

the rural development programme for england 2008-2013

A guide to Rural Development Programme funding in the West Midlands



Geoff Brown, Bridgeford Hall Farm, Staffordshire, West Midlands Region

what can the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) do for you?

You may be able to benefit from Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funding if you work in a land based business or a rural Tourism enterprise. Eligible businesses include farmers, growers, foresters, primary producers, rural tourism businesses and other small rural business or community organisations.

Through RDPE you will be able to access projects that are designed to:

- Help you diversify into new business areas
- Get you closer to your market
- Improve your profitability
- Save costs
- Enhance and conserve the environment
- Take advantage of low carbon opportunities

And generally help secure a better future for your business.

The programme can also help rural communities work together to become more sustainable.

Cover image: Staffordshire based farmer Geoff Brown (pictured) is a Director of **BiEcc** – the company set up as the miscanthus ‘supply manager’ for the £6.5 million **Eccelshall Biomass** project. The pioneering scheme to develop the UK’s first successful bio-energy power plant in Staffordshire was supported by a **Dti Bio-Energy Capital Grant Fund** and £925,000 from **Advantage West Midlands**.

Geoff is growing 20 hectares of the miscanthus cane, a non-invasive, sterile, perennial grass at his farm in Great Bridgeford. **BiEcc** aim to plant 3,400 hectares of the crop within 25 miles of Eccelshall between 2007-2010.

This project was not funded by RDPE.

What are the priorities for the West Midlands?

The priorities for rural development in the West Midlands have been decided in partnership with a range of industry representatives and private businesses.

The priorities are:

Environmental Technologies

- Environmental goods and services
- Support innovation
- New markets
- Networking
- Training and Skills
- Sites and premises

Food and Drink

- Skills, training and knowledge transfer
- Supply chain development
- Competitiveness
- Trade and consumer awareness

Tourism

- Sustainable tourism
- Environmental improvements
- Food tourism
- e- tourism

Livestock industry development

- Knowledge transfer
- Efficient production
- Improve livestock quality
- Promote best practice
- Promote understanding of Environmental Legislation
- Animal health and welfare

Community infrastructure, cohesion and development

- Places to meet, 'recreate' and communicate

- Inclusive and participative governance
- Develop and maintain voluntary groups and activities
- Positive culture of enterprise and economic purpose
- Access to 'fit for purpose' housing

Environmental Stewardship; the new Energy Crops Scheme and the English Woodland Grant Scheme

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity)
- Maintain and enhance landscape
- Protect the historic environment
- Natural resource protection and promote public access & understanding of the countryside
- Mitigate climate change
- Create and manage woodlands

How much funding is available?

In the West Midlands, Advantage West Midlands has a budget for Axes 1 and 3 of around £53 million over the life of the RDPE programme to 2012, that equates to just under £9 million per year. Funding should be available from the beginning of 2008 providing the programme is approved by the European Commission.

Funding will be offered at between 35% and 100% of the eligible cost of most projects, rising to 70% for training and skills development.

The Environmental Stewardship scheme is nationally budgeted, with each region targeting delivery of the scheme.

The English Woodland Grant Scheme is a national scheme with an annual Grants Prospectus setting out the funding available in each region for the suite of grants covering woodland planning, creation and management.

Where has the funding come from?

The RDPE is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), with matched funding from the UK Government.

How does the RDPE work?

The fund addresses three key areas known as Axes:

- 1 To improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors
- 2 To improve the environment and the countryside
- 3 To improve quality of life in rural areas and promote diversification of the rural economy

The Regional Development Agencies throughout England are delivering Axes 1 and 3, Advantage West Midlands in this region. Axis 2 is being delivered nationally and regionally by Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

Some funding has been allocated to develop Local Action Groups through the LEADER approach and this will be aimed at developing more vibrant and sustainable rural communities.

How can I get involved?

What sort of activities will the RDPE support?

Funding from Advantage West Midlands will support;

- Projects that encourage businesses and/or community organisations to work together, share ideas and improve training and skills.
- Business support and modernisation initiatives.
- Diversification into new services or products.
- Development of supply chains and reconnection with the marketplace.
- Innovation and new product or process development.

Axes 1 and 3 RDPE funding is intended for larger scale projects that will help a number of land based businesses to deliver across several of the priorities mentioned above. It is very unlikely to fund individual businesses.

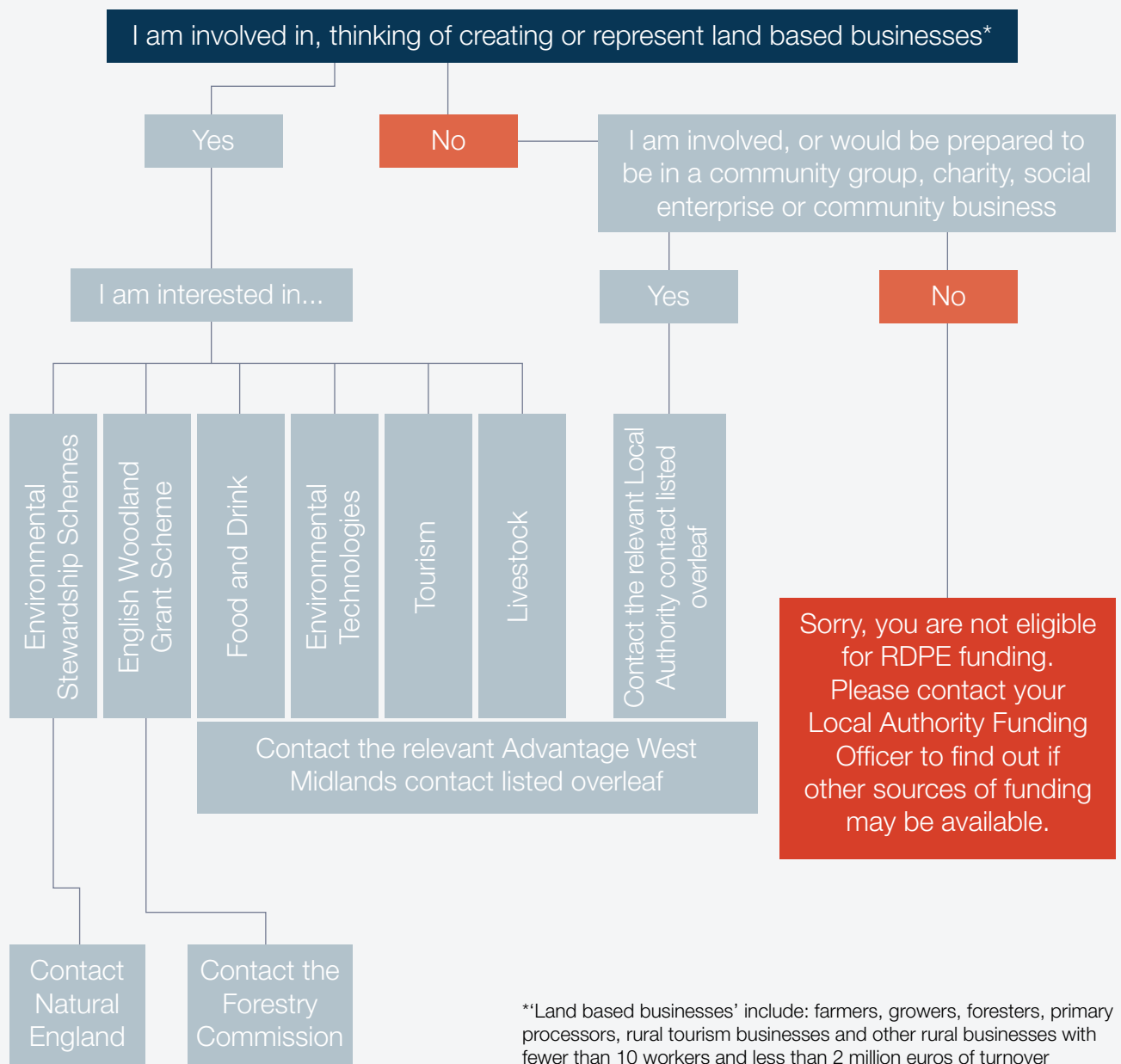
There are a number of schemes available for Axis 2 priorities. Some such as Entry Level Environmental Stewardship are open to all eligible farmers and land managers. Others are more competitive or are targeted to parts of the region. More information can be obtained from Natural England and the Forestry Commission and is available on their websites.

Please contact Natural England or the Forestry Commission for details.

www.naturalengland.org.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

The LEADER Local Action Groups has funding that will be used for community projects. All socio-economic projects will be encouraged to demonstrate how they can develop economic returns by making the most of improvements to the countryside.

Simply follow the chart overleaf to see how you can get involved.



Where can I find out more?

Please go to our website: www.advantagewm.co.uk/working-with-us/rural-development-programme-for-england.aspx or find further details of the national scheme on www.defra.co.uk.

Projects will be developed with the help of the Rural Development Team and Rural Partnerships Team employed by Advantage West Midlands. Please contact the member of the team relevant to your area of interest, below:

Name	Sector	Contact details
Ian Baker Head of Team		ianbaker@advantagewm.co.uk 07919 168238
Jamie Inglis Rural Development Policy Manager		jamieinglis@advantagewm.co.uk 07824 542559
Bob Gregson Rural Development Manager	Food & Drink	bobgregson@advantagewm.co.uk 07887 508490
Ross Evans Rural Development Manager	Livestock	rossevans@advantagewm.co.uk 07894 621067
Jo Jury Rural Development Manager	Tourism	jojury@advantagewm.co.uk 0789 4621066
Simon West Rural Development Manager	Environmental Technologies	simonwest@advantagewm.co.uk 07769 881346
Ian Edwards Head of Rural Partnerships	Community (LEADER funding)	ianedwards@advantagewm.co.uk For queries about the LEADER approach – specific project ideas should be directed to your Local Authority 07917 810469

Natural England

Please contact:
Tel: 0845 6024095, 01905 362888 or email
BDCWM.Genesis@naturalengland.org.uk

Forestry Commission

Please contact:
Bob Evans, 01905 533802 or email
bob.evans@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

What other funding is available?

There are many funding initiatives available in rural areas. For example, the Redundant Building Grant (RBG) Scheme. If you have redundant buildings that you would like to bring back into use, you could apply for a Redundant Building Grant.

If you live in Herefordshire, Shropshire or Worcestershire please contact Dorothy Coleman on: 01432 383616 or e-mail: rbgscheme@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you live in Staffordshire, Warwickshire or Solihull please contact James Hinton on: 01785 277232 or e-mail: rbgscheme@staffordshire.gov.uk

Rural Hub Contacts:

The West Midlands Rural Hub Network plays an important role in :-

- Promoting the RDPE to potential applicants, both the programme as a whole and particular funding opportunities.
- Facilitating collaborative working, to take advantage of the programme, between individual businesses and groups of businesses.

Name	Hub	Contact details
Cathy Meredith Co-ordinator	Herefordshire Rural Hub	Office: 01432 870033 Mobile: 07970 181628 meredithc@hct.ac.uk
Victoria Jones Co-ordinator	Shropshire Rural Hub	Office: 01939 262106 Mobile 07967 438516 shropsruralhub@wnsc.ac.uk
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Please contact the Marketing Team on 0121 380 3500.