

Report from Mendip District Councillor

Support for a trial of Universal Basic Income in Mendip

At the meeting of Mendip District Council Cabinet on Monday, 22nd February, councillors passed a motion overwhelmingly to support a trial of Universal Basic Income in Mendip.

A Universal Basic Income (UBI) offers a non-means-tested fixed sum paid by the state to cover the basic cost of living, which is issued to all residents regardless of whether they work, or are unemployed, or are rich or poor.

The motion was proposed by Cllr. Shane Collins, leader of the Green Party Group, and seconded by Cllr. Ros Wyke, LibDem leader of Mendip.

MDC's Chief Executive, Stuart Brown, and Cllr Wyke will now draft a joint letter to open up a dialogue with the Government and urge them to consider Mendip for a UBI pilot scheme.

The proposal has been widely debated across the UK in recent months, with similar calls for UBI trials to reduce poverty and inequality gaining traction and cross-party support in cities such as Sheffield, Bristol, Oxford, Birmingham, Lewes and Brighton and Hove.

£40k investment in local creative industries

Mendip District Council is to kickstart local creative industries with a £40k investment. The one-off windfall - achieved through significant savings in reduced travel costs by Council staff and members due to COVID restrictions - will provide a welcome boost to the struggling sector, hard-hit by the pandemic during the past 12 months.

The monies will be used to leverage other funds into Mendip from organisations including, potentially, Arts Council England.

Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund

On 10th February, the Government launched the new £10 million Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund. The Fund has been announced to help deliver nature projects which create and restore habitats, tackle climate change or improve water quality.

The innovative Fund will provide grants of up to £100,000 to support the delivery of projects that can attract private, financial investment in the run up to COP26 in November 2021. Those eligible to apply for the grants include environmental groups local authorities and businesses.

Examples of the types of projects that could be eligible include woodland creation and restoration of river catchments. The projects need to be replicable elsewhere, with key learnings made public to encourage the development of similar nature-based schemes, that attract private finance, in the future.

More details of the fund and how to apply can be found [here](#).