

27.07.09

LEADER programme gives rural communities a financial boost

Four Southern Oxfordshire projects have received more than £80,000 from the Southern Oxfordshire LEADER programme, a European funded initiative to help strengthen the local rural economy.

The Southern Oxfordshire LEADER programme, a joint initiative involving South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, has £1.89 million of funding available to support rural projects up to 2013. Projects like farm diversification, tourism initiatives, rural community projects, renewable energy initiatives, and support for rural businesses, which meet the aims of the programme and are within the Southern Oxfordshire boundary, could receive up to £50,000 toward their objective.

The LEADER programme is overseen by the Southern Oxfordshire Local Action Group (LAG) a partnership of local business, farming, and community representatives.

Projects benefiting from the LEADER programme include:

- A grant of £22,000 to the Children's Food Festival recently held at the Northmoor Trust for Countryside Conservation farm at Wittenham Clumps, with 14,500 visitors. The event was aimed at children and families to demonstrate where food comes from and to encourage healthy eating. The event raised the profile of Southern Oxfordshire and its local produce to tourists and visitors.
- A grant of £23,220 to support the energy efficiency aspects of a new milking parlour that is being developed at Step Farm, Faringdon. The project will provide facilities for increased educational visits to the farm, and will allow the farmer to research the local market for direct sales from the farm gate.
- A grant of £10,000 towards The Husband Obedience Trials, a community film initiative being developed within the parish of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, which aims to bring the community together, encourage volunteering, and build local skills.
- A grant of £30,000 towards the development of a community-run village shop in Brightwell cum Sotwell. The project will result in a new village shop based in an extension to the village hall, which will be managed and run by a team of volunteers from the local community. The project will provide a local service for the village and its surrounding parishes, and will increase access for those who may find it difficult to travel elsewhere.

Harry Barton, Vice-Chair of the Southern Oxfordshire Local Action Group, said:

"These recent grants demonstrate the potential of the Southern Oxfordshire LEADER programme, with the aim of supporting and strengthening the area's rural economy. What we need now is for plenty more strong projects to come forward and make the most of this funding opportunity."

"These grants show some really exciting and varied initiatives being generated by local communities in Southern Oxfordshire. We are very keen to see more projects come forward

and benefit from LEADER funding. If you have a great idea that you believe will make a lasting difference to your local area, if you've got the support of others and if you've thought through the business implications, then contact the LEADER programme."

ENDS

Notes to editors

For more information on the Southern Oxfordshire LEADER Programme, how to apply for funding and the programme's aims and boundaries, visit www.southernoxfordshireleader.org.uk or contact Kate Forrest on 01491 823176 or email info@southernoxfordshireleader.org.uk.

LEADER (the "Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de L'Economie Rurale" or "Links between actions for the development of the rural economy") funding is available as part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007-2013 and is delivered with support from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the South East England Development Agency.

The Southern Oxfordshire Local Action Group is made up from volunteers representing the following organisations; DAMASCUS Youth Project, Local Farmers, British Conservation Trust for Volunteers, National Farmers Union, Sustainable Wallingford, Sylva Trust, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, The Northmoor Trust, Berks Bucks & Oxon Food Group, 21st Century Thame, Business Link, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, and Local Business Representatives.

The project is delivered with local support from South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council.

Grants are available for up to £50,000, but will typically be for £20,000 to £30,000 and can only be used for 30 to 50 per cent of the cost of the project.