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£3.4m boost for Nottinghamshire's rural economy

Rural areas in Nottinghamshire are to benefit from £3.4m of European funding to support economic growth over the next five years.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced today that Nottinghamshire County Council-backed bids have been successful in securing LEADER funding, for areas in the north and south of the county.

It is hoped that the overall investment in the county's rural economy could top £7.5m, if match-funding is successfully secured.

The money will help deliver projects in rural areas of:

- **South Nottinghamshire**, covering Rushcliffe, Gedling and some small areas of the Ashfield districts
- **North Nottinghamshire**, covering Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood and parts of Mansfield districts

The projects will aim to generate economic benefits and jobs through a range of initiatives, including the development of farming and other rural businesses, promoting tourism, bringing woodland areas into sustainable use and improve services to rural communities, based on local need.

Councillor Diana Meale, Chair of Economic Development Committee at Nottinghamshire County Council, said: "In tandem with the rollout of our Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire programme, securing the LEADER funding is a fantastic boost to the rural economy in Nottinghamshire - helping to deliver growth, jobs and new opportunities in rural communities.

"The Government has been very keen to encourage wider LEADER participation in England and with long-held ambitions to stimulate economic growth in rural Nottinghamshire, this was an opportunity we could not miss.

"The County Council is delighted with the awards and we are looking forward to working with all partners to ensure that this is an effective source of support for the county's rural businesses."

Work on the bids started in February 2014 with a huge amount of input from a variety of partners including District Councils, the National Farmers Union, individual businesses and voluntary organisations such as Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire. Partners contributed a unique perspective on what made each of the LEADER areas distinctive and how this was translated into the needs of and opportunities for those rural areas.

The **North Nottinghamshire scheme** will be a continuation of the previous programme (2007-2013), albeit in a slightly expanded area covering a population of 150,000 people, now including some rural parts of the Mansfield district and the market town of Retford.

It is expected to generate a total of £3.75m of growth activity for north Nottinghamshire's rural communities, once match-funding is secured.

The 2007-13 programme in the north of the county delivered a diverse range of projects, including support to provide a permanent home for the Queen's Royal Lancers and Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Museum at Thoresby courtyard, to the purchase of machinery to support low-impact coppicing in local woodlands. Various grants to individual companies were also provided to support new and expanded premises, purchase of equipment, etc.

The Shadow North Nottinghamshire Leader Local Action Group (NLLAG), which submitted the bid on behalf of the partnership, said it would use experience gained from the previous programme to ensure the funding secured the maximum benefit for rural communities.

Rob Crowder, Chair of NLLAG, said: "This is a great opportunity to help local business, farming and forestry to grow. We will be inviting people to apply for funding to support activities across all sectors of the economy. I hope that this will inject much needed support to our rural areas and encourage new jobs and sustainable economic development."

Private, public and voluntary sector partners in Ashfield, Rushcliffe and Gedling were also successful in gaining funding - after engaging the local area to help identify the area's specific needs and opportunities.

The Shadow **South Nottinghamshire scheme** is worth around £3m, with £1.5m of LEADER funding.

Linda Fitzgerald, Chair of the South Nottinghamshire LEADER Local Action Group said funding would be targeted at fulfilling the need for the creation of new, well paid jobs in the rural economy.

She said, "This is where the really hard work starts. The needs and opportunities of the area were mapped out over the summer with events, consultations and surveys. The results then formed the nucleus of our bid and how we planned to support growth in the rural economy over the next 5 years. Now we need to make this aim a reality and invite applications for grants from businesses and groups to actually do just that."

Both Action Groups would like to hear from interested partners who want to promote and support growth. Groups or individuals who would like to share local knowledge, experience in key fields such as finance, farming, forestry, tourism and the environment are being urged to come forward to help develop project ideas to ensure success and sustainability.

Businesses with an idea or project that requires grant support are also advised to get in touch, to assess if their project could be eligible for support under LEADER. Anyone wanting to learn more about the Programmes should contact:

North Nottinghamshire - Jim Burley, Programme Manager North Nottinghamshire LEADER - 01777 712 711 or email Jim.Burley@bassetlaw.gov.uk

South Nottinghamshire – Mandy Ramm, Nottinghamshire County Council – 0115 977 2685 or email mandy.ramm@nottscc.gov.uk

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