

WARR PARTNERSHIP NEWS

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The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



WARR Partnership

5 Red Barn Mews

High Street, Battle TN33 0AG

Tel: 01424 787400

E-mail: info@warrpartnership.org.uk

Website: www.warrpartnership.org.uk

The WARR Partnership is responsible for delivering the Leader programme across rural Rother and Wealden, including the market towns of Hailsham, Heathfield, Battle and Rye.

FUNDING FOR FARMERS AND FORESTERS

With the programme past its half way mark, and full spend achieved three years running, the WARR Partnership is well on its way to achieving the targets and objectives set out for this area. To ensure the remainder can be achieved before the end of the programme, we particularly need to encourage projects which fall under the following Measures to come forward:-

Measure 122: Improving the economic value of forests

This Measure is only available to the owners of private forests, and its objective is to improve and broaden the economic value of our woodland. Increasing demand for wood fuel, together with natural materials for construction, landscaping and furniture, creates a viable return from timber harvesting. Encouraging improved management of woodlands will in turn provide greater environmental and social benefits for us all. Funding of up to 50% may be available and below are examples of eligible costs:-

- Specialist harvesting equipment
- Storage facilities and handling equipment
- Equipment and machinery for harvesting, and in-forest processing of wood fuel
- Equipment and machinery which will improve woodland habitat
- Infrastructure specifically for in-forest recreational enterprises which will safeguard environmental impact.

NB: Evidence of a Forest Management Plan covering your holding will be required, but this can be grant aided by the Forestry Commission.

Measure 123: Adding value to agricultural and forestry products

This Measure's objective is to increase the processing and marketing of primary agricultural and forestry products, in order to improve overall performance. A maximum grant rate of 40% is available, and below are examples of eligible costs:-

- Butchery facilities, cheese/yoghurt production, processing of fruit/vegetables
- Contractors producing rough sawn timber, or processing roundwood for wood fuel (limited to operations prior to industrial processing)

NB: We are unable to fund costs associated directly with production.

With best wishes for the summer from the WARR Partnership team: Anne (Manager), Melanie (Project Officer), Linda (Finance) and Joanna (Administrator)

New projects approved since our last Newsletter

Please see our website for more details

FARLEY FARM HOUSE

Several leading artists and writers of the 20th century had close associations with Wealden. Farley Farm House, known as 'The Home of the Surrealists in England', was visited regularly by Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore and many others. This project is using grant funding to widen public enjoyment of this local cultural heritage by creating two touring exhibitions featuring Pablo Picasso and Roland Penrose, whose work contains references to Wealden's landscape and culture. After showings at the Farley's Yard Barn Gallery, the exhibitions will tour venues throughout Wealden and Rother and then across the South-East. Considerable public interest in the artists' links with Wealden is expected, with strong educational benefits for schools and colleges.

BOWLES MINIBUS

Bowles, an outdoor education centre and charity helping young people to access outdoor activities to aid personal development and teach new skills, requires safe, reliable minibuses to transport youngsters to and from local schools, youth groups and the many tourism, heritage and woodland sites across Sussex and Kent. Grant funding has enabled the purchase of an additional second-hand minibus, enabling the Trust to meet increased demand for its services and to offer more holiday activity courses. Disadvantaged young people will now be able to make longer journeys to Wales and the Peak District, giving them the opportunity to undertake greater challenges and achieve their full potential.



M J WOOD SOLUTIONS

The continued popularity of woodburning stoves has increased the market for wood fuel, with demand outstripping supply. After cutting firewood by hand for the past 5 years, forester and arboricultural contractor Mike Jackson was finding it difficult to meet customer demand across Wealden. Grant funding has enabled the purchase of a log processor which has dramatically improved the safety and efficiency of Mike's business and enabled him to increase the volume of timber he can process, pleasing his customers and benefiting other small woodland owners who contract Mike to help them manage their woodlands. This brings improved access for public enjoyment and helps maintain wildlife habitats for birds and butterflies.

FAIR OAK FARM TREE HOUSES



An exciting new project is taking place at Fair Oak Farm, near Mayfield, which offers luxury activity breaks for families and larger groups. Grant funding will add two eco-lodge tree houses to the site, using sustainable materials to construct bathroom and kitchen facilities around a studio space for living and sleeping. The availability of self-catering properties which can cater for larger groups and families is limited in the UK, and the addition of the tree houses will increase this site's capacity to 19 people. Visitors can cook, eat and relax as a group in the large open plan barn, or take part in on-site activities such as archery and falconry.

AFTA FILM & WEBSITE

The Ashdown Forest Tourism Association, which promotes services and facilities available to tourists through its membership group of some 102 businesses based on or near the Ashdown Forest, needed to upgrade its internet services to meet the changing expectations of today's visitors. Grant funding is being used to create a new website, compatible with the new technology for maps and iPhone 'Apps'. It will also carry a downloadable film showcasing the special features of the Ashdown Forest area and promoting the facilities and activities offered by AFTA members, covering places to stay, places to eat and places to visit. It will better enable the Ashdown Forest to compete with facilities offered by tourism areas in other parts of the country.

THE CALF SHED

Grant funding has been awarded to Bardown Farm to diversify by providing accommodation for disabled guests, with the conversion of a former calf shed into a 5-star self catering cottage to sleep 4 + 2, with M3 A/I special needs facility, suitable for wheelchair dependent persons. It will incorporate such features as a rise and fall worktop for the sink and ceramic hob and space for discreet storage of specialist equipment. Although there are some 750,000 wheelchair users in the UK, a national shortage of suitable self-catering units exists, with only two such 5-star cottages currently available in the whole of England. Demand was demonstrated when two bookings were made before work had even begun on the building conversion.

UCKFIELD FM

Following the granting of an OFCOM licence to broadcast community radio for Uckfield and its surrounding rural area, this local radio station urgently needed to bring its facilities up to the standard required for 24/7 broadcasting. A grant has enabled it to construct a new studio whose modern, reliable equipment will ensure the station's survival and prosperity. Truly local information is brought to residents, eg during last winter's severe weather, and the high response to competitions and appeals demonstrates substantial listenership. Local businesses are taking advantage of the ability to broadcast within their immediate area, generating revenue to cover the station's running costs. To listen in click on www.uckfieldfm.co.uk followed by 'Listen Live'.

BURWASH INTERNET ACCESS POINT

Supported by grant funding, Burwash Parish Council is creating a public internet access point at the Bear Inn to help overcome digital exclusion in this rural community, where access to the internet is believed to be below 60%. Three computers will be available for public use, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, under the supervision of trained staff. In conjunction with Age UK, classes will be held for the elderly to teach basic computer skills. Other community groups, such as the Scouts, will also use the facility. Local residents will be charged a nominal fee of 20p per visit, with additional services such as printing and copying charged at standard rates.

RAPPSE

Rhododendrons and other pest plant species are a real nuisance in many woodland areas. Extraction, removal and elimination by using chainsaws, herbicides and burning often results in a high level of recurrence, with chemical methods presenting environmental, animal and human risks. Grant funding has enabled established forester Homer Cuddon to purchase a small tracked digging vehicle with a special grapple tool to remove the shrubs with their roots. Disposal of the vegetation by constructing 'habitat stacks' exposes the roots to the atmosphere, ensuring they do not re-root, and provides ideal colonising places for animals and birds whilst encouraging natural rotting processes to provide rich, diverse environments for insects and fungi.

RDPE Leader Programme

A wide range of projects is eligible for funding, but projects do need to meet specific criteria and to have the approval of the WARR Partnership Board.

How can I apply?

To be eligible your business or organisation must be located in rural Rother or Wealden (including the market towns of Hailsham, Heathfield, Battle and Rye). For full details visit our website at www.warrpartnership.org.uk or contact our office in Battle on 01424 787400 or by email at info@warrpartnership.org.uk.

How much funding is available and what types of projects could be eligible?

Grants of up to £50,000 are available. They can cover activities such as farm diversification, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, tourism and community projects. Match funding will be required and the level of grant funding will depend on the type of project that you bring forward.

Who can help me in my application for funding?

Staff at the WARR Partnership Office in Battle will happily advise and assist you at every stage of your application.