

**North Northamptonshire Rural
Action Partnership**

***“Meeting the Sustainable
Development Challenge”***

***A prospectus for investment
2009-13***

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

The Leader approach is a delivery mechanism under the new Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007-2013. Also known as Axis 4, the Leader approach is not a scheme, fund or set of objectives, but is a method of harnessing local knowledge to enable a “bottom up”, community led approach to delivery of RDPE funding in rural areas. The Leader approach can be used to deliver a range of Programme objectives, and will help achieve integration. In 2008, a local development strategy (LDS) was written for each programme area. This identified the area, the needs of that area and the overall plans for the six years of Leader funding available.

The LDS was written with the input of the North Northamptonshire Rural Action Partnership. The partnership is a group of volunteers from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, who wished to have an input into the way the funding programme was developed and which projects are funded over the six years.

The Partnership is now working to implement that strategy by instigating and supporting projects that may be eligible to apply for funding through the new LEADER Approach element of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The North Northamptonshire Rural Action Partnership has been awarded £1.5m to support project applications for rural development through the LEADER approach until 2013.

North Northamptonshire RDPE funding is a European Union initiative delivered through Defra and emda.

The North Northamptonshire area

This project covers the main rural parishes of North Northamptonshire; however it excludes the main urban areas of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

Parishes in NNRAP Area			
Borough of Wellingborough	Kettering Borough	East Northants Continued	East Northants Continued
Bozeat	Barton Seagrave	Ashton	Nassington
Earls Barton	Brampton Ash	Barnwell	Newton Bromswold
Easton Maudit	Braybrooke	Benefield	Oundle (TC)
Ecton	Broughton	Blatherwycke	Pilton
Finedon	Burton Latimer (TC)	Brigstock	Polebrook
Great Doddington	Cranford	Bulwick	Raunds (TC)
Great Harrowden	Cransley	Chelverston cum Caldecott	Ringstead
Grendon	Desborough (TC)	Clopton	Rushden (TC)
Hardwick	Dingley	Collyweston	Southwick
Irchester	Geddington	Cotterstock	Stanwick
Isham	Grafton Underwood	Deene	Stoke Doyle
Little Harrowden	Harrington	Deenethorpe	Sudborough
Mears Ashby	Little Oakley	Denford	Tansor
Orlbury	Loddington	Duddington with Fineshade	Thorpe Achurch
Strixton	Mawsley	Easton on the Hill	Thrapston (TC)
Sywell	Newton	Fotheringhay	Titchmarsh
Wilby	Orton	Glaphorn	Thurning
Wollaston	Pytchley	Great Addington	Twywell
	Rothwell (TC)	Hargrave	Wadenhoe
Corby Borough	Rushton	Harringworth	Wakerley
Cottingham	Stoke Albany	Hemington	Warmington
East Carlton	Sutton Bassett	Higham Ferrers (TC)	Woodford
Gretton	Thorpe Malsor	Irthlingborough (TC)	Woodnewton
Middleton	Warkton	Islip	Yarwell
Rockingham	Weekley	King's Cliffe	
Stanion	Weston by Welland	Laxton	
Weldon	Wilbarston	Lilford	
		Little Addington	
	East Northants	Lowick & Slipton	
Kettering Borough	Aldwinckle	Luddington	
Ashley	Apethorpe	Lutton	

Our vision

“By delivering truly sustainable development in North Northamptonshire we will secure the benefits of growth for the land based sector and rural communities, set within a framework of green infrastructure”.

Our Objectives

Having considered the challenges facing the area NNRAP has identified four general objectives for its work over the next six years. These are set out below with a list of activities for each one. We expect most of the match funding for our programme to be private in accordance with RDPE principles. However, match funding from public sources may be appropriate for projects aimed principally at community or public benefit; and we would also wish to consider how we integrate the Leader process with other funding programmes.

1. Promoting Rural Tourism

The potential for increasing tourism and outdoor leisure activities in Northamptonshire is vast. NNRAP will build on the work of Destination Northamptonshire and will concentrate on a number of themes identified in the East Midlands Tourism Strategy:

- Natural environment
- Outdoor activity
- Historic houses
- Local products and food

The opportunities exist to develop linkages with, and to add value to activities in Rockingham Forest and the River Nene Regional Park and NNRAP will work with these organisations to maximise the value of interventions.

We will particularly encourage project proposals from groups which combine individual offers to enhance the overall experience and contribute to the economic wellbeing of the community.

Proposed activities are: -

- Support major eco-tourism projects
- Support quality accommodation
- Support for niche activities and development of themes
- Support co-operative projects in market towns
- Support for projects which use local ecology habitats
- Encourage the development of new, and improvements to existing, tourism/visitor attractions
- Link heritage initiatives to the wider visitor attractions

2. Local Food and Drink

Food production has, historically, been a primary contributor to the Rural Economy, creating wealth and providing employment. Globalisation and highly cost effective operational leadership of commodity production has

marginalised the long-term sustainability of these businesses demanding a return to consumer focussed market led premium production. The challenges facing tomorrow's primary producer will be to develop consumer confidence in local produce, the integration of local communities, sustainable business continuity and local employment through local retail outlets and services.

The growing environmental concerns based on the realisation by consumers that food is travelling further than ever before and that family farms, local abattoirs, processing plants, local distribution systems and small shops are disappearing is leading to a change in awareness and an increasing demand to halt the loss of local distinctiveness, traditional values, craft production and a sense of belonging to the community. In addition health awareness is increasing the demand for fresh seasonal, easily accessible local foods. As a predominantly rural area, in close proximity to a growing and increasingly affluent urban population, North Northamptonshire is ideally placed to benefit from these changes in consumer awareness. The development of local food and produce initiatives has the potential to bring a wide range of benefits.

Proposed activities are: -

- Assistance for measures that promote co-operation between groups of local producers and retailers.
- Assistance for measures, which encourage farmers to sell their produce through farm shops/ local markets and retailers.
- Encourage the development of initiatives, which increase the market for local foods and produce.

3. Diversification for Forestry and Agriculture

In order to address the reduction in rural employment within the NNRAP area it is essential to seize the opportunity for innovation and new approaches. These can regenerate the economy through the provision of the locally produced goods and services, which are required to meet the needs of the increased urban population locally and in the adjacent and prosperous Eastern and South Eastern regions.

The integration of capital funding and income funds is critical to the longer-term success of diversified rural business to ensure the successful transition of business initiation through to strong business growth. The business lifecycle provides many different challenges throughout the key stages of initiation, growth, maturity and decline, and it is recognised that to enable the NNRAP area to meet the objectives of successful business diversification, public funding needs to be available and relevant throughout the business lifecycle process.

Historically matched capital funding has been available to support the initial development of diversified businesses. There will remain a requirement for this front end funding but also the opportunity for businesses who have reached the growth stage to benefit from further capital finance to meet the growth challenges. This continued support will help ensure a higher degree of success.

Proposed activities are: -

- Support initiatives, which increase the development of the woodland economy.
- Increase the use of redundant or under-utilised farm buildings for economic use (New businesses, business relocation or community/co-operative activities).
- Assistance for measures to encourage use of non-food crops.
- Develop initiatives related to improving the environment and sustaining traditional rural crafts.
- Increase the number of individuals/enterprises participating in entrepreneurial activity in the emerging sectors in the rural economy.
- Measures to enhance the heritage resource.

4. Supporting Micro-Enterprises

Generic Business support for pre-starts is available in North Northamptonshire through the Business Link Start-Up Service. For established businesses there is an IDB process provided by East Midlands Business, trading as Business Link. Both are operating out of Opus House in Northampton, but have local advisors throughout the county, accessible via 0845 058 6644. The new Business Link Land Based Programme is also active in the area. The programme will link to the existing advice framework and support projects and knowledge acquisition in more specialist areas.

Proposed activities are: -

- Provision of training opportunities, which increase the base and quality of skills.
- Initiatives to increase the range and accessibility of specialist support.
- Support activities encouraging social and community enterprise.
- Provide training in key areas of need
- Activities which encourage participation and commitment to the project

How to apply

To be eligible to apply for funding you will need to be an existing farmer, rural business or community group within the North Northamptonshire area OR an individual or group with a new business development idea for that area.

Applications are made on a rolling basis; there are no deadline dates currently within the programme.

The application process is in two phases, expression of interest and full application. If you have an idea for a project please contact the project coordinator to discuss in further detail before filling in any forms, the project coordinator will ensure you are eligible to apply and that your project meets our objectives.

For further information

If you are interested in finding out more about the opportunities outlined in this prospectus or you would like to discuss your initial project ideas please contact: -

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