

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 11TH MARCH 2010
title: RDPE PENNINE LANCASHIRE 2009 – 2013 UPDATE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS – RURAL REGENERATION OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive information on the work of the Rural Development Programme for England in Pennine Lancashire.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions - In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, it also recognises the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough. The work of the Rural Development Programme aims to support this.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities - Delivery of services to all
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a £3.9 billion seven year programme (2007-13), jointly funded by the European Union and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Its aims are to safeguard and enhance the rural environment, improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and foster sustainable and thriving rural businesses and rural economies across England.

2.2 The programme is focussed on the following three themes, or axis, these are:

- Axis 1 – improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sectors
- Axis 2 – improving the environment and the countryside
- Axis 3 – rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy

2.3 In Lancashire, 3 Local Action Groups (LAGs) have been set up to manage the RDPE programme of activity under Axis 1 & 3, whilst Axis 2 is being delivered by Natural England and the Forestry Commission: -

- Lancashire West (West Lancashire, South Ribble, Chorley and Preston)

- North Lancashire (Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre)
- Pennine Lancashire (Ribble Valley, Pendle, Burnley, Rossendale, Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen)

Each Local Action Group has a dedicated Development Officer who acts as a point of contact and support. In addition to this two RDPE Programme and Monitoring Officers are based at the Lancashire Economic Partnership offices in Accrington.

2.4 Within Axis 1 & 3 there are seven measures, these are:

- Measure 111 'Vocational Training and Information Actions' - Funding will be available for intermediary organisations to deliver a range of activities to end beneficiaries. These may include training in management and business skills, practical technical husbandry skills, environmental land management and more.
- Measure 123 'Adding Value to Agriculture & Forestry Products' - Funding is currently available to micro forestry enterprises (less than 10 employees and with a turnover of less than 2 million Euros) and micro, small to medium and larger farming businesses for the development of new products, processes or technologies.
- Measure 124 'Co-operation for the Development of New Products' - Funding will be available for collaborations between two or more producers, processors or other enterprises towards research and development costs. The aim of the funding is to strengthen links between the food chain, in particular farmers and their markets.
- Measure 311 'Diversification into Non Agricultural Activities' - Funding is currently available to farm businesses that wish to diversify their business from agriculture to provide an alternative source of income.
- Measure 312 'Support for the Creation & Development of Micro Enterprises' - Funding is currently available for existing micro enterprises (less than 10 employees and with a turnover of less than 2 million Euros) or those wishing to set up a new micro enterprise.
- Measure 313 'Encouragement of Tourism' - The funding will be targeted primarily towards the development and marketing of tourism services related to rural areas. The Local Action Group will be deciding shortly how and when this funding will be delivered. The options being considered are to deliver the funding through a direct grant scheme or alternatively to commission a project or a number of projects. Further details will be available once a decision has been made.
- Measure 321 'Basic Services' - Funding will be available for the development of activities to benefit rural communities. Projects such as developing community buildings, ICT for community benefits or developing community enterprises to provide key services will be considered. The funding is not yet available but the Local Action Group will deciding shortly how and when this funding measure will be delivered. Full details will be made available once a decision has been made.

3 INFORMATION

- 3.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council took the lead role in the production of the Local Development Strategy on behalf of Pennine Lancashire partners. The Axis 1 and 3 elements of RDPE in Pennine Lancashire will deliver a £3.2 million programme, which includes £2.7 million in direct grant aid with the balance to cover other elements of the programme to include such things as staffing, research and project development costs. The Strategy provides a focus for the sustainable rural development of the area from 2009-2013 as part of the RDPE.
- 3.2 Following the successful application for funding the Local Action Group (LAG) was formed to oversee delivery of the Pennine Lancashire programme and a dedicated Pennine Lancashire LAG officer was appointed, employed by Lancashire Economic Partnership and based in the area working out of the Ribble Valley Borough Council offices.
- 3.3 A successful launch event was held on the Monday 14th September 2009 at Mitton Hall attended by over a hundred people. Grant packages are now available for businesses in Ribble Valley from £5000 up to a maximum of £100,000 depending on the scale and nature of the business project. The Regeneration Team are promoting this new package of funds to Ribble Valley businesses and a simple expression of interest form has been produced to encourage businesses to participate.
- 3.4 The Pennine Lancashire LAG consists of local representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The purpose of the LAG is to:
- Nominate annually an Executive Group who will be the decision making body
 - Promote RDPE to relevant contacts
 - Propose potential projects
 - Offer specialist guidance / expertise where appropriate

A number of organisations were chosen from the LAG to sit on the Executive Group alongside representatives from each of the Pennine Lancashire Local Authorities. The remit of the Executive Group is to approve projects for recommendation ensuring that the Leader approach of community led/ bottom up approach is used. The LAG Executive Group has been chosen for their experience and/ or expertise in rural developments and/ or grant funding.

The LAG Executive meets regularly to develop processes & systems, it will also:

- Implement and review the Pennine Lancashire Local Development Strategy
- Recommend projects for approval by NWDA
- Advise the LAG Development Officer
- Develop project ideas with the LAG Development Officer
- Provide specialist advice to project applicants (i.e. sector specialists)
- Monitor the programme and spend

- Elect its own Chairperson and Vice Chairperson through its Terms of Reference

3.5 Who can access funding?

- Businesses - RDPE funding is available to rural businesses to support the start up of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses. Currently there are three grant schemes, which offer direct grants. The schemes are Adding Value to Agriculture & Forestry Products, Diversification into Non - Agricultural Activities and Support for the Creation & Development of Micro Enterprises. There will also be funding available for the Co-operation & Development of New Products, however applications for this funding will not be progressed until later in the 2010/11 year.
- Social Enterprises - Social Enterprises can currently access funding via a direct grant scheme for Support for the Creation & Development of Micro Enterprises. Further funding will become available for Basic Services although applications are not yet being taken for this funding.
- Community Groups - Community groups may also be eligible to access funding via the Basic Services grant.
- Intermediary Organisations - The Vocational Training & Information Actions funding must be delivered to beneficiaries by an intermediary organisation. The Local Action Group (LAG) will decide how and when this funding will be delivered in 2010. The LAG is also in the process of deciding how and when to deliver the Encouragement of Tourism funding.

3.6 Funding is accessed through the following 3-stage process: -

- Stage 1 – From initial contact with the LAG Development Officer and before the application process begins interested parties are advised to read the Practical Guide to Managing RDPE Projects to enable applicants to fully understand their obligations once they are successful in securing grant aid. A Business Link Broker will contact the applicant to arrange an appointment. The Broker will then work with the applicant to conduct a business health check and from that develop an action plan appropriate to your business needs. If RDPE is the most appropriate route for the business are then advised to further work with the Development Officer to develop the project. All projects will be required to submit a Business Plan and Expression of Interest (Eol) form.
- Stage 2 - The Eol will then be reviewed internally and a decision will be made as to whether you can proceed to full application. Applicants are then sent a full application pack and a visit is made by the Development Officer to further discuss the project and provide guidance if necessary. Applicants then submit their completed application pack along with Business Plan.
- Stage 3 - The full applications for individual grants and projects will be appraised and presented to the LAG Executive group and the NWDA and either be approved, deferred or rejected. If the project is approved a letter will be drawn up detailing the project and the amount of grant allocated. All

applicants in receipt of grant funding will benefit from a half-day workshop that will assist them to manage their project.

- 3.7 The Pennine Lancashire LAG Executive formally approved the first 3 measures under the RDPE Programme for delivery at their meeting on the 27th July 2009 and the programme formally launched on the 14th September 2009 following the event at Mitton Hall. A further 3 LAG meetings have taken place since this time.

To date the Pennine Lancashire RDPE Programme team have made a total of 97 contacts with business and individuals with projects and proposals across the 6 Pennine Lancashire Local Authority districts (57 in Ribble Valley). From these 35 proposals have been submitted for consideration (Step 4 - Expressions of Interest) and 9 full grant applications submitted (5 in Ribble Valley). To date this has resulted in 5 projects being formally approved by the LAG (3 in Ribble Valley) for delivery.

In financial terms the 9 projects currently at full application stage across the Pennine Lancashire LAG area amount to a total of £337,222 of grant funding (£195,496 in Ribble Valley) against a total overall project value of new business investment of £1,202,449 (£707,862 in Ribble Valley). The 5 projects approved by the LAG to date equate to £271,665 in grant funding (£149,525 in Ribble Valley) against a total overall project value of new business investment of £1,002,830 (£566,806 in Ribble Valley).

- 3.8 Details of the 5 projects currently approved by the LAG are as follows: -

- Area/Location: Ribchester, Lancashire
Description: support for the development of an Equestrian Holiday Centre for livery and accommodation for riding holidays.
Project Cost: £119,000
Grant Amount: £29,800
- Area/Location: Longridge, Lancashire
Description: support to deliver new build high-grade farm shop and café selling local produce.
Project Cost: £349,393
Grant Amount: £80,360
- Area/Location: Eccleshill, Lancashire
Description: creation of a new farm park and alpaca centre with a mobile road show visiting schools.
Project Cost: £200,350
Grant Amount: £80,140
- Area/Location: Clayton le Dale, Lancashire
Description: development of a workshop to design and manufacture timber wheelie bin screens and recycle box stores.
Project Cost: £98,413
Grant Amount: £39,365
- Area/Location: Fence, Lancashire
Description: development of a new racing stable yard containing 38 stables and a 5.5 furlong all weather gallop.
Project Cost: £235,674
Grant Amount: £42,000

3.9 The next steps will be for the LAG to address the delivery and priorities of the remaining 4 measures this includes: -

- Measure 111 'Vocational Training and Information Actions'
- Measure 124 'Cooperation for the development of new products, processes and technologies'
- Measure 313 'Encouragement of tourism activities'
- Measure 321 'Basic services for the economic and rural population'

This will then enable the group to further plan and budget for the 2010/11 year and beyond to ensure monies will be allocated in line with the priorities of the Pennine Lancashire LDS and local need.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Pennine Lancashire Local Development Strategy (RDPE) 2009 - 2014

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.