PROJECT UPDATE

European Structural & Investment Funding News

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European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

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

Grant makes numbers stack up for firm

HILTON & CO Accountants, Bridgnorth, has secured more than £16,000 in grant funding from the Business Growth Programme to help the firm move into new premises.
In January 2014, a strategic focus to build the business saw the client base double year on year. In July 2016, such was the demand for its services, the firm realised it had outgrown its existing premises and negotiated a lease on a bigger office to allow it to take on more staff.

Hilton & Co applied for funding from The Business Growth Programme to assist with some of the capital and revenue costs. This included office equipment and new signage.

Managing Director John Hilton said: "Applying for the grant was surprisingly easy once I had gathered all the information together. The experience was made easier by having the support of The Marches Growth Hub Shropshire. The team assisted me with any questions I had and helped make the process as painless as possible.

"Having the grant has made it easier to complete the move as we were able to move in with all the right equipment from the start instead of delaying some purchases due to cashflow. This has meant that staff could hit the ground running and support the growth of the business that was intended."

EU-funded support STILL available

EUROPEAN FUNDING is still available to support businesses in the Marches - that's the message to those expressing concerns over continued support following the Brexit vote.

In a letter to Graham Wynn OBE, the Chairman of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Community and Local Government, pledged that schemes would continue.

He wrote: "Current funding guarantee for ESIF projects signed up until the Autumn Statement, will now extend to all projects signed up to the point at which the UK departs the EU, even when these projects continue after we have left the EU.

"For projects signed after the Autumn Statement, funding for projects will be honoured by the Government, if they demonstrate good value for money and are in line with domestic strategic priorities."

A special event organised by the Marches EU Funding Technical Assistance team attracted nearly 100 companies who were looking to tap into the existing financial support on offer.

The day-long programme at Shrewsbury Town Football Club, co-hosted with the Marches Growth Hub, highlighted the available funding streams and provided valuable guidance and advice for businesses that want to apply.

Speakers included representatives from the Marches Growth Hub, the EU Funding Technical Assistance Team for the Marches, the Business Growth Programme, the European Bioenergy Research Institute, the Built Environment Climate Change Innovations, the Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise Network, the Innovative Product Support Service, and Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Programme.

Gary Spence, from the Marches EU Funding Technical Assistance team, said: "In the last year, businesses in the Marches secured more than £600,000 through EU funded support schemes and while there is still funding available, we are encouraging people to apply and secure the financial support they need to grow their business.

"There are lots of funding opportunities for businesses and the event aimed to help businesses make sense of what's out there and to reduce some of the mystique that surrounds EU funding."

Business support organisations and institutions including the University Centre Shrewsbury, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Impetus, and Good2Great business training were also on hand to support and advise delegates.

> *"...encouraging people to apply and secure the financial support they need..."*

Mandy Thorn MBE, Chairman of the Shropshire Business Board, added:

"There are significant EU funds available for businesses and we want to make sure that businesses get their fair share.

"We were delighted that there was a range of business support organisations available to meet local businesses face-to-face on the day."

£16.5m European funding pots open for applications

PROJECTS THAT will promote economic growth and create jobs across the Marches are being invited to bid for a share of more than £16 million of European funding.

Applications have opened for projects that focus on research and innovation, creating low carbon economies and improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises.

The three themes have been identified as priorities for funding in the Marches European Structural and Investment Strategy, which was developed by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership following consultation with stakeholders, partners, the business community and the voluntary and charitable sector.

The LEP is the private sector-led organisation working with the local councils in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, to help grow prosperity and create jobs.

The region has been allocated a total of around £105m of European money for projects being delivered between 2014 and 2020.

This round of applications to the European Regional Development Fund is offering **£6.2 million** for projects across the Marches that will support the development of a low carbon economy; **£2 million** for initiatives in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and **£1.3 million** for those in Herefordshire that support access to support business research and innovation; and **£7 million** for activities that will boost the competitiveness of SMEs in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

Councillor Roger Phillips, Chairman of the Marches ESIF Committee, said: "The Government has confirmed that it will guarantee EU funding for structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK's departure from the EU, even when these projects continue after we have left the EU, so I would encourage businesses and organisations to tap into the wealth of opportunities on offer.

"Creating a strong and sustainable economy is our main focus for the Marches and these three funding streams will target some key priorities that have been identified to create the framework that will make that happen."

The application criteria are set out in the call templates available on the Government portal at https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds. There is an online application system.

ERDF can provide up to a maximum of 60 per cent of a project's funding in Shropshire and Telford and 50 per cent of a project's funding in Herefordshire.

Prospective applicants are advised to contact the Marches Technical Assistance Team (gary.spence@shropshire.gov.uk, hannah.owen@shropshire.gov.uk or call 01743 252976) for advice and support.

Supporting the shift towards a Low Carbon Economy

There is **£6.2 million** available to help organisations across the Marches region take steps towards reducing our collective carbon footprint.

A low carbon economy will play a key role in achieving sustainable and balanced growth.

Investment will focus on supporting low carbon and renewable energy supply chains and providing opportunities to develop energy efficiency, waste reduction and renewable energies in communities.

The focus will be on proposals that:

- increase the number of small scale renewable energy schemes – in particular applications to support community renewable energy projects, specifically where communities are 'off grid'
- increase energy efficiency in small and medium sized enterprises, including through the implementation of low carbon technologies
- support energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector
- increase the energy efficiency of homes and public buildings, through the implementation of low carbon technologies
- promote low-carbon strategies, in particular for urban areas.

https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds/low-carbon-call-in-the-marches-rolling-call-oc36r16p0474

Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises

With the potential to create significant numbers of jobs and drive growth, SMEs are the backbone of our economy.

Supporting business start-ups and equipping established businesses with the knowledge to grow is vital to the future sustainability and viability of our economy.

To encourage innovation access to information and support is key. **£7 million** is available through this fund to ensure businesses in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are able to respond to the challenges of a global, knowledge based economy.

Applications are invited from projects that:

- promote entrepreneurship, in particular facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
- support the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for products, services and development
- support small and medium sized enterprises to grow in regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation.

Proposals are particularly encouraged from applications that involve collaborative working across a number of LEP areas.
https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds/sme-support-call-in-the-marches-rolling-call-oc36r16p0473

Promoting research and innovation

Enterprises in the Marches need to invest in research and development. To do this they need access to the right services.

Investment in research and innovation will help the Marches to improve its productivity. Key sectors where there is a potential for high value growth include advanced manufacturing, agri-food and agri-tech, defence and security, environmental technologies and digital and creative.

This fund has allocated **£2 million** for **Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin** and **£1.3 million** for **Herefordshire** to foster new opportunities for research and development.

Applications are invited from projects that:

- enhance the research and innovation infrastructure and capacities to develop research and innovation excellence, and promote centres of competence, particularly those of European interest
- promote business investment in research and innovation; including developing links and partnerships between enterprises, research and development centres and the Higher Education sector, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advance manufacturing capabilities and first production.

Any business support activity should be delivered in collaboration with the Marches Growth Hub and indications of how the proposed project will work with the Growth Hub should be included in the application.

£3.5m of EU funding unveiled for tourism and food sector in the Marches

FUNDING STREAMS worth £3.5m to boost the tourism and the food processing industries in the Marches have been announced.

The latest round of Tourism Growth Programme funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), administered by DEFRA, will see £1m available to develop visitor attractions, tourist information, and recreational and small scale infrastructure projects including holiday accommodation.

£2.5m has been allocated to grow and enhance the food and drink sector by supporting micro, small and medium-sized food producers and processors looking to expand and create jobs.

Tourism in the Marches, which takes in the Wye Valley and Shropshire Hills and heritage assets such as Ironbridge Gorge, a World Heritage Site, generates around £856 million into the economy every year and employs 33,000 people.

Agriculture and food production has already been identified as highly important to the local economy in the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership ESIF strategy.

Roger Phillips, Chairman of the Marches ESIF Committee, from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership said: “Tourism and food manufacturing are both very important sectors in the Marches that are thriving. Growth in both these industries will help us build a sustainable economy.

“The region currently has a diverse offer to visitors and the new funding will enable us to develop an improved year round offer to them as well as enhance the range and quality of rural tourism products.

“Investment in the food and drink sector through infrastructure, equipment and machinery will create jobs and support supply chains that will in turn boost our economy.”

Details are available by following the below link: http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/3-5m-eu-funding-unveiled-tourism-food-sector-marches/

> “identified as highly important to the local economy”

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 and new programmes.

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