



European Funding to Enhance Rural Broadband

The East Midlands Development Agency has launched a new £400,000 fund to improve internet connections across rural parts of the region.

Financed through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), their Rural Broadband Fund will aim to enhance ICT infrastructure and support the uptake of superfast next generation technologies.

Grants ranging from £30,000 up to £250,000 are up for grabs to develop "innovative approaches that address existing gaps in rural broadband coverage".

EMDA is particularly interested in supporting community broadband projects, upgrading infrastructure to exceed the Coalition Government's proposed Universal Service Commitment speed of 2 Megabits per second, or piloting "next generation" broadband technologies.

Expressions of interest are invited from businesses, community groups, social enterprises and charities.

Collaborative bids are also acceptable.

Andrew Morgan, EMDA's skills and communities director, said:

"The quality of broadband in many rural parts of the East Midlands is threatening competitiveness and could inhibit future sustainable economic development. This funding will help to address the problem, and we are keen to support projects that address market failure, improve local services and stimulate economic development and social inclusion."

It is thought that EMDA will support up to six projects through the programme – due to the limited amount funding available, applications cannot be made from rural areas where broadband speeds already meet the 2 Megabits per second criteria.

For further information about the Rural Broadband Fund, visit the EMDA website at www.emda.org.uk/rdpe/broadband.asp?nav=08&snav=0802

Communities First Fund to be launched by the end of the year

The Government has announced a Communities First fund which will help start more groups in deprived areas. They intend to have funding in place by the end of 2010.

The Government has set out its plans under The Dormant Bank and Building Society Act 2008 to set up the Big Society Bank to provide new finance for social enterprises, charities, neighbourhood groups. It is intended that funds will become available from April 2011.

The Government plans to reduce the bureaucratic burden on small civil society organisations to be initiated by September 2010.

It also intends to review options to incentivise more social investment and philanthropy to be put in place by January 2011.

This information is included in the Cabinet Office Structural Reform plan.



Brewers Fayre launches £10,000 Bursary Award Scheme

Brewers Fayre is on a nationwide quest to find the nation's 'Local Heroes'.

The 2010 Local Hero award will grant bursaries from an aggregate £10,000 pot to the most worthy regional contenders, to help support and continue their community projects within their areas.

And don't take 'hero' too literally, because your nominee doesn't need to have performed superhuman acts of courage. They simply need to have contributed in some way - big or small - to making your community a better place to live. It might be a school dinner lady who's smiled her way through thousands of apple pies and custard servings, it could be a football coach who's given the pub team something to shout about at last, or it might be a lollipop man who goes out of his way to make the roads safer for your kids. Just take a good long look around your neighbourhood and you're sure to find some worthy candidates.

To nominate someone who you think is worthy of an award, visit www.brewersfayre.co.uk/localhero

Entries must be in by Friday 27th August 2010

Awards for All - local groups benefit



East Midlands' community projects are racing away with summer fun as the Big Lottery Fund announces the latest grants from its Awards for All programme. A total of £265,139 is being shared amongst 38 groups across the region including:

- * **The Inclined Unit of Harborough District Explorer Scouts.**
- * £1,140 has been awarded to the group to help them build a pedal car and compete in competitions, particularly the annual 24 hour race at Shenington.
- * **Leicestershire and Rutland Federation of Young Farmers**
- * £2,000 awarded to develop a website containing information about community volunteering, agriculture and country life for existing and potential new members.

Funds and Figures Training Session

"Strategic Funding and Finance Management"

Available for Voluntary Organizations, Community Groups and Registered Charities

**Thursday 23rd Sept 2010, 9.45am - 4pm
at Quorn Lodge, 46 Asfordby Road
Melton Mowbray LE13 0HR**

Commissioned by the Funds and Figures Project, this course will be led by an experienced trainer from The Directory of Social Change and includes:

- * The World Of Funding – how it is changing and how to respond to these changes
- * Costing Our Work – how to fully cost your work and how to present costs to funders
- * Where Is The Money Going to Come From - effective fundraising and income generation
- * Planning Ahead – how to plan ahead, to think strategically and to avoid being funder led

Cost: £20 per delegate payable at the time of booking.
Please email Christine Barrett on cbarrett@vasl.org.uk or call (01858) 439264 for a booking form or with any other questions

www.ruralcc.org.uk

Please email the Editor, Bridget Masters, with any news items: bmasters@ruralcc.org.uk



Nominate your heroes for Watermead bench

Watermead's Connect2 project is a £1.4 million scheme to improve paths, access and bridges in and around the park. It is part of Sustrans nationwide Connect2 scheme which won £50 million from the Big Lottery in an ITV vote back in 2007. The 'People's £50 million' is the largest single lottery grant ever awarded in the UK.

Leicestershire residents are being invited to nominate their local heroes to be immortalised in a new piece of public art – a portrait bench to mark Watermead Country Park's Connect2 project.

The heroes can be anyone from a community hero, right up to a famous face, sports star or a historical figure. Local wildlife or even prehistoric creatures associated with Watermead, which is jointly managed by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council, could also be considered.

The portrait bench is an art initiative from sustainable transport charity Sustrans, who are one of the largest commissioners of public art in the UK. There will be a portrait bench at each of the Connect2 projects up and down the country.

Similar benches in England and Wales have featured runner Darren Campbell and comedian Rob Brydon, as well as local heroes such as a doctor and a park ranger.

Lesley Pendleton, Leicestershire County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, said: "It is fitting that people voted for Connect2 to receive the Big Lottery money, and now people will get the chance to choose who is immortalised on the commemorative portrait bench."

Patrick Davis, Area Manager of Sustrans added, "The bench will add a great focal point as well as offering a place to meet and rest with famous local figures for company. I'm really looking forward to seeing whom the community chooses to immortalise."

To have your say on who is on the portrait bench email etdcomms@leics.gov.uk, write to Portrait Bench – ETD Comms, Room 600, County Hall, Glenfield LE3 8RJ or log onto Watermead's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/watermead) and leave a message on the wall. Nominations can be submitted until Friday 13th August.

Switchover Help Scheme is launched

The Switchover Help Scheme has launched in the Central TV region. Run by the BBC under an agreement with the Government, the Help Scheme offers eligible older and disabled viewers practical assistance and equipment to convert their TVs to digital.

Ed Jezard has been appointed Regional Manager for the scheme. If you have any questions about the Help Scheme, please contact him on 07872 413065 or email ed.jezard@bbc.co.uk. For more information visit www.helpscheme.co.uk.

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Please email the Editor, Bridget Masters, with any news items: bmasters@ruralcc.org.uk



New online resources for local green groups



The RCC's 'Communities Cutting Carbon' project has added more resources to its website to support the work of community groups acting locally on climate change in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

The new resources include:

- * a guide to effective communication of sustainability issues, so that common pitfalls can be avoided and more people can be inspired to get active in their local area

<http://www.ruralcc.org.uk/communication.html>

- * a funding guide, detailing a wide range of sources of grant funding for community-based green initiatives (such as installing solar panels on village halls, or planting community orchards)

<http://www.ruralcc.org.uk/ccc-funding.html>

The project's Climate Friendly Communities grant fund is still open for applications, and applications are now invited for the next grant panel meeting in early September. For more information on the grant, which can award up to £5,000 for local climate change projects, visit www.ruralcc.org.uk/climate-change.

Communities Cutting Carbon is a collaboration between the RCC, De Montfort University and each of the local authorities in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Freedom - what does it mean to you?

The Government wants your views on what freedom means to you. It wants to restore Britain's traditions of freedom and fairness, and free our society of unnecessary laws and regulations – both for individuals and businesses.

'Your Freedom' web site offers the opportunity for anyone to suggest ideas on restoring liberties that have been lost, repealing unnecessary laws and removing excessive regulation on businesses and the Third Sector. This site gives you the chance to say which laws and regulations you think we should get rid of. Your feedback will inform government policy and some of your proposals could end up making it into bills brought before Parliament to change the law.

Once ideas have been submitted, users of the site will be able to comment and rate their favourite ideas. Relevant departments will respond to the most popular workable ideas, and the Government will give regular progress updates.

Visit <http://yourfreedom.hmg.gov.uk/>

Residents offered watchdog role

People living in Blaby are being urged to play their part in scrutinising the district council's decisions, its performance and the performance of its partners.

The Council is looking for people who may want to attend Scrutiny meetings or put forward topics to investigate. Scrutiny Commission, made up of 18 councillors, works to make sure all decisions taken by the Cabinet Executive are based on sound evidence and have a positive impact on people living in the district.

For more information about Scrutiny, questions about topics and how to get involved call Linda McBean on 0116 272 7708.

www.ruralcc.org.uk

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