



Rural Development Programme for England for rural businesses and communities in South West England

News Release

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Fund will support rural services

A £7.5 million fund has been launched to help the region's rural community and social enterprises to boost local services.

The fund, part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), has been set up by the South West RDA to enable community and social enterprises to play a major role in expanding or adding to the basic services they provide.

Funding will be targeted in two ways:

- A grant to support projects from community and social enterprises for the improved delivery of, and access to, basic services
- Advice and support for community and social enterprises that deliver basic services in order to improve their overall viability

Over the next three years, £2 million will be available annually to not-for-private-profit organisations such as registered charities, community businesses, social enterprises or co-operatives and parish councils to support a range of projects.

The grants should be used to directly support the provision and delivery of basic services in rural areas. These can range from key services such as access to child care, retail services or services provided for the benefit of the community such as renewable energy projects.

"The needs of the community are often most effectively identified by the communities themselves," said Andy Wood, the RDA's Head of Place Making and Partnerships.

"It is not possible to give a definitive list of activities; they will vary with each community but they could include provision of local services such as small-scale transport, local shops and community facilities. Community and social enterprises are an effective way of delivering and maintaining services, maintaining employment and providing local solutions to local problems.

“It is important that the services and projects we support must be able to sustain themselves after the period of grant support is over. The grants themselves should help to achieve this.”

The fund is open to enterprises in rural areas – the countryside or towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 – across the whole of South West England.

All projects will go through the same appraisal process with viability, sustainability and value-for-money being major considerations.

The Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 is jointly funded by Defra and the European Union, with the aim of delivering targeted support to rural businesses and communities. It is managed in this region by the South West RDA, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

More information on the Community and Social Enterprise Fund is available at <http://www.sw-ruralgateway.info/getting/social-enterprise-1.shtm>

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For further information, please contact Pat Murray, of the South West RDA press office, on 07733264756

Notes to editors

RDPE

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) runs from 2007 to 2013. It is the 2nd pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy and aims to support the creation of genuinely sustainable farming, forestry and food sectors, whilst also bringing wider benefits for the economy, the environment and rural communities. It provides the major financial vehicle for protecting and enhancing the environment and securing a range of public benefits for society. Defra is the Managing Authority.

The RDPE has three priorities for rural development:

1. Improving competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors
2. Improving the environment and the countryside
3. Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity

In this region, the South West of England Regional Development Agency (RDA) will deliver priorities 1 and 3 with a budget of £156.8 million over the seven years. The RDA is also responsible for ensuring that five per cent of the RDPE funding is spent on enabling community involvement in rural development. The delivery partners in the South West aim to ensure that investment in each of the three priorities will help support investment in the others.

The RDPE priority for improving the environment and the countryside is being delivered nationally by the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme and Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme. In addition, a minimum of 5% of the programme will be delivered through a local community-led approach.



The aims, objectives and priorities for delivering RDPE in South West England were agreed for the socio-economic investments with regional partners and these are set out in the Regional Implementation Plan. On the basis of a thorough analysis of South West England's rural characteristics and economy, the Plan sets out eight themes:

- i. Skills development
- ii. Social enterprise
- iii. Business support
- iv. Supply chain and adding value
- v. Resource management (soil, water, energy, waste)
- vi. Sustainable rural tourism
- vii. Biodiversity and landscape
- viii. Community-led development

Further more information on the RDPE and the schemes see www.sw-ruralgateway.info

Organisations involved in delivering RDPE

The South West RDA leads the development of a sustainable economy, investing to unlock the region's business potential. It works in partnership with public, private and social purpose organisations to drive up the region's productivity by giving people the skills they need, encouraging enterprise, improving infrastructure, regenerating places and promoting the strengths of the region. For more information see www.southwestrda.org.uk

Natural England works for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. It conserves and enhances the natural environment for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people, and the economic prosperity it brings. For more information see www.naturalengland.org.uk Environmental Stewardship (ES) was launched in 2005, builds on the very best practice already evident in British farming. During the period 2007-13 the national budget for ES will be £2.9 billion. The objectives of ES are to:

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity).
- Maintain and enhance landscape quality and character.
- Protect the historic environment and natural resources.
- Promote public access and understanding of the countryside.
- Natural resource protection.

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for forestry in Great Britain. It supports woodland owners with grants, tree felling licences, regulation and advice; promotes the benefits of forests and forestry; and advises Government on forestry policy. For further information, visit www.forestry.gov.uk/england-swe