



In the Zone Newsletter, Issue 12



Re:think now extended across the Zone

Following a successful two-year pilot programme funded by the Rural Regeneration Zone, the RE:think Energy capital grant scheme is now being expanded across all rural areas of the West Midlands.

Picture: Sandy Hanson of Caplor Ltd in Herefordshire, with the 15kW wind turbine that aims to provide approx 12% of on-farm energy demand. This will save £3,000 and 11 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year.

Over £5m of funding will be available to micro businesses, SMEs and farmers after RE:think was expanded to cover other rural areas of the West Midlands.

The extended initiative, which is managed by Shropshire Council, is set to start in January and will run for nearly three years, offering organisations grants of up to £35,000 towards renewable energy installations and new technologies such as wind turbines, solar thermal, photovoltaic panels, biomass boilers and hydro turbines.

Funded by Advantage West Midlands, ERDF, local authorities and private sector investment, the programme is designed to deliver significant energy costs whilst reducing CO₂ emissions in the process.

“RE:think has been a tremendous success during the pilot phase and has provided Shropshire businesses with some real tangible benefits,” explained Steve Fowkes at Shropshire Council.

“What it does is give businesses the added incentive to reduce their energy usage and emissions in line with national and global priorities, whilst also having a positive impact on their bottom line. In addition to the funding, companies also benefit from advice and guidance on making sure they maximise the benefit of the new installations.”

He concluded: “It is excellent news that we have secured additional funding and are looking to roll-out the programme to all rural areas in the West Midlands, including the appointment of a new Project Manager early in the New Year.

For further details or to register your interest, please contact Steve Fowkes at Shropshire Council on steve.fowkes@shropshire.gov.uk.



Rural Broadband much needed to stimulate economic growth

AWM are leading the way in identifying the present and future potential for broadband infrastructure in the rural West Midlands in order to inform its future investment. The Agency is also looking to pilot a project in the RRZ to increase the rural broadband offer and ensure an equity of provision and the potential to stimulate local economic growth.

Advantage West Midlands have engaged Ecotec, the Community Broadband Network and Sam knows to undertake some regional research into rural broadband infrastructure. This will consider the level of access to varying degrees of bandwidth, the demand for improved capacity and the extent to which infrastructure either exists at present or is anticipated to be developed over the coming years. In the next few months the consultants will be seeking the views of local business and wider stakeholders on the subject so look out for your chance to contribute.

In the short term, AWM have been tasked to use RDPE economic recovery programme funding to look at solutions to the issue. The funding available is a drop in the ocean compared to the finance required to bring Fibre to the rural region but has allowed the Agency to consider number of alternative options to pilot a solution to rural broadband. The preferred option is to establish a web mesh in a pilot location in a corner of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire which would act to 'de-risk' the last mile for commercial suppliers of backhaul and ISP services. A tender process will be drawn up to ensure that the local community and business have access to the most advantageous services available on the market. Initially, within the technological footprint of the pilot area, if proven, wider areas of the rural west midlands could benefit from the solution.



New hope for Bromyard's community

Access to essential community services in Bromyard has been given a major boost, with news that a new £1.3m Multi-Use Facility for the market town has been given the green light from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

Picture (l-r): Sheenagh Davis (HOPE Family Centre), Colin Birks (Herefordshire Council) and Matt Smith (Rural Regeneration Zone)

The purpose built extension to the HOPE Centre will feature offices and meeting rooms for 17 new and improved services and local organisations, small business units, training rooms and a central community meeting space with catering facilities.

It will also aim to meet the growing need for specialist childcare facilities locally, with an on-site crèche and day care unit set up to accommodate more than 30 families.

The ambitious project has been spearheaded by the HOPE Family Centre, who has been delivering a range of community services for the people of Bromyard since 1999.

Working alongside Herefordshire Council and the Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ), it has successfully secured nearly £1.1m from the Rural Development Programme for England with work due to begin in February.

Matt Smith, Partnerships Manager at the RRZ, was delighted that the bid was successful: "Bromyard's 6000-strong population has suffered for some time from a limited provision of

community services and problems with isolation and transport. HOPE had been providing an excellent service to families from its existing centre, but this simply wasn't big enough to cope with demand and they approached us with a number of options."

The 950sq metre Multi-Use Facility will accommodate a range of permanent and outreach service provision organisations. It will also provide a hub where home workers can meet and a catering facility where formal training will be undertaken and healthy eating initiatives offered to the whole community. Specialist support will also be available to lone parents, those on low incomes, people with low skills levels and economic migrants.

HOPE Family Centre's Rosemary Collie was instrumental in the bid: "This is excellent news for the people of Bromyard and gives us a wonderful opportunity to provide the local community with the level and range of services which are clearly needed in the area.

She continued: "The project has been a real team effort and community spirit has undoubtedly won the day and I have to thank Herefordshire Council, the Rural Regeneration Zone and of course AWM for supporting us in this bold vision. "



REG grants local firm the title of cleanest coffee maker in Europe

The 'cleanest' cup of coffee in Europe is being roasted in the heart of Ross-on-Wye thanks to a local company with a passion for providing the best tasting 'bean' in the world.

Picture (l-r) Dorothy Coleman (REG), Ian Edwards (Rural Regeneration Zone) and Peter James (James Gourmet Coffee)

James Gourmet Coffee is celebrating its tenth birthday in style after investing in a groundbreaking eco-roaster that will cut emissions, reduce energy costs and provide a more even roast for better quality.

Backed by a £21,850 Rural Enterprise Grant from the Zone the company has become one of the first organisations in the world to install the Loring Smart Roaster and celebrated the start of 'green' coffee making with a special opening ceremony recently.

Peter James, Managing Director, believes this latest advancement marks the first major change in coffee roasting for more than 100 years.

"Our whole business ethos has been based on providing our customers with a select range of gourmet coffees that offer the most unique flavours and the best possible taste. This has governed everything we have tried to do, from our first year in a small unit on my parents farm to where we are today, supplying over 40 tonnes of coffee every year," explained Peter.

"The next step was to combine this pursuit of excellence with embracing a new way of 'roasting' that would provide a host of environmental, quality and financial benefits. REG was a major boost for the business and allowed us to complete the project quicker than first envisaged."

Investment in the new roaster represented a sizeable move by James Gourmet Coffee, with the global recession also taking its toll on the sector with sales fluctuating during the year.

Established in 1999, James Gourmet Coffee has gone from strength to strength over the last decade with sales now in excess of £450,000 per year and employing six people. Its commitment to developing contacts and researching the best tasting coffee from all over the world has seen it develop a diverse client base, ranging from fine food retailers and food service professionals to domestic customers who order via the internet.

Rural Regeneration Zone's Ian Edwards added his support: "We are fully committed to helping support rural business in their diversification and growth plans and REGs is one of the ways we can do this with grants of up to £62,500 available to support businesses such as James Gourmet Coffee." He concluded: "We are delighted to be able to support Peter and his team in putting Herefordshire on the European map when it comes to the next generation of eco-friendly coffee."



Groundbreaking Church Project set to open in January

A church which can trace its history back more than 8 centuries is to become a pioneer of the 21st century when it opens as the area's first Multi-Use facility in the New Year.

An official ceremony will take place on the 12th January when the doors will be opened to the community following completion of the £400,000 project.

The centre, which has received £100,000 from the Rural Regeneration Zone, will provide a wide range of services for children and parents, a library, kitchen, meeting rooms and toilets. Worship will always be available in the re-ordered church, with regular services held in the chancel and larger gatherings being held in the nave by bringing in specially-designed stackable chairs.

Mrs Enid Tarbox, secretary of St Peter's Parochial Church Council, said: "The new centre will provide services not just for Peterchurch but for the whole of the beautiful Golden Valley. "We have much to be proud of in the very long history and tradition of St Peter's but we also need to serve the needs of the community in the 21st century.

"The partnership could well become an exemplar for other parishes in the diocese and elsewhere in the country."

Matt Smith, Rural Regeneration Zone Partnerships Manager, said: "There are other Multi-Use Facilities being developed in the Zone but I think it's fair to say this is the most imaginative and unusual. Transforming part of a church – and a church that is so historically significant – is a tremendous way to not only open up services to the community, but also ensure it remains viable."



RegenWM Prizes 2009

And the RegenWM Prize Winner is...

... Economic and Community Development Team at Herefordshire Council for Best Regeneration Team 2009

Well done and congratulations to all involved!

Season's Greetings
Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!
From the Rural Regeneration Zone Team



The Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) is one of the key delivery mechanisms established by Advantage West Midlands and covers nearly all of Herefordshire, most of Shropshire and parts of west Worcestershire