



European Union
European Structural
and Investment Funds



MORE THAN 3,000 small and medium-sized businesses in the Marches LEP region will have received advice or grant support via European Regional Development Funding since 2016, new figures have revealed.

The LEP area of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin was allocated £60m from the ERDF for the period between 2014 and 2020. Projects benefitting from this funding started delivering in 2016 and activity will continue through to June 2023.

The ERDF, part of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF), pays for a range of business support and grant programmes, large capital

£44 million funding to support business

build projects and
environmental schemes.

Herefordshire Councillor Roger Phillips, Chairman of the Marches European Structural Investment Fund Committee, said: "From the outset, we wanted to encourage projects which would deliver sustainable SME growth and job creation. The ERDF in this region has seen significant success, right from the delivery

of programmes which promote research and innovation through to those which support a shift towards a low carbon economy.

"To date, £44m has been awarded to projects delivering in the Marches and a further 21 applications were submitted in the latest call window that closed on September 30 2019, which will utilise the remaining £16m.

“Over the course of the ERDF investment, it is anticipated that more than 3,000 small and medium sized enterprises will receive advice or grant support, there will be annual savings of at least 5,000 tonnes of carbon and 50 hectares of land will

have improved biodiversity."

There is likely to be a further opportunity to bid for funds in February 2020, because the remaining funds from across the LEP areas will be wrapped up into national calls.

- Gary Spence, Marches ERDF Technical Assistant, is happy to advise on future bidding opportunities. He can be contacted by email, gary.spence@shropshire.gov.uk or phone, 01743 252976.

Expert help and grant support for Hitherbest

A TELFORD FABRICATION specialist has secured a number of new contracts, contributing to a 20 per cent increase in turnover, after receiving support from ERDF projects.

Hitherbest, which provides sheet metal/punching, folding and powder coating capabilities, benefitted from expert assistance from the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) and the Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP), including a strategic review and identifying ways in which the firm could improve its energy usage.

This led to the introduction of specialist energy engineering consultancy Pro Enviro and a comprehensive project that has already generated nearly £15,000 of savings and a reduction in gas, electricity and powder usage.

"We've had a very strong twelve months that has seen us win a lot of work to produce parts for switchgear cabinets, industrial equipment and the heating and ventilation sector," explained Peter Grant, Managing Director at Hitherbest.

"Five new jobs have been created, taking our total workforce to 35 highly skilled staff. In line with this expansion, we were also using our machinery and plant more and recognised the need to work smarter with energy to have a positive impact on the environment and help to manage costs effectively."

He added: "Internally, we didn't have the right expertise to make it happen, so we decided to turn to support from BEEP and then the Manufacturing Growth Programme."

"It has proved to be a wise decision, as this approach gave us a framework and support for an in-depth analysis of the environmental opportunity that we knew we had, but simply didn't have the resource or knowledge to carry out whilst still trying to keep on top of day-to-day priorities."

A further consultancy grant of £2,150 was accessed through MGP2 in June 2019 to ensure Hitherbest is investment-ready through the development of a robust business growth plan and accurate financial forecasts. Ultimately the project will enable the company to increase capability and capacity, generating new business sales.



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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CONTACT US

Grants, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), start at a minimum of £20,000 and applicants can apply for up to 40 per cent of eligible costs. The maximum grant for business

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership is particularly encouraging applications from farming businesses that want to diversify into non-agricultural activities and environmental and land-based rural businesses wishing to expand. Expressions of interest for a grant must be registered by 16 February 2020. Gary Spence, Marches EU Technical Assistance Officer, said: "Grant funding can help pay for constructing or improving buildings or



ideas with their local Growth Hub officers."

Application is in two stages and organisations must first submit an Expressions of Interest (EOI) form. If successful at this stage, organisations will be invited to formally apply. EOI forms must be received by February 16 2020. Funding bids must be submitted by May 31.

buying new machinery or equipment. However only companies employing fewer than 50 people can apply under the rural business and tourism themes, although any size of business can apply under the food processing theme, subject to meeting other criteria.

"Projects need to demonstrate evidence of a sound business case and good value for

taxpayers' money by creating jobs off the back of the grant investment. We would advise organisations considering an expression of interest to read the guidance carefully before applying and discuss their

- For more information and advice on how to apply, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme> or contact the Marches Growth Hub at enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk


Mr Hinkins said the Marches Growth Hub was one of the best

Below: Marches Growth Hub Chairman Paul Hinkins and colleagues launch the £10million Growth Challenge Right: The free event drew a large audience



Right: Paul Hinkins & Marches Growth Hub Shropshire manager Emma Chapman

“With this funding, and the expertise of the Marches Growth Hub, we can help business to innovate into new sectors, drive up skills, boost wealth and create one of the best places to live anywhere in the UK.”



HELP FOR ENERGY FROM WASTE

EBRI
European Bioenergy Research Institute



The Ludlow-based company manages a woodland area in the region and collaborates with a local farm which has an anaerobic digester on site that uses corn and energy crops as feedstocks. Edenviro engaged the help of EBRI to see whether a byproduct of the digester could be transformed into briquettes

Specialist 1-2-1 advice was followed-up with further support from a bespoke technical assessment of farm waste material and briquetting applications. This highly-detailed report outlined the potential bioenergy market for waste biomass briquettes, an overview of the briquetting process and available technologies and although ultimately the briquette application wasn't appropriate, it has led to alternative uses suggested by EBRI being further investigated by the company.

The Sustainable Energy in Public Buildings (SEPuBu) is an ERDF funded grant scheme for innovative low carbon measures in public buildings across the Marches.



"The MBIG scheme has had positive impacts in terms of employment and GVA, with these impacts expected to be stronger over the next few years.

A group of four professionals, three men and one woman, are standing on a construction site. They are all wearing white hard hats and high-visibility yellow safety vests over business attire. They are gathered around a large set of blueprints held by one of the men, pointing at various sections. The background shows the steel framework of a building under construction, with various beams and supports visible against a cloudy sky. The ground is dirt and gravel.

Shell Store transformation well under way

Programme which will start delivering in 2020.