PROJECT UPDATE

European Structural & Investment Funding News
Issue Eight / Summer 2018

European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
Herefordshire · Shropshire · Telford & Wrekin

BEEP launches in Shropshire to help firms cut energy bills

investing in your future
European Regional Development Fund
European Union

beep

BUSINESSES IN SHROPSHIRE can now access support and funding to help them become more sustainable – cutting energy use and costs.

The Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) has been extended to the county after receiving a funding boost from the European Regional Development Fund.

The scheme, managed by Worcestershire County Council, already operates in Worcestershire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire and has proved a huge success in helping businesses drive down their energy costs and develop sustainable models for the future.

Christopher Atkinson, BEEP programme manager, said: "BEEP helps businesses identify quick and affordable changes they can make, and gives them the support to do so."

The BEEP programme offers a two-pronged combination of technical mentoring support and grant funding to help manufacturing and engineering businesses slash their energy usage and make cost savings. It works across other sectors too, such as distribution, hotels and professional services.

It was launched in Shropshire at a special event at Shrewsbury Town's football ground on July 6.

Businesses qualifying for the BEEP programme will receive a free energy efficiency assessment review from energy specialists Pro Enviro Ltd.

Grants from £1,000 to £20,000 are also available to help businesses undertake energy efficiency improvements such as lighting, heating, variable speed drives and compressors, energy efficient equipment, refrigeration, renewable technologies and more.

Mr Atkinson added: "Once businesses have brought down energy costs, often the next natural step is to make a capital investment focused on sustainability. But making this investment deliver value for stakeholders is often something that may not impact the bottom line until three years or so later – so this is where the grant funding comes in. The funding acts as a catalyst for businesses to make a capital investment that will significantly impact their overall energy savings, and deliver cost savings over a period of time."

• Businesses wishing to register interest in the BEEP programme can do so at http://www.business-central.co.uk/beep/

BEEP is a partnership between Worcestershire Councils, Herefordshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce.

How BEEP saved us £10,000 a year

AN ELECTRICAL SPECIALIST says it expects to make savings of £10,000 a year after signing up to the BEEP efficiency programme.

Telford-based Digiland is housed in a converted warehouse unit which got very hot in the summer but very cold in the winter and was fitted with inefficient air cooling.

Digiland business development manager David Baxter said the company worked with the BEEP team, who drew up a detailed energy efficiency scheme detailing improvements and savings.

Its grant application to carry out the recommended work was successful and Digiland has now replaced its air conditioning units, fitted solar film to those windows which did not have it and insulated the roof voids.

The company has also added an additional boiler to replace inefficient fan heaters, fitted motion sensors to its warehouse bay lights, auto-close mechanisms to some of the doors and added rubber draught excluders.

David said the work had led to annual predicted energy savings of £10,000 and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 45 tonnes a year.

"The working environment has greatly improved for the staff, creating a happier workforce and increased productivity," he added.

CONTACT US

We are happy to assist with any EU funding queries you might have so please do not hesitate to contact us on any matters relating to current or new programmes.

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UNIVERSITIES JOIN FORCES FOR AGRI BOOST

TWO LEADING UNIVERSITIES have joined forces to make their expertise available for free to help boost business innovation across the region – thanks to European funding.

Aston and Harper Adams universities are running a joint project until February 2020 to help support businesses with the development of new products or processes in the agri-tech and food & drink manufacturing sectors.

The scheme, which is just completing its first year, has already helped 32 separate companies and its leaders are now urging more to get involved.

Agri-tech Growth and Resources for Innovation – known as AGRI – is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and aims to connect companies in the Marches region with innovation-focused academics at the two universities.

Project director Professor David Webb of Aston University, said: "The AGRI project is an exciting opportunity for businesses in the region to directly benefit from the expertise and technology at Aston and Harper Adams universities.

"This support will help them in developing new, innovative products and services, enabling them to make their business more competitive and increase opportunities for growth."

A key feature of the scheme is that all assistance is free of charge to the business concerned.

Following an initial discussion of opportunities and challenges being faced by the company, the first phase consists of a short study of around two days outlining potential solutions.

Should the company wish to further develop the solutions, the universities can provide longer-term assistance, utilising their technical resources and expertise to develop a prototype or new process.

In addition to supporting companies already operating in the agri-tech sector, the project is keen to assist those who may wish to move into it. As well as providing technical help, the scheme can also provide advice and assistance in accessing more substantial innovation funding, such as from Innovate UK or the European Union's Horizon 2020 scheme.

Aston University Birmingham

Harper Adams University

• For more information, including whether AGRI can help your business flourish, visit http://www.agri.org.uk/ or email info@agri.org.uk to arrange a discussion with an innovation support manager.

CHEERS! AGRI HELPS BREWERY'S TASTE TESTS

CASE STUDY

SHROPSHIRE BREWER Hobsons has already taken advantage of the ERDF-funded AGRI project to make its award-winning beers taste even better.

The Cleobury Mortimer brewery has been working with Aston University to see how technology can improve its taste-testing process.

The AGRI Project innovation team at Aston were able to identify optical measurement methods which produced a significant correlation between their measurement results and those recorded by the taste panel.

The initial testing proved that it was possible to distinguish between the flavours of different beers using the optical measuring techniques. Hobsons and Aston are now looking at refining the measuring techniques to distinguish between different flavour characteristics within the individual beers.

This will enable closer monitoring of flavour characteristics and how they are impacted by other factors like the different times when the measurements are taken.

Nick Davis the founder of Hobsons Brewery said: "The innovation support from the AGRI project and Aston University has enabled our brewery to explore ways of further improving the taste and consistency of flavour in the beers that we can offer to our customers."

FIRM FLYING HIGH THANKS TO GROWTH GRANT

A SHROPSHIRE aerial photography and video business is clinching national contracts after securing grant funding to invest in new equipment.

Kensson provides drone services, including photography and surveys for building surveys and inspections to clients in the construction, commercial property and energy sectors.

The business, based at Welshampton, near Ellesmere, used the grant to part-fund the purchase of a new drone, computer equipment and a secure file server so it could deliver 3D mapping and secure log-in services. The investment has also supported the introduction of one new administrative job at Kensson.

The business support team, based at Marches Growth Hub Shropshire in Shrewsbury, helped Kensson access a £10,000 grant from the Business Growth Programme (BGP).

Ben Smith, Director at Kensson said the company could now utilise the latest drone technology so it could offer the new services of 3D mapping and topographical volumetric analysis to expand its customer base.

The Marches Growth Hub Shropshire, helped Kensson access a £10,000 grant from the Business Growth Programme.

The Marches Growth Hub can provide guidance and support to businesses at all stages of application process. More information is available via the MGH helpline on 0345 6000 727 or by emailing enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk. or on the website, https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/finance-and-funding/business-growth-programme/

MARCHES GROWTH HUB
YOUR GATEWAY TO BUSINESS SUPPORT

BUSINESS Growth PROGRAMME
for supply chains, innovation and expansion

Below: Droning on with Kensson

Business gets up to speed thanks to £25,000 superfast broadband grant

A COMPANY NEAR Shrewsbury has become the first in the Shropshire Council area to benefit from a dedicated grant to help it install ultrafast broadband.

Now other businesses across the region are being urged to make their own applications for a similar grant before the end of the year.

Gwaza received the maximum £25,000 grant from the Marches & Gloucestershire Broadband Grant scheme, which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Managing Director Victor Edwards said the ultrafast connection was essential to the company's success.

"Our IT focus is yielding growth that is outstripping the currently available internet infrastructure.

"By having access to an ultrafast synchronised service Gwaza customers will be able to order on demand, significantly improving the customer experience and ensuring next day delivery targets."

Mr Edwards said the company hoped the success of the scheme would lead to new jobs being created and further investment in its warehouse and packing facilities.

The company was founded by John Price in 1967 primarily as an electric fencing manufacturer, known as Salop Fencing Ltd. It expanded into gate and general steel fabrication serving the agricultural, automotive and industrial sectors. As their distribution into the aftermarket for engineers, agricultural dealers and retailers developed, the company was re-branded as Gwaza Ltd.

welcome to fastershire
Faster broadband for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

MARCHES GROWTH HUB

Nic Laurens, Shropshire Council's Cabinet member with responsibility for broadband, praised the scheme.
"It's great to see a Shropshire business benefitting from this grant scheme, which can fund up to 100% of the cost of installing a superfast broadband connection. I would encourage any business or business park owner struggling with broadband connectivity to investigate their eligibility for one of these grants, which are part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.
"The Marches & Gloucestershire Broadband Grant scheme is under-subscribed and the last thing we want is to have to hand money back to Europe at the end of the project. The clock is ticking and all grant applications must be submitted by the end of December 2018."

The grant gives eligible businesses up to £25k to fund the installation of a superfast broadband connection.

Businesses wishing to find out more can visit http://connectingshropshire.co.uk/business-broadband-grant/

Registering for the grant is a simple and easy process, but all applications for the grant must be completed before December 2018.

Grant aid helps timber company quadruple output

ONE OF THE Midlands' leading pallet suppliers and manufacturers is set to quadruple its output, thanks to a £20,000 grant aimed to help businesses.

Shropshire Pallets & Timber Supplies has invested £110,000 in a new state-of-the-art log-processing sawmill at its Oswestry headquarters that will allow it to vastly increase its manufacturing rate and employ two new staff.

It was supported in its grant application by the Marches Growth Hub, the business support service developed by the Marches LEP, and the funding was awarded from the European Regional Development Fund's Business Growth Programme.

The firm applied for the grant because it had reached full production capacity and needed to invest in a new high-speed log-processing sawmill to meet the demands of its growing order book.

Keiron Fleetwood, managing director of Shropshire Pallets & Timber Supplies, said the funding had been crucial in unlocking the remaining privately sourced investment for the new sawmill.

"We were operating at full production capacity and had outgrown our previous sawmill. The new log-processing sawmill not only yields considerably more boards per shift, but it makes production life smoother, safer, and more efficient.

"The new mill has lifted the glass ceiling that once prevented us from tendering for many new pallet contracts. We're confidently predicting continued growth in our profits and that we will be further increasing our workforce to meet demand for our products."

Keiron Fleetwood, MD, Shropshire Pallets & Timber Supplies

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Marches region attracts £90m of EU funds.

Business survival rates in the Marches LEP area are the second highest in the UK.

The ERDF's SME International Growth Project has provided grants to 28 SMEs committing over £55,000 of funding to support their export aspirations and promising 47 new jobs.

The ERDF-funded Business Growth Programme has awarded nearly £1.8million of funding across the Marches, creating nearly 200 jobs.

The Marches Building Investment Grant has awarded nearly £750,000 to create 51 new jobs in the last year.