# PROJECT UPDATE

European Structural & **Investment Funding News** Issue Five / January 2017





## Grant makes umbers **stack up**

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."



people to apply

and secure the

financial support

they need... 5

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 66...encouraging

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.

existing financial support on offer.

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

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.

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." THERE ARE currently 11 live projects across the Marches with funding streams available to businesses in the region. Information on these is available via the Support Finder directory on the Marches Growth Hub website.

Another eight projects are currently in the pipeline and will be promoted via the Marches Growth Hub as they go live. Across the Marches we have been working with partners to ensure that projects are approved to meet both the financial and outputs targets set by Government.

At the end of 2016 the Marches is on track for spending in relation to priority projects focused on Research and Innovation, Information Communication Technology, Business Support and Environment to meet the 2018 spend targets that have been set by Government. Slightly below currently is spend on low carbon economy projects, but a rolling call launched in December aims to bring more projects forward.



Forecasts for output targets indicate the Marches will exceed all output targets to 2018 for all priority areas, apart from ICT where there is a slight shortfall however this will be

managed during the project and programme delivery.

So far live projects and those that are in the process of being contracted will be supporting more than 1,500 businesses across the Marches up to the end of 2018.

See table below

Information on live projects is below and further information on each is available at http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk or please call 0345 6000 727 to be put in touch with each scheme.

FUNDING STREAM	FUNDING SOURCE	DESCRIPTION
KEEN (The Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise Network)	University Of Wolverhampton	KEEN works by putting a recent graduate into an organisation to work on a strategic growth project, with ongoing support from the university. Companies benefit from part funding by the ERDF, allowing them to recruit graduates and access university knowledge throughout the duration of the project.
IPSS (Innovate Product Support Services)	University Of Wolverhampton	The IPSS programme supports businesses through the early stages of developing a new product or process. The programme is specifically designed to support businesses developing:  • Environmental technologies  • Low carbon engineering and products  • Digital technologies  • Transport technologies  • Electronics  • Medical technologies  Businesses will receive a 2-day review. Through to a second phase of the programme that offers 4-days support.
BECCI (Built Environment Climate Change Innovation)	University Of Wolverhampton	To promote sustainable economic opportunities and growth by working with SMEs to develop innovative climate chang solutions within the built environment. It specifically focuses on products associated with the retrofitting of housing. Helping businesses develop new or improved energy efficient products, engage with housing providers in the region to support the use of more green products and give SMEs access to the latest information and knowledge on low carbor technologies.
Manufacturing Growth Programme	Economic Growth Solutions	The Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP) provides free advice and support to manufacturing SMEs to help them: Identify opportunities and create plans for growth and improvement Work with the best external experts to implement those plans Cover 35% of the cost of implementing the plans through a growth/improvement grant Connect to wider support to maximise opportunities for growth
EBRI (European Bioenergy Research Institute)	Aston University	EBRI helps companies to apply for collaborative research funding to develop new products, processes and technological and take them to market.
BGP (Business Growth programme)	Birmingham City Council	The fund consists of four strands of business support; namely the Business Development Programme, the Business Innovation Programme, the Green Bridge Supply Chain Programme and the HS2 project.  The package of support is designed to strengthen supply chains, stimulate innovation and grow existing SMEs and there are strict eligibility rules for businesses wishing to access the grants. To be eligible your business must operate 100% on a Business to Business (B2B) basis.
Innovation Vouchers	Aston University	Offers an Innovation Voucher, worth £2,500 to access external expertise with knowledge base organisations (research institutes) to support an innovation project.  Provides free support in the form of workshops so that participating companies become more competitive and manage growth effectively
Business Energy Efficiency Programme	Worcestershire County Council	Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin only.  FREE energy efficiency assessments which could lead to grants for SMEs who wish to use their energy more efficient reducing costs and improving environmental credentials.

### £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.

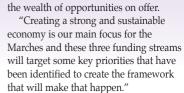
The region has been allocated a total of around £105m of European money for projects being delivered between 2014 and 2020.

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.

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

Councillor Roger Phillips, Chairman of



The application criteria are set out in the call templates available on the Government portal at https://www.gov.uk/europeanstructural-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-structuralinvestment-funds/low-carbon-call-in-the-marchesrolling-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-structuralinvestment-funds/sme-support-call-in-the-marchesrolling-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

important to the local economy

Heritage Site, generates around £856 million into the economy every year and employs 33,000 people.

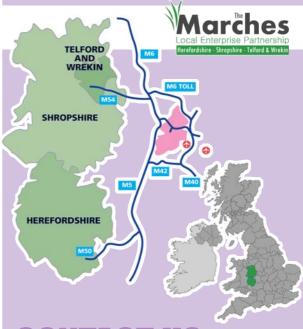
Agriculture and food production has already been identified as highly important to the local economy in the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership ESIF strategy.

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/



#### **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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