

In The Zone Issue 5

Zone Conference Next Month!



Places are filling up faster than ever for "Supporting Rural Enterprise" this year's RRZ Conference

Once again it is our pleasure to announce details of the Rural Regeneration Zone Conference which, this year, will take place on **Friday 27 June**. Following our last two, highly successful events, we are returning to **Ludlow Racecourse**. The conference will start at 10.00am (with registration from 9.30am), and will conclude with lunch at 1.15pm.

Much has been achieved in the last year and **Peter Pawsey**, Chair of the Rural Regeneration Zone, will spend a short time reflecting on our achievements and presenting some of our plans for the year ahead. The Rural Regeneration Zone Annual Report will also be launched at this event.

However, the main focus of this year's conference will address one of the fundamental issues affecting business activity in the Zone – the barriers to development.

Supporting Rural Enterprise can embrace many issues - access to finance, availability of advice, finding suitable premises, appropriate technology, skills etc. In a departure from previous events, we are inviting you to contribute your thoughts and ideas to this key debate at the conference. We will be looking for you to tell us about your experiences - of the good support available and areas where there is a need for improvement - so be prepared to think about these issues beforehand and to address them on the day.

We are delighted that the new Chief Executive of Advantage West Midlands, **Mick Lavery**, will speak at the conference. We will also have Lorraine Holmes from **Business Link West Midlands** and others who will join the debate with you.

It promises to be a lively, challenging and highly rewarding 3rd Annual Conference for the Rural Regeneration Zone and we encourage you to attend. Places are filling up fast so book early to avoid disappointment. Contact advantagewm@presfact.demon.co.uk to book a place

Re:Thinking Carbon Consumption



New grant scheme launched for Zone businesses to improve environmental efficiency

The Rural Regeneration Zone continues to develop projects that contribute to its Strategic Objective of developing a thriving economy through environmental excellence. The latest project to receive funding through the Environmental Economy Strategic Investment Framework is the Renewable Energy Capital Grants Scheme which will be known locally by the more snappy title of ReThink

Climate Change and the declining natural resources that provide us with our energy needs are becoming increasingly relevant to businesses and residents at all levels. However, businesses remain largely unaware of the options available to them in the provision of renewable technology that could reduce their demand on natural resources and provide significant cost savings. Added

to this, many businesses believe costs of developing and implementing renewable technology projects and in sourcing alternative fuel sources for these projects to be prohibitive.

This project seeks to engage with individual, small clusters and business park based businesses in order to both undertake energy audits and assess the suitability to implement renewable technology equipment that would reduce the demand on the natural resources to provide power and heating in the business environment. The project will seek to raise awareness of the types of renewable sources available and offer grant support to install equipment.

Regional Minister Opens Centre



Liam Byrne in town to highlight the Environmental Economy

Liam Byrne MP and Minister for the West Midlands opened the Pump House Environmental Technology Centre in Shrewsbury on the 12th of May. The Centre is one of the RRZ's Flagship projects in the Environmental Economy Strategic Investment Framework and will assist the Zone in achieving its strategic objective of developing a thriving economy through environmental excellence.

Officially opening the Centre the Minister said "Environmental Technology is an area of high growth potential and I am delighted officially to open the Pump House today. This is the result of a public-private joint venture involving Advantage West Midlands' Rural Regeneration Zone and Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council and showcases high quality low energy sustainable design and stimulating the wider environmental economy. The Pump House is already home to a number of expanding environmental technology companies. I know that the building was fully let before it was even completed, and that all tenants take sustainability really seriously in the way that they do business – it's inspiring to see such a collective commitment.

Cooperative Fire

Further funding provided for local eco projects

Cooperative Fire is yet another innovative project to be supported through the RRZ's Environmental Economy Strategic Investment Framework to add value to the development of the Zone as a centre of excellence for eco innovation!

The project will essentially provide funding to implement four community based low carbon energy generation schemes that will be built and run by community co-operatives. Activity supported will include the use of consultants and professionals to investigate the best solution for each community, develop the project and take activity through to planning permission stage. Work will then be undertaken to 'sell' shares in the scheme for its full implementation. Surpluses coming out of each project will be recycled to develop and implement further projects outside of the initial four schemes

Communities will be fully engaged within the projects from inception. It will be for communities to drive schemes through to implementation and would only proceed with full support and 'sign up' to the co-operative model.

Leominster Centre Open for Business

Enterprise Centre Network beginning to take shape

Leominster's £1.5m Rural Enterprise Centre has opened its doors to the local business community, offering high quality workspace for entrepreneurs and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Part of the £16m Rural Regeneration Zone Enterprise Centre Network, the Centre has been designed to provide sustainable workspace for up to 22 businesses and, once full, could create up to 100 jobs.

Peter Pawsey, Chairman of the RRZ, said: "The opening of the first Centre here in Leominster marks a significant milestone for the project, which is unique in that we have matched the best aspects of the public and private sectors to deliver this development.

Leominster is the first of eight centres being developed in the Network to support entrepreneurs and SMEs across Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Herefordshire's other Enterprise Centre, currently under construction in Hereford, is on programme for completion in August 2008. This large £3m hub centre will offer 42 offices and 6 workshops. With a further Hub and Spoke in both Shrewsbury and Ludlow under development, the Network is really beginning to take shape

For further information call 0800 039 3900 or visit www.evanspacespace.com

Nexus Scheme Programme

The Nexus Scheme recently underwent a Mid Term Evaluation, conducted independently by RHCS Ltd. The scheme has been successful in many areas and may be subject to an extension beyond its anticipated closure in March 2009.

That the scheme has received over 230 expressions of interest in the 2 years since its launch at the 2006 Zone Conference. Of that, 77 have developed into applications, 48 projects have been approved and over £220,000 committed to date leveraging in an estimated £275,000 in match funding.

Outputs include 19 new community groups established, 1,661 new people using facilities, 2,266 more people using services, 361 people entering learning or volunteering and 4,762 people engaging in community leisure.

RHCS Ltd concluded by saying 'the vast majority of projects with which we have been in contact have all said that they have found the application process to be straightforward [and that] good support has been available from the outreach workers with a good understanding shown of the realities of working in rural areas'.

The main issue highlighted is that there's money left for at least another 37 projects and that the Nexus Panel will be looking to target projects in mid west Shropshire, Corvedale, Clun Forest, Golden Valley and north west Herefordshire.

A full Copy of the report can be downloaded from the resource library on the RRZ website

Business Plan gets Thumbs Up

The RRZ 2008/9 Business Plan has been endorsed by AWM and will act as both the business plan and Zone Implementation Plan for this financial year.

You can access the plan in the resource library of the RRZ website

RRZ Office Usage

The office has now been open for a year and is being used more and more by our partners as a location for subregional meetings. Examples include the Marches SRG who have been developing projects for Zone and RCE funding and Social Enterprise event.

Partners wishing to book space at the Zone Office should contact katepowell@advantagewm.co.uk there is a maximum capacity of 25 people.

Slow Food Gathers Pace

Things are far from slow at Slow Food UK, as the movement continues to gather pace and momentum across the country, with almost 50 local groups (a group of members is called a convivium) from as far afield as the Highlands of Scotland, to the Channel Islands, Wales, Northern Ireland, and coast to coast in England, all campaigning to promote food that is Good, Clean and Fair. In other words, food that tastes good, respects the environment and that pays a fair price to producers.

Slow Food UK was lucky enough to find a home for its national office in the RRZ office here at the Eco Park, Ludlow, almost a year ago now. Our sincere thanks to all at AWM for their warm welcome and support, giving us the best possible start to developing the movement in Britain.

New for this year are exciting campaigns to promote Slow Bread and Heritage Orchards. We have also teamed up with the BBC Good Food Shows to support small producers at a series of four Shows in 2008, in London, Birmingham and Glasgow, starting with the Summer Show at the NEC in Birmingham from 11 – 15 June 2008. As part of this collaboration, we have launched a special Bursary Award to give exceptional, artisan producers an opportunity to exhibit for free. Award winners at the forthcoming Summer Show include Newport-based Fish in Box, Mahorall Cider from Shropshire, and Gloucester Beef from Cowshill Farm in Gloucestershire. There will also be some fantastic Taste Workshops, featuring these products and more, offering a rare chance to taste delicious food that meets the Slow Food's standards of Good, Clean and Fair methods of production. Further information, including on-line booking for the Show and Taste Workshops, can be found here: <http://www.bbcgoodfoodshow.com/landing/holding.html>

To find out more about Slow Food, how to join, and where to find your nearest group, browse the website: www.slowfood.com; call Tel: 01584 879599, or e-mail: info@slowfood.org.uk

RRZ Sponsor Live Work Report

The Live Work Network and the RTPI's report Tomorrow's property today was launched at the Live Work Network's hugely successful national conference at BT's London headquarters on April 16. The report was sponsored by the RRZ and copies will soon be available to download on the RRZ website.