good food and good housing are critical and are never treated in isolation.

#### **2. A strong and empowered community supporting fairness.**

Luton is super diverse and ranked in the top 20% for deprivation in the Multiple Indices of Deprivation (LSOA index of 2019). Its population is younger than UK average and suffers



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from significant health inequalities. It is now a **Marmot Town**, affording it access to coordinated support, advice and opportunities to challenge these issues and come together in partnership for greater good.

Those experiencing the highest health inequality are often also those with protected characteristics and lived experience of racial inequality. BLCF is a founding partner of the Luton's Fairness Taskforce and pledged to address this and further ensure transparency of data, support, and information from Luton Rising grants work is publicly shared on the 360 Giving platform and reported to FREA (Funders for Race Equalities Alliance) equity toolkit.

Our CIF programme in 2021-22, was aligned to Luton's 2040 vision through Luton Rising's revised Community Funding Strategy and we saw 55% of groups prioritise those most disadvantaged in the town and a further 17% looking to address fairness and equity through their work. In 2022-23 work continued to prioritise those most disadvantaged and in addition Luton Rising support a larger Windrush Fund (Bedfordshire Cultural Support Fund) which awarded £29,913 of funds to 6 projects marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Luton Rising approach is to be agile and responsive to needs and opportunities to support its communities and in breaking down barrier to accessing that support.

### **3. Securing a strong economic recovery**

By building networks of knowledge and understanding through BLCF, and through supporting strategic conversations, Luton Rising has been able contribute to addressing the socio-economic challenges of the town. With a record lower than national average weekly wage, yet a greater than national average GDP growth, we see Luton is an area of high employment but high in work poverty.

BLCF is ensuring the Luton Rising programmes align with Luton's new Skills Strategy and in 2022-23 both the Small Grants and Near Neighbours' programmes supported training and development workshops to empower communities to support individuals with opportunities to improve their economic situation. £32,445 was awarded from these 2 programmes towards projects with training and skills offers and 1498 beneficiaries we reported. Luton Rising recognises its role as a significant employer but also the opportunities wider skills and training can offer to growing the local economy.

### **4. Making Luton a child-friendly town.**

The Luton Youth Fund makes a strategic link between Luton Rising and the Council's Youth Partnership Services. With its independent grant panel of experts, it ensures a strong alignment of the work of commissioned and non-commissioned charities to the wider needs of young people. Luton Rising funds in 2021-22 showed 19 grants awarded supporting children and young people and 25% of CIF funded work also addressing the needs of this age group. In 2022-23 12 projects were funded with £406,284 benefiting 1828 young people but further its Small Grants and Near Neighbours funds also address the need of children and Young people across the town and wider geography supporting a further 9 projects with £56,803 supporting 1717 beneficiaries.



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## 5. **Becoming a greener and more sustainable town.**

BLCF have worked with Luton Rising to start to support more work that addresses the climate crisis. We are embedding environmental considerations into our funds but are developing these further with Luton Rising and to explore capacity, knowledge, skills, careers, and employment opportunities. In 2022-23 Luton Rising funded £16,977 in funding to support projects reaching 1012 beneficiaries. Luton Rising is committed to addressing the climate crisis through its funds and its business operations.

Luton Rising's growing support through its **Near Neighbours fund**, further demonstrates its support and understanding of the role it can play in improving lives of those outside of Luton but impacted by the airport's growth. This fund supports not only in Central Bedfordshire but also charities across North Herts, St. Albans, Dacorum, Stevenage, Eastern parts of Aylesbury Vale District and some neighbouring villages. In the last 12 months alone Luton Rising's community funds, working through the BLCF partnership, has funded 9 projects with £43,724 benefiting 2770 people. And this is set to expand over the next year with triple the funds looking to be made available to groups going forward.

Our partnership allows us to adapt, expand, and grow alongside the Luton Rising ambition for its community funds to grow with airport expansion and we are pleased to have been awarded a new contract to continue our work to manage and deliver their funding priorities for a further 4 ½ years. During this time, we will support Luton Rising's aims to do more to ensure the programme of grants adapts to the changing needs of the community. We will deliver this on behalf of Luton Rising by,

1. Creating more entry level opportunities for groups to apply for funding to break down barriers to accessing funding especially for most disadvantaged groups and those group led by and supporting those people with lived experience of racial inequality.
2. Recognise the ongoing needs and challenges of the cost-of-living crisis by responding to urgent appeals and needs as they occur and remaining agile to this approach in the decision making and processes to ensure timely interventions but always through a transparent approach.
3. Ensure work continues to fit with Luton's Strategic priorities as set out in Luton 2040 by always reflecting the wider factor of poverty and wider determinates of health in the variety, breadth and depth of projects funded.
4. Ensure that's the projects supported produce detailed and useful data on impact that can be used to inform the systemic changes in the town in terms of services and need.



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BLCF are fully in support of the DCO application and the exciting future for the growth of the airport. It not only brings the option of prosperity to the town in terms of jobs and income and investment to the local economy and businesses but as we have shown through the Community Fund and information above its impact cannot be underestimated and its potential, to do more and be transformative, for the lives of the people of Luton and surrounding communities cannot be underestimated.



Karen Perkins

CEO, Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation

