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East of England Development Agency



The Development Agency for the North East of England



Working for England's World Class Region



South West RDA



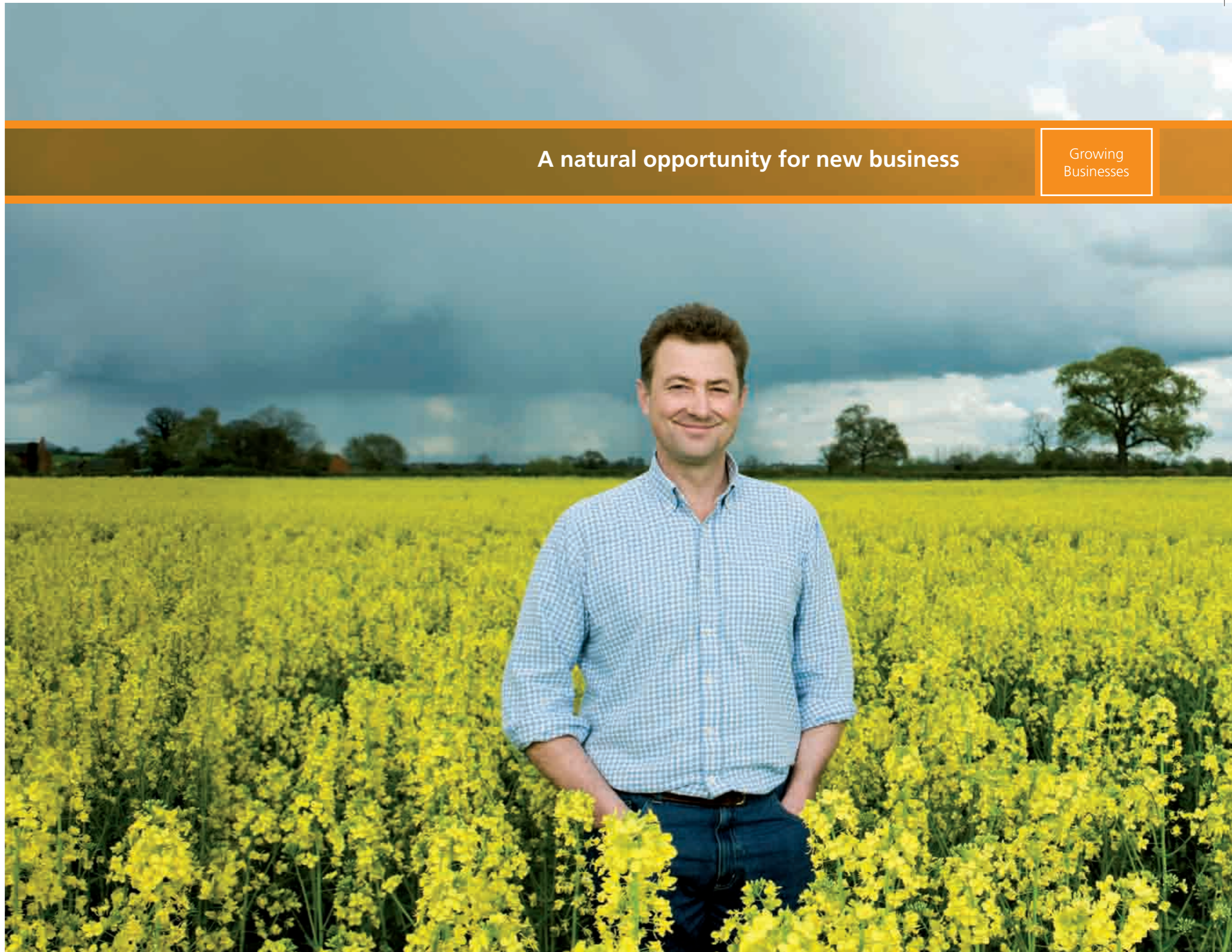
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Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) delivered through England's RDAs

A natural opportunity for new business

Growing Businesses



Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) delivered through England's RDAs





A better future for everyone

Each of the nine Regional Development Agencies within England shares the same mission – to transform the country's regions through sustainable economic development.

England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are committed to working across both rural and urban areas in a way that meets the needs of people and businesses, regardless of their location. This work is informed by the priorities identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for each region.

Each RES is created by an RDA working with partners and stakeholders to set out a long-term vision for their region. The RES is owned by the whole region and informs the work of regional and local partners, including the RDA.

RDAs are working to make a difference in rural areas through their core business activities: business support, the development of employment related skills, the promotion of innovation and sustainable development, and regeneration. Wherever possible, RDAs' core business activities address the needs of both rural and urban areas. But where there is an obvious market failure or demand that is not also present in urban areas, RDAs may develop programmes or projects with a specific rural focus.

Since their inception in 1999, RDAs have brought significant benefits to rural areas within England through their core business activities. In 2006/07 alone, for example, in rural areas RDAs:

- created or safeguarded 23,206 jobs;
- assisted 10,268 people to find employment;
- helped to create and attract 5,874 new businesses to their regions;
- assisted 53,810 businesses to improve their performance;
- encouraged 1,549 businesses to engage in new collaborations with the UK knowledge base;
- assisted 85,696 people to develop skills relevant to employment.

One of the main rural-specific programmes which the RDAs have responsibility for is the socio-economic part of the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13. The RDA-managed elements are focused on improving the competitiveness of the farming, food and forestry sectors, as well as diversifying the rural economy and enhancing quality of life in rural areas. Rural economies and businesses can therefore look forward to even brighter prospects with this additional investment.

Foreword - Richard Ellis

Delivering sustainable economic development in rural areas is nothing new to the Regional Development Agencies. This has been our mission statement since our establishment in 1999. Assuming responsibility for the delivery of the socio-economic elements of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) therefore fits neatly with our existing remit. The request from Defra Ministers to take on this new and exciting role has given us an opportunity to work with our partners to ensure that the Programme is tailored to meet regional needs and to further strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of rural areas.

We all recognise the active role that rural communities play in the development of a dynamic and sustainable knowledge-based economy. That's why the RDAs are aligning the RDPE with their core funding and other public sector investment to boost collaboration amongst businesses, improve skills, enhance knowledge transfer and increase entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise to maximise rural areas' potential.

The RDAs' desire to create leading low carbon regional economies and improve resource efficiency underpins our delivery of this Programme. We are looking to support projects which will deliver multiple benefits to a range of people and businesses, ideally combining economic, social and environmental outcomes. We are proactive in commissioning activity to deliver strategic investments which will strengthen the economic viability of rural areas in the long-term. I am pleased that all projects will have to pass a sustainability test before they are approved.

However, there are limits to what the RDAs can fund through the Rural Development Programme for England. The RDPE sets stringent requirements about what the funding can be used for. These requirements focus heavily on improving the competitiveness of the land-based sectors of farming, food and forestry, although it does make some provision to support diversification of rural economies and projects to improve rural quality of life. Also, we have been asked by Defra to set aside over £100m of RDPE funding specifically to help the livestock industry. Therefore, RDAs are also aligning RDPE funding with complementary funding from our core Single Pot and other public sector investment to provide added value to strategic solutions in those areas the RDPE cannot assist.

In developing the regional delivery of the Programme, the RDAs, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and Government Offices have all worked closely together to develop and consult on the Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) which identify the needs and priorities of the regions' rural areas. Although there have been delays in commencing the new Programme, primarily due to the European-level approval negotiations, RDAs are now beginning to approve significant volumes of strategically focused projects in response to the new RIP-led approach.

Although it is still early days for the Programme, which will see RDAs investing around £540m of European and Defra funding in rural areas through RDPE over the period until 2013, results are already being delivered. This brochure is intended to explain the RDAs' approach to the delivery of RDPE and to showcase some of the work already making a difference to our rural communities.

Chair
East of England Development Agency
RDA lead on sustainable development,
climate change and rural affairs.



Working
Together

Working in partnership to deliver improved opportunities and successful outcomes

The Rural Development Programme for England is the national delivery mechanism for the EU Rural Development Programme, which is designed to help rural areas to meet their economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities.

Introduced following reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the EU Rural Development Programme divides its aims into three main areas:

- Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the farming, food and forestry sectors;
- Axis 2 - Improving the environment and the countryside;
- Axis 3 - Diversification of the rural economy and enhancing rural quality of life.

Within these areas – in particular, Axis 1 and Axis 3 – there are other objectives which emphasise the importance of improvements in skills, knowledge transfer and enterprise.

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a 7-year programme running from 2007-13. Worth £3.9bn overall, it is jointly funded by the European Union and the UK Government (Defra). Some £3.3bn of the total budget is allocated to agri-environment schemes, which are being delivered by Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

England's RDAs are responsible for managing the delivery of around £540m of funding (20% of the programme funds), with investment split roughly equally between improving the competitiveness of the farming, food and forestry sectors (Axis 1) and diversification of the rural economy and enhancing the quality of life in rural areas (Axis 3).

In addition to achieving the three main aims of the programme, RDAs are also responsible for the establishment of a community led delivery mechanism (also known as Axis 4) to deliver 5% of the RDPE programme funds.

RDAs are currently running the required open competition processes to select Local Action Groups. Each Local Action Group will comprise public and private sector partners, who will produce a Local Development Strategy to prioritise RDPE investments in their area.

Defra has asked RDAs to ensure that a certain amount of RDPE funding is made exclusively available to the livestock industry. Although this sector will also be able to access other programme funding, just over £100m will be set aside specifically to help the livestock industry to:

- improve the competitiveness of individual livestock sectors;
- enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of on-farm management of nutrients;
- facilitate improved animal health and welfare.

The allocation of RDPE funding by each RDA has been informed and shaped by the development of a Regional Implementation Plan. This enables RDAs to take a strategic, investment-led approach to meeting the needs of rural areas.

The Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) capture each region's priorities for RDPE funding. Each Plan was developed by the RDAs, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Government Offices, working together to consider regional evidence and consult with regional and local partners and stakeholders to identify priorities for rural areas.

The RDPE funding allocated to RDAs is not split equally across regions. Similarly, the priorities developed through each RIP also differ, as they have been developed in response to the needs and priorities of each region. This means that each region will focus varying levels of investment on diverse activities to meet its specific needs.

Delivery of Axis 1, Axis 3 and Axis 4 will effectively be run regionally, albeit as part of a national programme framework that sees RDAs using consistent approaches where appropriate.

RDAs are taking a strategic approach, addressing longer term needs through proactive project commissioning. They are working with partners to develop collaborative projects that deliver multiple outcomes (social, environmental and economic).

Within each region, RDPE support is aligned with other public sector investment as far as possible to deliver shared outcomes with additional value. RDAs are also working closely with the Forestry Commission and Natural England to encourage the delivery of integrated projects that offer sustainable development, resource efficiency and low carbon benefits.

All RDAs are using sustainable project design, development and proofing techniques to ensure that the projects they support will deliver sustainable development.

Each RDA is taking a strategic approach to the delivery of RDPE in response to each region's particular requirements and priorities, through the commissioning of projects and activity.

As always, good communication is key to successfully identifying and meeting regional needs.

Regional Rural Affairs Forums have played an important role within regions, acting as a consultative body, contributing to the shaping of the Regional Implementation Plans and providing feedback from potential customers and stakeholders on the delivery of RDPE as it moves forward.

RDAs are also engaging in one-to-one meetings with partner and stakeholder bodies and networks across the country to explain their approach to RDPE. This ensures that these bodies and networks are properly able to brief their members on the regional roll-out of the programme.





Supporting enterprising initiatives

The RDAs' approach to sustainable economic development is business and market-led – because high-performing, innovative and sustainable businesses are the key to improving productivity, wealth and well-being.

Throughout England, the RDAs are working to support new business start-ups, to help existing companies to grow and to foster an enterprise culture – within both urban and rural areas.

Collectively, the RDAs have invested over £2bn in business support and competitiveness. RDAs provide support through their management of the Business Link Network and the Manufacturing Advisory Service. The former is typically the first port of call for firms seeking initial guidance and advice on, for example, the efficient use of resources or business planning. The latter provides local businesses with hands-on advice and assistance from experts across manufacturing disciplines.

In addition, the RDAs have facilitated a wide range of initiatives linked to the Business Link Network to provide more fundamental support for businesses. This work includes support to encourage inward investment; improving access to finance for business start-ups and growing businesses; improving international trade; developing innovation; and increasing collaboration and knowledge sharing between universities, research institutions and the business community.

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a key addition to the suite of tools used by RDAs for the delivery of business support around the English regions. The RDPE will play a vital role, alongside other investment, in helping to build profitable, innovative and competitive farming, food and forestry sectors.

As part of the programme, RDAs are working to enable land-based businesses to benefit from mainstream business support by connecting them with Business Link. This will ensure that they can maximise their opportunities to access the wider support and advice available through the service.

In Yorkshire, for example, Business Link and the Yorkshire Agricultural Society's Growing Routes programme are working in partnership to deliver Yorkshire Forward's RDPE Rural Business Start-up Programme.

Meanwhile, South West RDA has created the South West Rural Enterprise Gateway, which operates a dedicated information network for rural businesses aimed at improving the competitiveness of local farming and food businesses. It offers tailored support and skills training via Business Link.

At the other end of the country, One North East is using RDPE funding to provide Micro-Enterprise Grants. Managed by Business Link, the grants are to help emerging and existing land-based micro-enterprises to develop, grow and make their operations more sustainable. It is helping small businesses with elements such as start-up revenue and capital investment costs, technical and marketing support, product development, branding and design. External advice and support is also available on developing alternative sources of income for a more sustainable future.

The RDPE will play a vital role in helping to build profitable, innovative and competitive farming, food and forestry sectors – thriving rural industries that meet the needs of consumers and make a net positive contribution to the environment.

Providing skills for today and tomorrow

Investment in training and skills development is an important aspect of increasing the performance of businesses and this makes it a significant feature of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The RDPE will be used throughout the country to raise skills levels within the farming, food and forestry sectors, where such development opportunities are not available through other programmes. This will help to improve the competitiveness of these industries and to improve the abilities of the rural workforce. It will also increase opportunities for knowledge transfer, particularly in the areas of technology and entrepreneurship, and facilitate access for all individuals and businesses to other mainstream learning and development opportunities.

Working with partners through Regional Skills Partnerships, RDAs are ensuring employment and skills provision will address the identified regional priorities. This partnership approach helps to ensure that each skills provider fits into a pan-regional network of provision. It also avoids duplication of effort and enables customers to be channelled towards the provider that best meets their needs.

The specific use of RDPE funding to address identified skills gaps where mainstream funding can't support the specialist needs of land-based industries is a great example of RDAs using this programme to complement mainstream provision. And it works both ways, as RDAs are also working to increase mainstream funding support for skills improvement in the land-based sectors.

All RDAs around the country are delivering programmes designed to ensure that their region's agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors are best placed to improve their competitiveness, efficiency, profitability and sustainability.

The Yorkshire Forward LandSkills Programme is one example of this. The Programme, which is managed by Lantra – the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector – will deliver a range of subsidised skills and knowledge transfer activity. This is aimed at the key sectors of livestock, arable and non-food crops, production horticulture, forestry, and food in relation to supply chain activity.

An Industry Advisory Board has been created to steer the ongoing development of the LandSkills Programme. This will ensure that it is complementary to mainstream skills provision, that it responds to the specialist needs of the industry and that it achieves lasting benefits for the region.

The Programme will help businesses improve their performance in the key areas of:

- resource efficiency;
- nitrates, pesticides and waste management;
- animal health and welfare;
- supply chains and marketing;
- assurance and traceability;
- environmental land management;
- business management;
- succession planning;
- risk management;
- climate change.

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is particularly looking at the issue of animal health, welfare and resilience, an acute set of issues for the region following last year's disease outbreaks. Because the region faces the risk of diseases coming into the area from continental Europe, SEEDA has appointed a Sector Champion for biosecurity and disease risk reduction, who will be working closely with livestock farmers.

Another major project will see the creation of a pan-regional Animal Health and Welfare training programme. This will primarily focus on the vocational needs of those working with livestock in the south east. The project aims to reach as many livestock farmers as possible and use skilled trainers to bring them up-to-date with the latest methods of improving animal welfare. This will ensure optimal livestock resilience to give animals the best chance of combating future diseases.

From April 2009, in addition to using RDPE funding to provide skills development and education opportunities to rural businesses, RDAs will also assume responsibility for Train2Gain, the skills brokerage programme that is delivered through the Business Link Network, across both rural and urban areas.

RDAs play a key role in ensuring that training and skills development within rural areas is meeting the needs of employers, individuals and a sustainable economy.

Boosting Skills





Resource
Efficient
Business

A strategic, sector-based approach

RDAs have been tasked with taking a more strategic approach to investment in the land-based sectors and to focus on some sectors in particular – such as livestock.

To ensure that investment is made where it will make most difference, a strong sector-based approach is required within regional plans for the use of Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funding.

All RDAs and their regional partners have therefore worked hard to ensure that the evidence base for their plans is the result of a clear understanding of the relative importance of the land-based sectors targeted by RDPE.

This inevitably means that each region may have different priorities for each of the sectors concerned. For example, the livestock sector is a priority for all regions – but it is of particular importance in the western regions, where Defra has allocated the majority of the relevant RDPE funding.

RDAs already take a sector-based approach to their priority cluster development work in most regions, so the RDPE's focus on sectors is simply an extension of this.

In the majority of cases, RDPE-funded activity can actually add value to the core priorities set out in a region's economic strategy. For instance, regions that are focusing on the burgeoning environmental products and services sectors can now also align land-based opportunities and link farmers and other land managers to the key and growing markets in their areas.

In central England, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) has focused the whole of its RDPE activity on sector-based action plans that align to the region's key identified opportunities and priorities. These are environmental technologies, tourism & leisure and food & drink. A fourth action plan has been established to reflect the programme's national focus on the livestock sector.

Each action plan comprises a series of strategic projects designed to reflect the main opportunities that have been identified for developing business ideas within each sector in the region. Through this approach, the RDA and its regional partners are aiming to maximise the benefits achieved from the investment available.

Within the environmental technologies sector, for example, AWM's RDPE action plan is likely to include investment in innovations to address the region's waste, energy and water challenges. It also encourages the creation of pilot environmental economy projects. In particular, it is focusing on:

- bioenergy supply chain development;
- support for innovation in new environmental products and services;
- waste management/recycling facilities;
- training and knowledge transfer.

Another programme focusing on resource efficiency and sector sustainability is the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) Camgrain investment.

Thanks to almost £4m of RDPE investment, a 300-strong farmers' co-operative in Cambridgeshire is set to create one of the UK's biggest and greenest processing centres for wheat, barley and other crops.

The funding is being used over five years to build new state-of-the-art facilities. When it is finished, Camgrain's Advanced Processing Centre will save 1,000 tonnes of carbon emissions every year, despite enabling the processing and storage of an additional 90,000 tonnes of grain. The new facilities also mean that Camgrain's specialist processing capabilities will meet the increasingly demanding requirements of processors.

By improving productivity, being innovative and saving energy, Camgrain will be able to play a vital role in helping the region's food & drink sector to be more competitive in a global marketplace while also helping to safeguard local jobs.

There is a strong national focus within the RDPE to support and promote the livestock sector. The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), covering the north west where livestock is a key farming sector, has created an Integrated Livestock Programme in response to the need to improve the competitiveness of local livestock farms.

The programme is designed to address three key areas: competitiveness, animal health & welfare and nutrient management. It will offer ongoing training, support and guidance for those working within specific areas, as well as provide networking and collaborative promotional opportunities for the sector as a whole.

Encouraging businesses to be cleaner and greener

RDAs are investing in sectors directly linked to the resource efficiency and low carbon agenda, as well as ensuring that investment in other sectors delivers carbon reductions.

England's RDAs are determined to help all businesses to make the most of opportunities arising from the growing interest in resource efficiency and low carbon economies. The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is also playing a key part in this drive.

The need to reduce carbon emissions and improve resource efficiency is integrated into every aspect of the RDPE – and into every regional policy or project delivered by RDAs, as can be seen by the examples in this brochure.

RDAs are bringing regional leadership and focus to the climate change agenda by ensuring that carbon reduction and resource efficiency are key features of all aspects of their work. Advantage West Midlands, for example, was the first RDA to create a low carbon Regional Economic Strategy, closely followed by the East of England Development Agency. A number of RDAs are leading the development of regional climate change action plans and all RDAs are supporting Regional Climate Change Partnerships.

In 2007, RDAs approached the Chancellor with the idea of piloting a streamlined approach to business resource efficiency advice, which would be available through Business Link. This pilot proved very successful and all businesses that have contact with Business Link are now being helped to reduce their carbon footprint and improve their resource efficiency. This includes rural businesses.

Resource efficiency and sustainability advice is also being put into practice in RDPE projects around the country.

In Yorkshire, livestock farmers who want to invest in new technologies to make better use of their waste, energy and water resources can access RDPE funding of up to £20,000 through Yorkshire Forward's Farm Resource Efficiency Programme. This allows them to investigate options such as renewable energy, rainwater harvesting/water recycling systems and manure management.

Meanwhile, the East Midlands Development Agency has used RDPE funding to support a new build commercial workspace/demonstration facility called the Centre of Renewable Energy (CORE). The centre will incorporate many renewable technologies itself and demonstrate how other technologies work. It will also provide a base for collaborative working opportunities for local businesses.

In north east England, One NorthEast's Fuel for the Future initiative is helping farms and forestry businesses that are looking to produce biomass for low carbon heat and power markets to build the necessary industry supply chains. The RDPE initiative is enabling new and existing feedstock suppliers for markets such as woodchip heating and combined heat and power generation to develop the facilities and systems they need, as well as providing access to specialist training.

The various RDPE skills programmes that are being implemented across the country also include an emphasis on resource efficiency, climate change and nutrient management.





Boosting business prospects in rural areas

All over the country, RDAs are working to support sustainable development, encourage economic prosperity and create places where people can live, work and thrive.

The RDAs' mission is to create 'sustainable economic development'. This means enabling businesses and communities to realise their potential by providing business support, strengthening skills, boosting sectors, investing in regeneration and infrastructure, encouraging innovation and diversification, and enabling communities to articulate and prioritise their needs.

This dovetails neatly with the aspirations of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which provides RDAs with an opportunity to focus on strengthening the economies of rural areas by encouraging diversification and improving quality of life.

Diversification helps to broaden the business base, reduce reliance on primary agriculture and adds value to the economies of rural areas.

The diversification of agricultural businesses is a significant source of income for a growing number of farmers, with more than half the farms in most regions having diversified. Traditional diversification opportunities exist in tourism and food and drink, alongside newer ideas and services.

RDAs are using RDPE funds to support diversification in a strategic way by identifying priorities and working with potential applicants to develop initiatives that not only fill gaps, but which are also sustainable.

The East Midlands Development Agency offers a good example of diversification in action. It has approved an RDPE project to convert a group of listed farm buildings in Tuxford in Nottinghamshire into a day nursery to accommodate 30 children from three months of age upwards. Many of the buildings don't meet the needs of modern farming and the owner was keen to find a new use for them. With other childcare nurseries between 7 and 14 miles away, meeting the need for

local childcare provision seemed like an excellent way of bringing the farm back into use, for the benefit of local people.

Meanwhile, a new tourism initiative is benefiting from RDPE funding from the South East England Development Agency. The newly approved two-year Hidden Britain South East project has the twin aims of encouraging visitors to get off the beaten track and explore more secluded areas of the countryside while also ensuring that local rural communities benefit from the increased footfall.

Under Axis 4 of the RDPE, Local Action Groups are being established to identify priorities for specific areas and to direct investment towards meeting those priorities. This delivery mechanism is an effective method of harnessing local knowledge to enable a 'bottom up', community-led approach to the delivery of RDPE funding.

Local Action Groups comprise both public and private partners. RDAs are in the process of selecting Local Action Groups to deliver programmes of RDPE funding that meet identified priorities for their areas.

A number of groups have already been selected. They include The Fells & Dales and Solway Border & Eden, which are both located in Cumbria and cover all rural areas of the county. Both groups will deliver an integrated programme of RDPE activity that spans Axis 1 and Axis 3 of the programme. They will also seek to influence the direction of Axis 2 within their geographical area.

RDAs are supporting diversification in a strategic way by identifying priorities and developing initiatives that not only fill gaps, but which are also sustainable.

Delivering added value through effective investment

The alignment of specific rural development funding and activity with mainstream initiatives and other public sector investment offers sustainable synergies and benefits for all.

RDAs are investing in rural areas, and the land-based sector in particular, using their core funding as well as finance provided under the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

By working hard to ensure that RDPE support is closely aligned to their core funding and that of broader regional and sub-regional partners, RDAs are able to deliver added value and improved effectiveness and efficiencies in public sector investment.

To this end, RDAs are both using and influencing wider investment support to contribute directly to rural regeneration – and to stimulate improved strategic delivery of the RDPE.

This approach is already paying dividends in the east of England, where an initiative designed to stimulate the commercialisation of alternative and non-food crops into products is set to establish the region as a market leader in the sector.

The InCrops (Innovative Crops) Enterprise Hub will build on the region's world-class research excellence in plant and environmental sciences and its leading work on climate change and the role of greenhouse gases.

Closely co-ordinated with the work of the National Non-Food Crop Centre and Defra's national policy for the use of renewable resources, the project will promote low carbon supply chains based on plant-derived raw materials for consumer and industrial products. These include building materials, specialist oils, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, biopolymers and structural components. It will help to create new businesses and jobs in the region within the rapidly growing market for sustainable products.

Building an effective business innovation network in the region and using the capability of world-leading partners in the field is core to the project's success. The partnership responsible for delivery will operate through the University of East Anglia and the project

is supported by investment from the East of England Development Agency, which is using both RDA and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding.

With such combined investment and capability potential, this initiative has the capacity to make a real difference in a rapidly growing market.

In the south west, the RDA is proposing to extend its support for the well-established South West Food & Drink Skills Network with additional funding that will integrate activity with that of Train2Gain and Business Link. This will help to improve accessibility, delivery capacity and the creation of centres of expertise within the food processing sector. The introduction of a similar amount of RDPE funding will enable the initiative to expand its footprint across the whole of the agri-food chain within the region.

The successful alignment of RDPE funding with core RDA funding will strengthen the ability of the Network to work with Train2Gain at a sub-regional, regional and national level to ensure sufficient future capacity to meet the needs of rural businesses in the food chain.

Another example of mutually beneficial funding alignment is the West Midlands Tourism Action Plan, which will involve close partnership working with the region's Destination Management Partnerships (DMPs) as well as key delivery organisations. This partnership approach ensures that rural tourism businesses can benefit from marketing and skills initiatives focused on food tourism, festivals and events and sustainable tourism activities.

Collaboration with DMPs means that resources available from other sources, including the RDAs' Single Pot, can be used in support of sustainable rural tourism initiatives. What's more, alignment with DMPs will also ensure alignment with the region's Visitor Economy Strategy, to which they all contribute.

Smart
Funding

