



**BOLTON
GREEN
UMBRELLA**

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

End of Grant Report 2025



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About the Funding



Introduction:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025.

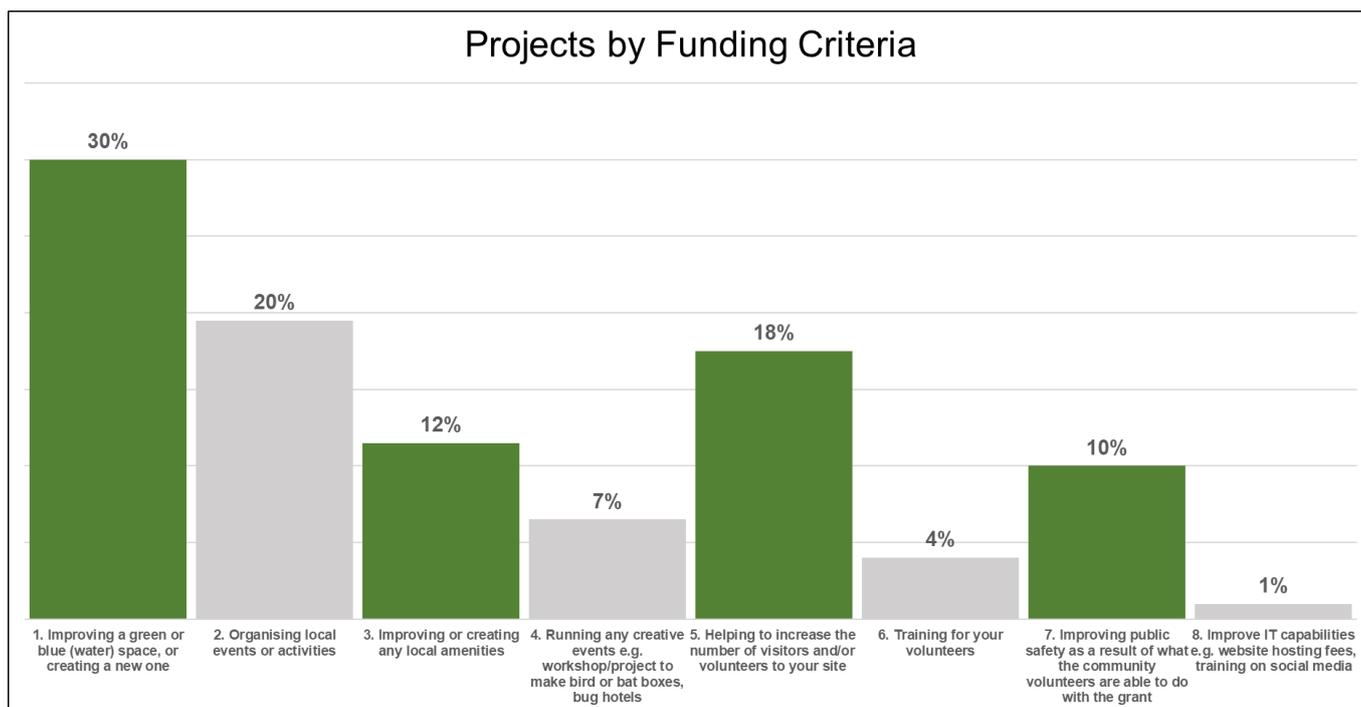
Funding for Bolton

£50 000 of the fund was agreed by Bolton Council to be used to fund the enhancement of green and blue spaces and the environment across Bolton and develop and maintain the volunteering network over two years (£25 000 in 2023-2024 and £25 000 in 2024-2025). They worked closely with Bolton Green Umbrella to ensure that the funds were distributed fairly and effectively as possible.

Project Description:

From November 2023 to March 2025, £28 600 of the funding was used to allocate £200 to small volunteer community groups who are part of Green Umbrella and £15 334 was allocated for larger more targeted projects. All the projects needed to meet one or more of the criteria set out below:

1. Improving a green or blue (water) space, or creating a new one
2. Organising local community and volunteer events or activities
3. Improving or creating any local amenities such as repairing or replacing a shed or bench
4. Running any creative events e.g. workshop/project to make bird or bat boxes, bug hotels
5. Helping to increase the number of visitors and/or volunteers to your site
6. Training for your volunteers
7. Improved perception of safety for example upgrading a footpath.
8. Improve IT capabilities e.g. training on social media



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Targeted Projects



Captains Clough CrowdFunder



Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) [See the INNS report HERE](#)



A new community allotment/tool hub at Tonge Moor Allotments



Distribution of Native Wildflower Seeds



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Targeted Projects continued



The Smithills Nature Trail Volunteers



Sunnyside Park – Great Lever



Eatock Lodge Local Nature Reserve



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Data & Analysis



Data Collection and Analysis of the Grants Programme:

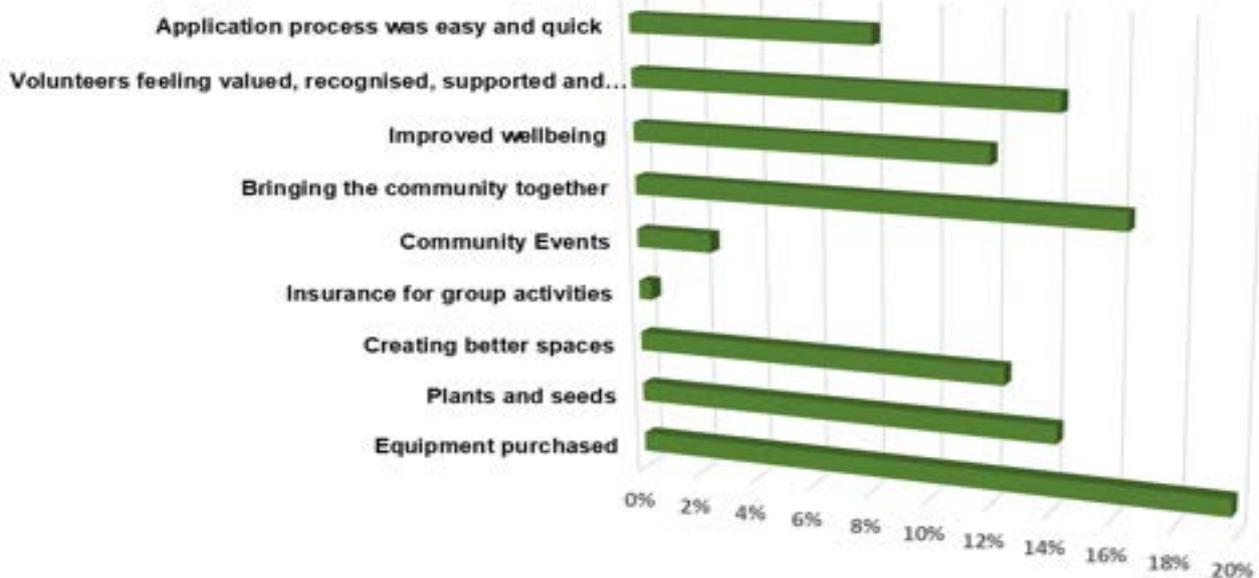
Below is a summary of how the grant funding was allocated across the borough, including the total amount awarded, the geographical distribution of grants and the evaluation feedback provided by the groups who benefitted. This overview highlights both the reach of the programme and the impact it has had on community volunteer organisations throughout Bolton.

Total Projects	Total Amount Awarded	Including a total of £15 334 for larger projects spread across the borough including the INNS Programme, a Volunteer Celebration Event and distribution of native wildflowers across Bolton
148	£43 934	£28 600 for 143 community and voluntary groups across the borough

Borough-wide Breakdown of Funding Awarded

37 projects in BL1 Totalling £9010	43 projects in BL2 Totalling £13 400	24 projects in BL3 Totalling £5600	24 projects in BL4 Totalling £4800	14 projects in BL5 Totalling £3600	2 projects in BL6 Totalling £400	4 projects in BL7 Totalling £800
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Small Grant Feedback Evaluation



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Achievements

The primary objective of the Bolton Green Umbrella grant programme was to enhance green and blue spaces and improve environmental quality across the borough, while also strengthening the volunteer and community network. The funded projects have delivered clear and measurable progress toward these goals.

All supported initiatives demonstrate improved access to green spaces, particularly in areas of high deprivation and limited access to natural environments. Grant monitoring and evaluation data confirm that the programme met its aims in this regard. Many projects created accessible, safe and inclusive spaces that cater to diverse community needs.

A significant achievement has been the transformation of under utilised urban areas into valuable community assets. These revitalised spaces now offer opportunities for recreation, wellbeing and social connection, especially for residents who previously lacked access to nature.

Beyond physical improvements, the programme has contributed to:

- **Increased biodiversity**, through native wildflower seeds and habitat improvements.
- **Expanded volunteer engagement**, welcoming new participants across age groups and backgrounds.
- **Improved wellbeing and social cohesion**, with survey responses highlighting increased pride, belonging and use of outdoor spaces.
- **Capacity building**, as many groups developed new skills in project planning and community engagement.

These achievements reflect the programme's commitment to equity, sustainability and long-term impact. The improvements made are not only physical but social, fostering a more connected, empowered and environmentally engaged Bolton.



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Grant Beneficiaries



A full list of all grant beneficiaries can be found on the Appendix at the end of the report.



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Outcomes & Impact

Outcomes:

The project has achieved several notable outcomes, including increased community participation, improved access to essential resources such as tools, equipment, plants and a stronger sense of pride and ownership within the communities where people volunteer.

These outcomes directly address the initial need identified by the grant programme: enabling small volunteer-led groups to access much-needed funding and support. By removing financial and logistical barriers, the programme has empowered groups to take action, build confidence and deliver visible improvements in their local environments.

Importantly, these outcomes are not short-lived. The programme has fostered sustainable change by:

- **Strengthening collaboration between groups**, leading to shared learning, resource pooling and joint initiatives.
- **Embedding Bolton Green Umbrella as a trusted support mechanism**, offering ongoing guidance, visibility and connection beyond the lifespan of the fund.
- **Building capacity within groups**, with volunteers gaining new skills in project planning, environmental stewardship and community engagement.
- **Encouraging long-term volunteer involvement**, with many groups reporting increased retention and new interest from residents who had not previously engaged.

Together, these achievements reflect a shift from one-off improvements to a more resilient, connected and empowered volunteer network across Bolton. The grant programme has not only delivered tangible environmental benefits but also laid the groundwork for continued community led action. The most notable was the INNS work completed by John Fraser. The impact on eradicating Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed in Bolton has been remarkable. [See the INNS report HERE](#)

Impact:

The UK Prosperity Fund has had a significant and far-reaching impact on communities across Bolton. Crucially, it has helped **volunteers feel recognised, valued, and supported**, reinforcing the vital role they play in shaping local environments and strengthening community engagement.

By providing targeted grants to small voluntary and community groups, the fund has **enhanced community cohesion and contributed to improved wellbeing**. Data analysis confirms that funding has been **equitably distributed across all areas of Bolton**, ensuring that no community was left behind.

The grants have reached **a diverse range of groups** including Scouts and Guides, community allotments, litter picking teams, conservation projects, community gardens, ramblers and Friends of Groups, reflecting the breadth of grassroots action taking place across the borough. **The successful Volunteer Celebration made huge leaps in making volunteers feel valued and appreciated.**

Importantly, these small grants have empowered residents to take **ownership of local initiatives**, transforming ideas into action and fostering a deeper sense of pride and belonging. Many groups have reported **increased collaboration, stronger networks** and renewed energy to continue their work beyond the lifespan of the fund.

The **ripple effects** of this funding are likely to extend well into the future, supporting lasting improvements in environmental quality, social connection and joined up working across Bolton's volunteer network.



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Financial Summary



Bolton Green Umbrella			
UK Shared Prosperity Fund			2023-2025
Budget area	2023-2024	2024-2025	TOTAL
Small grants awarded	£13,600.00	£15,000.00	£28,600.00
Larger Projects	£3,704.92	£11,629.55	£15,334.47
Smithills Project		£1,000.00	
Sunnyside Park Project		£1,000.00	
Eatock Lodge Project		£1,000.00	
Community Wildflower seeds	£453.99		
Celebration Event		£2,609.92	
BGU Community Allotment and Tools Hub	£940.93	£4,059.07	
Captains Clough Trail	£1,010.00		
INNS Project	£1,300.00	£1,960.56	
Admin Costs inc. New Website	£934.21	£5,131.32	£6,065.53
TOTAL SPENT			£50,000.00
Remaining Balance			£0.00

£50 000 was allocated to Bolton Green Umbrella over two years.

As a committee, we invited groups who have joined the Bolton Green Umbrella website to apply for a small grant of £200.00. We allocated £28 600 of the budget to this.

We allocated £15334.47 to larger projects. These were for enhancements to Captains Clough trail, investment in the ongoing invasive non-native species (INNS) project, the start of a brand-new community allotment/tool hub at Tonge Moor Allotments, Sunnyside Park, Eatock Lodge and Smithills Trail. Native wildflower seeds have been purchased to be distributed across the Bolton Green Umbrella groups and a Volunteer Celebration Event was held at Queens Park.

Approximately 90% of the total fund has been awarded to small community groups across Bolton.

Bolton Green Umbrella has invested in a new website designed to expand our reach, strengthen connections and empower more volunteer groups across the borough. The platform will make it easier for groups to showcase their work, attract new volunteers and engage with wider opportunities, including Corporate Volunteering Days and social value initiatives that bring added resources and visibility to grassroots efforts.



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The Project's Achievement

The fund has enabled 148 small groups all over Bolton to become more empowered to care for the places they love. The funding has also grown the Bolton Green Umbrella network with many more volunteer groups joining, providing a fantastic network of volunteering opportunities all over the Bolton area. It has given them the equipment to build on the all the hard work that they have already achieved. Many of the groups have stated that the application process was easy and they received a very quick response.

Bolton Green Umbrella grant assessors played a crucial role by providing valuable feedback and constructive suggestions to applicants. Their expertise and insights helped applicants refine their proposed projects and activities, ultimately enhancing the quality of submissions. By sharing their experience with member community groups, Bolton Green Umbrella not only contributed to individual project improvements but also added significant value to the entire grants process. This collaborative approach fosters growth, innovation, and meaningful outcomes for the community.

Challenges

Some of the challenges the committee encountered was with verifying bank details, but this was overcome very quickly by working with and keeping in contact with the groups. It was also challenging to administer the grant fund in the short space of time that was allocated to us, but with the dedication of the volunteer committee this was achieved.

Areas for Improvement going forward

The BGU Committee will diligently review all the feedback and learning points gathered during the grants process.

Our goal is twofold: first, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the grants process itself; and second, to critically assess the focus of our funding initiatives. We will closely examine the alignment of recipients with our mission, as well as the clarity of expected outcomes. By doing so, we aim to maximize the positive impact of our grants and ensure that they contribute meaningfully to Bolton Green Umbrella's objectives.

We are especially grateful for the thoughtful input shared by applicants, volunteers and partner groups. Their insights will help us refine our approach and make the process more transparent, inclusive and confidence building, particularly for first-time applicants and smaller community groups.

In the months ahead, we will explore ways to simplify application steps, clarify timelines and provide more accessible guidance materials. We are also considering support check-ins with funded groups to help projects stay on track and feel supported.

Finally, we will revisit our funding criteria to ensure they reflect our evolving priorities, including sustainability, inclusivity and community empowerment and assess whether the feedback form enables us to measure outcomes and impact more consistently across Bolton.

We welcome continued feedback from our community as we shape the next phase of our grants programme. Together, we can make it even more impactful.



Conclusion



Conclusion

In conclusion, the UK Prosperity Funding has been a success, effectively addressing the targeted need within the volunteer community. Through clear objectives, efficient implementation and meaningful outcomes, the project has made a tangible difference to volunteer community groups in Bolton. By embracing the lessons learned and implementing the provided recommendations, future community grant projects can build upon this success and continue to drive positive change in communities across the whole of the Bolton area.

For 2026, we aim to continue supporting Bolton's volunteer groups while also expanding our focus on tackling invasive non-native species (INNS), building on the progress made through this project's INNS programme.

Finally, Bolton Green Umbrella would like to express thanks to Bolton Council for the grant fund that has helped to empower and grow the committed volunteer groups that contribute so much to improving Bolton for all its residents.



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