

Nearly half of funds available for community causes went unclaimed last year

Nearly half of funds available for community causes went unclaimed last year, it has emerged, with hundreds of thousands of pounds lying unspent.

A report on East Lothian's four common good funds – which have more than £13 million in reserves between them – revealed less than £160,000 of the £280,000 available in their budgets were handed out as grants.

Only two additional grants, worth under £8,000 in total, were awarded between January and the end of March this year – both in Musselburgh.

Musselburgh Common Good Fund, which is by far the biggest in the county with a total worth of over £9million, handed out £147,000 in eight grants including £40,000 to the town's rugby club to upgrade floodlights and £30,000 to the Hollies Hub day centre in the town.

It also granted just over £18,000 to Fisherrow Harbour Association to upgrade ladders and £10,000 to Musselburgh Athletic for new fencing, along with £35,710 to support the Musselburgh Festival and £5,000 to Musselburgh Congregational Church to replace unsafe flooring.

Between January and March the fund additionally gave Musselburgh Sea Cadets £3,100 and Musselburgh Cricket Club £4,709

Haddington's fund has handed out £10,000 in total this year, with £3,500 toward a new stand at Haddington Athletic, £2,500 to Thrive, which supports families, and £2,000 towards the Haddstock Festival.

Grants of £1,000 each were given to community projects Poldrate Arts and Crafts and Friday Friends in Haddington.

The North Berwick fund's only grant of the years so far has gone to North Berwick Community Council, which received £1,890 towards Christmas lights in the town, and Dunbar's only grant was £514 to youth project TheSpace.

A report to elected members said the common good funds, which are overseen by the council, were given a budget of £174,000 plus £104,577 unspent cash carried forward from 22-23 to hand out over the year.

They handed out fifteen grant awards totalling £159,791 up to the end of the financial year.

Applications to the funds are welcomed from individuals, groups or clubs who can demonstrate a benefit to the people of the area through their activity or positive promotion of the town.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter