

## Swale Borough Council

Swale House  
East Street  
Sittingbourne  
Kent  
ME10 3HT

28 June 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Re. Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for Sheppey**

I am writing to you on behalf of Swale Community Leisure (SCL), as the current operator of the Council owned leisure facilities on the Isle of Sheppey, at Sheppey Leisure Complex.

It is encouraging to see the work that has been put into the LUF bid for Sheppey. The area has some of the most deprived wards in Kent, alongside identified inequalities of service provision, economic well-being, and in the extreme, life expectancy. SCL has worked with partners at Swale Borough Council in order to try and address some of these issues, but with limited success. Measures have ranged from subsidised pricing for leisure activities, mentoring for unemployed young people and diversionary activities targeting anti-social behaviour. Previous successful bids for project funding have required demonstration of an in-depth understanding of the area. This has been achieved through the utilisation of local knowledge, including that of employees who are predominately local residents; data available through IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation); Kent and Medway Public Health Observatory; and Sport England Active Lives data. This has allowed the SCL team to develop a real understanding of local need, in addition to their everyday experiences of running a leisure business, as a charity, on the Isle of Sheppey.

The facilities that we operate are now ageing and in desperate need of improvement. Despite ongoing investment in maintenance, and attempts at improving the sport and leisure offer, it has been difficult to make a long term and sustainable impact on the lives of local people, to the degree that success of the LUF bid most certainly would do. An improved leisure offer, alongside operational efficiencies gained through the project, would allow for a more diverse, engaging and cost effective service to be provided to local people. This in turn would help create more jobs, access to a healthier lifestyle and thereby, a reduction in inequalities.

It has been a positive experience to be involved in the LUF bid, and as the operator of the facilities, refreshing to be consulted and contribute to the development of the project priorities from the outset. Regular and detailed consultation, has ultimately allowed for a robust project plan to be put together with confidence in it's integrity, and ultimate potential for creating a positive and quantifiable Social Impact Value (SIV), to the benefit of the people of Sheppey.

On behalf of SCL, I would like to advocate the content of the bid and our unequivocal support for the project.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Harcourt  
Chief Executive Officer, Swale Community Leisure