

## EU Transnational Funding for Rural Areas

### Summary

**Since January 2009 EU Connects has supported 67 bids from rural parts of West Midlands with a total project value of £9 million. This compares with 18 projects with value of £1.4 million 2008.**

### Background

During the pilot phase of EU Connects it was identified that the rural parts of West Midlands were performing less well than other parts of the region in bidding for European Transnational funds. The EU Connects baseline report which provided this evidence was given to the Rural Affairs Forum in March 2009. This is why EU Connects created the post of Rural Bidding Champion from January 2009. Our aim was to increase knowledge about funding opportunities, build capacity in the rural organisations and see more successful bids submitted from these areas

### Funding Streams

We concentrate on the funding streams which reflect the West Midlands European Strategy focusing on the "Transnational" programmes. In most cases, transnational projects require partners from at least one other EU member state (often 3 or 4 partners or more). The details are outlined in the EU Connects rural leaflet, which we produced to support our capacity building activities in rural areas (copies will be available at meeting). This proved so popular we are now on reprint.

The funding available ranges from short study visits (€500 - €1000) to more substantial projects where the total cost may be in excess of €1 million. Smaller scale projects are often funded at 100% with the larger projects at 50% to 75%.

### Results for 2009

The outcomes for 2009 on "rural" is very encouraging with bids to the total value of €9 million (€800.000 funded to date) submitted. We still await the results on most of these bids. A list of bids submitted is attached for information

An important part of our work is helping the West Midlands organisations to find European partners. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009 EU Connects jointly with West Midlands in Europe will deliver a Rural Project Market Place in Brussels. Twenty other European regions across Europe are invited to participate in this event. The objective is to pick up interesting strategic projects being developed elsewhere in Europe at an early stage, which rural WM organisations could join in 2010. EU Connects also provides opportunity and funding to the West Midlands rural organisation to pitch their own projects for 2010 and find partners. Strategic aim is to link up WM with other rural regions in Europe

## **What next- looking ahead to 2010**

We are working with the WM organisations which have projects on different stages of development for 2010. At the strategic level we are working with the five Shire Counties, Chambers of Commerce, HEFF and IATC. We are also engaging with the voluntary sector and Colleges mainly to support them with the Lifelong Learning programmes. In summary activities by fund include:

### **INTERREG**

We are looking to engage WM organisations to participate in the French lead project on rural broadband. We are also looking at opportunities to join projects on bio-mass, rural leadership, demographic change and access to services. The most likely participants would be Local Authorities or Chambers of Commerce. We would like to see each of the 5 Counties involved in an INTERREG project bid in 2010.

### **CIP Eco Innovation**

In 2009, EU Connects team supported a bid, which involved the English Apple and Pear Association. This fund is targeted at businesses who are developing innovative products where there is need to support market penetration. This funding will support enterprise, including small and medium once. EU Connects is looking to identify companies for the 2010 round, which are developing innovative products

### **LIFE+**

LIFE+ can support projects to help raise the profile of the rural counties within the region and at a wider level, and of their natural assets, such as by communicating their contribution to environmental sustainability, demonstrating best practice in conservation and energy management. The importance of biodiversity management on agricultural land for example, is a key area for potential benefit. Projects could also contribute to delivering objectives on water and waste management now and for the changing climate - attention to which is required as part of local development and Local Area Agreements but it is particularly the rural areas that can struggle to achieve.

EU Connects invites public, private organisations and NGOs to develop LIFE+ projects.

Some LIFE+ projects, which are looking for partners:

- **Protect and enhance biodiversity along Greenways of the UK-wide National Cycle Network** (Sustrans)
- **Coppice services** (Small Woods Association)
- **Demonstrate riparian restoration that addresses habitat degradation due to agricultural and recreational pressures, neglect and anthropomorphic influences** (Wye Valley AONB).

### **Intelligent Energy Europe**

Any private or public organisation established in the European Union<sup>1</sup> can respond to a call for proposals with projects designed to help deliver on the EU's energy and climate change objectives. Projects should have a significant impact on the market and could include: knowledge transfer from one part of the European Union to another on how to do something or how to improve processes; helping the different decision making organisations understand each other better; building confidence and understanding in the market, which is essential to the sector's growth.

Some IEE rural projects, which are looking for partners:

- **Training course for farmers & SMEs on medium scale AD for medium sized farms, feed stocks available on farm and diversification into food and drink manufacturing waste** (Walford & North Shropshire College);
- **Awareness and understanding of carbon footprint and benefits in rural businesses.** (Harper Adams University College). Harper Adams have more projects
- **Sustainable energy communities, schools as basis for community engagement** (Worcestershire County Council)

### **Life Long Learning**

A number of good project ideas coming forward for submissions to the deadlines in February and March 2010. Nineteen Transversal Study Visits (100% funding for professional development and knowledge exchange between European countries) were approved in 2009 from rural areas should help WM organisations to understand the processes of accessing EU funds and develop their networks. We are looking for the organisations interested to join Herefordshire and **Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce and Heart of England Fine Foods project one 'food and drink' theme.**

### **LEADER**

Although not one of the funds we directly support it is interesting to note that each WM LAG has a small budget (£20,00 to £30,000) for trans- national work. We would like to work with LAGs to see how this money could be used to support WM organisations in the European working.

### **EU Connects**

**December 2009**