

EXTERNAL FUNDING UPDATE

Report By: Director of Policy and Community

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To provide Members with an update on a range of External Funding Programmes which are currently benefiting Herefordshire.

Financial Implications

2. The report sets out, for information, activity already underway and the report therefore has no specific financial implications.

Considerations

3. In recent years the emphasis placed on regeneration activity and funding has amplified at a national level, with regeneration being increasingly used as a mechanism to support economic, community and environmental development. This role is now led at a regional level by the Regional Development Agencies (Advantage West Midlands in our region) who are responsible for co-ordinating, overseeing and delivering regeneration activity across their respective region. Similarly, the number of funding streams to support regeneration has also increased, and greater financial resources are available. Many of these funding streams cover the whole Country (such as National Lottery funding) and some are geographically targeted (such as Objective 2 European funding). Nearly all funding streams are time limited, and have strict rules about when the project activity can be undertaken.
4. Each funding stream has its own criteria and focus, with clear rules about the type and scale of regeneration activity or project it will support. However, there are a number of general criteria that regeneration funding works to. For example; regeneration funding will not support statutory services and cannot be used to replace existing government funding, such as education, housing or social services; funding streams are unlikely to support a project which is already underway; the project must show "added value" to any linked activity; very few funding streams provide all the funding for the project with most only giving a certain percentage (usually 50%); and, each project must produce outputs and benefits, such as number of people entering employment or number of people trained.
5. A breakdown of the main funding streams available and an update on their current position is attached at Appendix 1.
6. Over the past decade the availability of these funding streams has increased in Herefordshire, starting with many parts of the County being designated as Objective 5b European funding status in 1994, and then Objective 2 European funding status in 2000. The majority of Herefordshire is also now included in the Rural Regeneration Zone area (funded through Advantage West Midlands). Herefordshire has also been

successful in bidding for Leader+ funding to support the local natural and historic environment and Market Towns Initiative funding.

7. Herefordshire Council has made extensive use of these funding streams to support regeneration and development activity, for example Objective 2 funding and Rural Regeneration Zone funding was gained to support the current Tourism and Creative Industries development programmes; Objective 2 and Rural Regeneration Zone funding has been gained to enable workspace development in Rotherwas, and a number of geographical based regeneration schemes have been successfully established such as the South Wye regeneration programme and the Market Town development programme. This has enabled a wide range of activities to be undertaken that would otherwise not be possible.
8. The Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment of the Council in December 2002 commented that the Herefordshire Plan had provided the focus for partnership working and has contributed significantly to the Council being able to attract significant external funding to deliver projects tackling local priorities, such as rural access and pockets of deprivation. In this respect the Council has been able to punch above its weight as a small low-funded authority.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified