

UPDATE ON EXTERNAL FUNDING PROGRAMMES IN HEREFORDSHIRE

1. Herefordshire In Touch (HIT) Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Programme

The HIT Programme is a 7-year SRB programme for the Herefordshire Partnership, which is due to run until 2006/07.

The total value of the programme including all match funding is just under £14.5million.

Currently the programme has funding approved of:

- £3.7 million SRB (£2.2million capital and £1.5million revenue),
- £330k European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for Virtual Herefordshire
- £2million ERDF for Broadband (although this is under review and subject to project scope negotiations with Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM)).

Total funding drawn down to end December 2004:

- Total SRB £1.8million (SRB Revenue £1million; Capital £800k)
- ERDF for Virtual Herefordshire £152K
- ERDF for broadband £165K
- £68k RRZ

Key projects achieved to date:

HIT Core Team – to put in place the ICT Programme Manager, eGateway co-ordinator, Security Officer, Web development and programme office to support the other HIT Projects. Project now completed.

Smart Cards pilot – actioned in Colwall Library as a Library card and allowing out of hours access to IT suite. Project completed.

Business Study – first HIT study in the business sector to set a baseline of IT usage, attitudes and capabilities. Project completed.

Three projects to work in specific sectors increasing IT capacity and promoting use of the eGateway and broadband. These projects are the Youth Times (young people), Business Network Broker (business sector) and the Community and Voluntary Sector ICT project (community and voluntary sector).

EGateway - a platform is now available and both the Council and Partnership websites have been migrated across. A timetable of further migration of partner websites is planned over the next year, as is further developments on the eGateway e.g. search engine functionality.

Broadband – after funding initially agreed by GOWM and Advantage West Midlands (AWM), a marketing campaign was launched to raise awareness and encourage people to register their interest in broadband. The announcement that BT would enable most of the local telephone exchanges meant the scope of the project could be scaled down. This revised project is still being negotiated with GOWM although AWM have declared their support and approved funding accordingly.

2. South Wye Single Regeneration Budget Programme

The South Wye Regeneration Programme is a 7-year SRB programme for the South Wye area of Hereford City, which is due to run until March 2006.

The total value of the programme including all match funding is just under £14.3 million. Currently the programme has funding approved of:

- £4,358,768 SRB funding
- £7,620,686 Public funding
- £1,086,542 Private funding
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Total funding drawn down to end of quarter 3 in year 6:

- Total SRB £2,905,900 (SRB Revenue £1,867,400 Capital £1,038,500)
- Public match funding £5,247,910
- Private match funding £714,732

Key projects achieved to date:

Newton Farm Information Centre: Community information centre that serves not just the Newton Farm estate but the whole of South Wye. The Centre was started with SRB funding but is now totally run by volunteers who also raise the funds to ensure that it can continue. It is often used as a model for other such centres and they have won awards for this very valuable service. They also act as a paying point for the credit union and assist with the work of the Drugs Outreach Worker by providing a place for needle exchange.

South Wye Learning Centre: built with SRB funding it provides a facility for courses and training to take place. It specifically targets South Wye Residents but inevitably draws people from all over Hereford. It has been very successful and has managed to secure funding that will see it operating for at least two years after the SRB funding finishes.

Better reading partnership: operates a scheme whereby parents are encouraged to listen to their child read. It offers training and support and is now operating in the three primary schools in the area. They are also looking at taking on more volunteers to assist with the programme.

South Wye Community Development Team: operate solely in the South Wye area and have been instrumental in pushing through the community facilities project. They work with local resident associations and community associations ensuring that the committees have the support and assistance to allow them to run a community centre. They also support many community groups within the area and have also run the Community Pride project very successfully.

Healthy Living Community: Working within the area they are responsible for publishing the five a day scheme and have worked locally with people who have allotments to assist with the growing of organic food. They also work closely with Haywood High School on youth health issues. They have been at the forefront of promoting healthy living within the area and have a fitness co-ordinator and a healthy meals advisor who work with all age ranges and types of groups from the area.

3. LEADER + Programme

The Herefordshire Rivers LEADER+ Programme is a grant programme funded through the European Union and DEFRA with support for the management side of the Programme coming from the Rural Regeneration Zone. The Programme was awarded £1,682,000 from the EU and DEFRA for allocating funding towards projects that supported rural regeneration, environmental enhancement and cultural improvements. Grants have been awarded to a variety of community and voluntary organisations such as Age Concern, Herefordshire Nature Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), and Pembridge Amenity Trust, in addition a number of Herefordshire Council departments have also been awarded grants for projects.

To date the Programme has claimed £572,190 from European Agricultural Guidance Guarantee Funding and DEFRA and the next two years will probably see the bulk of future activity on the Programme to its close at the end of 2007. The money claimed has been allocated to approximately 25 projects covering a wide variety of subjects. Among the most successful are -

- The Houghton Project - a care farm which provides vocational employment and care/learning opportunities, for adults with learning difficulties, people with learning disabilities, New Deal participants and others. LEADER+ has supported the infrastructure improvements to the farm including the kitting out of buildings for learning, basic improvements to the farm environment including the refurbishment of a dairy. The farm is negotiating with Social Services to take on their clients and is now virtually self sustaining, among the successes for this particular project have been the integration of people with learning disabilities with other sectors of the community, and the entry into employment of 3 New Deal participants who once worked at the farm.
- The Old Midsummer Festival - a 2-day Festival in Pembridge and Eardisland focusing on the celebration of local country life and traditions. Operated by the Leominster Morris this project was put together by a group without the aid of a computer or previous experience. Several hundred participants were involved in the festival which saw traditional arts and crafts mix with local food producers and music. The festival closed with a lantern procession down the River Arrow in Eardisland.

Each LEADER+ group is required to run joint projects with other LEADER+ groups, one in this Country and one with another LEADER+ group from another European Union Country. We are exploring the ideas of rebranding the Wye Valley walk with Monmouthshire LEADER+, running a joint Orchard conservation project with Somerset, Kent, and Cumbria, and operating joint marketing and promotion of a walking festival with a group from central Ireland.

4. Activities In The Market Towns

The Market Towns Initiative (MTI) is a funding programme administered by the regional development agency – Advantage West Midlands and originally targeted at sustaining market towns as a service centre for their surrounding parishes. In each town eligible for MTI funding local cross sector Partnerships carry out comprehensive health checks to establish the social, economic and environmental health of the town and its hinterland parishes. A strategy/action plan is then drawn up with a view to addressing the issues arising from the check and to secure the MTI funding. All 5 of Herefordshire's Market Towns have active cross sector partnerships and all are eligible for MTI Funding. To date there has been three tiers of towns eligible = Kington was identified in tier 1, Ledbury and Bromyard in

tier 2 and more recently Leominster and Ross-on-Wye have been identified as being eligible for tier 3 funding. We are advised that no further tiers will be announced under this initiative.

Kington

Kington, a Tier 1 town was the first to receive MTI funding and begins its 5th and final year in April 2005. £416,000 has been approved over the lifetime of the MTI programme and full spend will be achieved by April 2005. Further funding has been secured via ERDF to enable the programme to proceed until 31st December 2008 by which time total spend is likely to be in excess of £1 million.

Successful projects have included the Skateboard Park and Play area, the Business Development Managers post (IT training), Debt Redemption and the Community Pride schemes.

The key issues for the Kington Partnership over the next 12 months will be to continue developing their forward strategy, looking for alternative sources of funding and applying for Charitable Status.

Bromyard

The Bromyard Area MTI programme begins its 4th and final year in April. The total spend for the programme is likely to be in the region of £1,111,513, of which £257,107 is MTI funding. The successful projects include the shop front grant programme that has significantly contributed to the improved appearance of High Street and Broad Street, the Business Training Scheme (run in partnership with Hereford College of Technology) and the Tourist Information Staffing Scheme. The flagship project is the construction of the HOPE charity family day centre that is due for completion this summer.

The key challenges for the Bromyard Programme over the next 12 months include the necessity to develop a forward strategy for the Partnership and the need for close monitoring of this year's spend, to ensure the effective delivery in the last year of the programme.

Ledbury

Ledbury MTI ends March 31st 2005 and the Ledbury Area Regeneration Partnership has developed a Strategic Implementation Plan that prioritises key regeneration projects post-MTI. Additionally, the partnership has created a regeneration company (Ledbury and Area Development Trust) that will seek to become a self-sustaining vehicle for future regeneration development in the Ledbury. The total programme spend will be in excess of £873,064 of funding of which £306,086 from the MTI.

Key projects in the Programme include a Skateboard Park: Urchins Nursery together with an IT Training provision to help mums back into work, and a scheme to connect the CCTV system to the main Hereford control room.

Leominster

Following an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders and the successful presentation of the resultant strategy to the Market Towns Task Group, the Leominster Area MTI Programme commences in April 2005. As a tier 3 town the total funding package is anticipated to be worth £1million, of which up to £500,000 will be MTI funding.

The Implementation Plan (delivery plan) submitted to AWM includes a total spend for the forthcoming year of £74,900 (£28,000 capital £46,900 revenue). Proposed spend will be focussed on four key projects for the Leominster area; a shop front grant scheme,

Community Pride, vocational training and an indicative capital purchase. Management and administration is also funded for up to £60,000 over the three years. At this juncture the capital purchase funding is ring fenced for the purchase of a capital asset to provide revenue for a succession strategy for the Partnership whilst actively regenerating the Area.

The key issues facing the Leominster Programme are identifying a suitable capital acquisition and to achieve spend with the predominantly capital money and the economic outputs required.

Ross-on-Wye and its surrounding parishes is also eligible for tier 3 funding. Similar to Leominster, the local Ross Area Partnership has been working with the local community to finalise a Strategic Action Plan for the area. The plan will be presented to Market Towns Task Group in late March and if successful, the Partnership will need to finalise an Implementation Plan in order to secure up to £500,000 of MTI funding towards a 3 year £1 million regeneration programme for the area.

5. Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ)

This is a fifteen year long programme administered by Advantage West Midlands covering the majority of Herefordshire, Shropshire and western Worcestershire. RRZ is a major source of match funding for Objective 2 for Economic and Community Development work. The programme has eight priority themes, called “flagships” which projects must support;

- i) Adult and Community Learning, and multi purpose Community facilities
- ii) Broadband
- iii) Business Growth and Clusters
- iv) Enterprise
- v) High quality natural and built environment and sustainable economic activity
- vi) Industrial Spaces
- vii) Young People
- viii) Catalytic Zone assets

The programme is focused towards supporting the economic growth and development of Herefordshire.

The table below sets out the budget position for the Zone over the next 3 years. The Plus 20% column represents over programming to allow for delays in implementation and potential project drop out which often occurs in these large programmes.

	Contracted/ Endorsed	Indicative Allocation	Plus 20%	Balance Available (20% plus)
2005/6	£5.9m	£8m	£9.6m	£2.1m (£3.7m)
2006/7	£1.6m	£10m	£12m	£8.4m (£10.4m)
2007/8	-	£12m	£14.4m	£12m (£14.4m)

Projects which have successfully drawn down a combined total of over £430,000 RRZ funding during 2004/5 in Herefordshire include Tourism Enterprise, Creative Industries, Herefordshire Rivers (Leader+) and Twyford Court units (completed and opened during 2004 as part of the Rotherwas Package). The South Wye (SRB) and Ledbury, Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Bromyard and Kington Market Town’s Initiatives (MTI) have collectively claimed in addition just under £800,000.

Projects currently under consideration for funding in Herefordshire include the Herefordshire Learning Village and Rotherwas Access Road.

6. Objective 2

Objective 2 is a geographically targeted programme, and almost all of Herefordshire is designated as Objective 2 status. Herefordshire has access to a substantial amount of money (part of £550 million across the whole region) to fund Economic and Community Development activity. Objective 2 money will on average support up to 35% of a projects costs.

The Objective 2 Programme is based on the four pillars of the West Midlands Economic Strategy:

- i) Creating a Diverse and Dynamic Business Base
- ii) Creating Conditions for Growth
- iii) Regenerating Communities
- iv) Creating a Learning and Skilful Region

Objective 2 also incorporates three themes that each project must address:

- i) Innovation
- ii) Environmental Sustainability
- iii) Equality of Opportunity

Herefordshire projects supported include the Creative Industries and Tourism development programmes; a strategic regeneration package incorporating capital development projects; and a community regeneration funding package.

Within the Herefordshire Strategic Regeneration Package of projects the following achievements (amongst others) have been made:

- Build and launch of Twyford Court industrial units, Rotherwas
- Development of the Leominster Bus Station and work at the Railway Station through Market Towns Sustainable Improvements
- Leominster Access Road was completed and opened
- Some development work for the Rotherwas Access Road and the Hereford Learning Village was paid through Partnership Mechanisms

Other projects within the Strategic Package include Herefordshire In Touch (HIT) and the Rural Transport Partnership. All the projects combined in the Strategic Package are profiled to claim just over £13 million pounds, during the Objective 2 Programme (between 2002 and 2008), just over £9 million pounds have been claimed so far.

In addition projects such as Creative Industries and Tourism Enterprise have successfully claimed Objective 2 funding during 2004.

There are some funds still remaining in the Programme, which have been prioritised for a few key strategic projects within the West Midlands. The Hereford Learning Village is within this group and is currently being developed through regular meetings with a task force compiled of representatives from AWM, GOWM, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Herefordshire Partnership. This project is progressing well through the application processes and it is hoped that all funding will be confirmed during 2005. The current development work includes a full planning application for phase 1 currently placed with

Herefordshire Council, with building currently profiled to commence April 2006, subject to everything being in place by then. The current funding profile for the Learning Village for phases 1 & 2 are £4 million from Objective 2, £5.5 million from AWM, just over £8 million from the LSC and £2 million from Herefordshire College of Technology.