

# The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

A quick guide for Foresters and Woodland Owners



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



## A quick guide for Foresters and Woodland Owners

One of the main aims of the new Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is to make both agriculture and forestry more competitive and fit for the future.

Worth £3.9bn until 2013 and funded by the European Union and Defra, the fund is managed in North East England by One North East, with Natural England and the Forestry Commission delivering mainly on the agri-environment schemes.

## Do you want support to manage existing woodlands on your land or to create new woodlands?

The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) – worth around £2m a year in the North East – is the Forestry Commission's suite of grants designed to develop the coordinated delivery of public benefits from England's woodlands.

EWGS is supported via RDPE and aims to sustain and increase the opportunities given by existing woodlands and help create new woodlands to deliver additional public benefits.

For more information:

- Visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/northeastengland](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/northeastengland) and click on grants
- Email [northeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:northeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)
- Call **01669 621 591** if you are based in Northumberland
- Call **01388 488 721** if you are based in County Durham

## How RDPE can help you grow or diversify your forestry and woodland business

To qualify for RDPE Business Support you will usually need to find at least 50% of its total cost from a private sector source.

### 1. The bioNErgy support programme

This can help you move into supplying biomass markets with funding available for a range of projects from capital equipment to feasibility studies. bioNErgy is aimed at strengthening and developing the emerging woody bio-energy sector in the North East. The programme offers a range of funding opportunities for eligible businesses that wish to undertake activities in developing regional bio-energy supply chains.

For further information on bioNErgy visit [www.northwoods.org.uk/bioenergy](http://www.northwoods.org.uk/bioenergy) or call **01670 513 292**.



## **2. LandSkills North East**

This offers a wide range of training to help foresters, woodland managers and woodland owners update their skills. Courses cover knowledge transfer, practical and technical work and woodland management through to forestry machine operation. LandSkills North East aims to develop the business and technical skills of the region's agricultural and forestry industries. The project, which is managed by Lantra Sector Skills Council, delivers a range of subsidised activities to help you improve the skills and knowledge needed to enhance the efficiency, profitability and potential of your business. Up to 70% of your training costs could be covered, depending on eligibility.

## **3. The Micro Business Fund**

This can help with revenue or capital costs to start a new venture with up to £10,000 per business available. The funding will help micro-enterprises in rural areas with elements such as start-up revenue and capital investment costs, technical and marketing support, product development, branding and design. Key objectives for micro-enterprise development are increasing business start-ups, strengthening existing businesses, improving sustainability of rural businesses and creating markets for rural business products and services.

## **4. The Community and Business Assets Fund**

This can support larger projects. Farm diversifications that will make a significant contribution to your area's economic or social future may qualify for up to 50% of the costs. Other aims of the fund are to assist with costs of developments within commercial projects, especially rural micro-enterprises including those in the forestry supply chain, and to reduce the costs of community-based enterprises to provide new services and jobs.

## **5. The Collaborative Processing and Marketing Fund**

This can help if you want to work with other farmers or foresters and your project could add significant value to agricultural and forestry products. Your project will need to have a value of at least £100,000 to be considered.

## How do I access the right support and guidance for my business?

There are two main strands of activity to help rural communities to take an active role in their economic development under RDPE.

RDPE funds are managed by the North East England Investment Centre and accessed via Business Link. Account Managers have expertise in dealing with businesses in the land-based sector to help you go through your ideas and explore potential solutions, with access to the latest information on all aspects of running a rural business – from legislation and diversification to sourcing finance.

The breadth and depth of expertise and guidance that Business Link supplies supports rural businesses by helping them become more competitive, diverse, flexible and environmentally responsible.

**Solutions  
for Business**

Funded by  
Government

RDPE Business Support is part of Solutions for Business, the Government's package of publicly funded support products offering help to companies to start, grow and succeed. Solutions for Business makes it easier for companies to get the right advice and assistance.

For further information, visit Business Link at [www.businesslink.gov.uk/northeast](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/northeast) or alternatively give them a call on **0845 600 9006**.

### Case study: Gordon Thomson



Woodland owner, farmer and woodland project officer Gordon Thomson, from Barnard Castle, accessed LandSkills funding through Northwoods for a number of training courses for both himself and his staff.

Gordon had initially sought out funding for a number of courses to broaden his own skills base, but discovered he could also enrol his staff and receive funding for a wide variety of training.

Following Training Needs Assessments, he accessed over £1,500 of funding, initially for courses in basic tree surveying and chainsaw operation, with more advanced courses in the pipeline.

## Do you have other proposals to help develop the rural economy or rural communities?

If so, your idea may be eligible for funding from one of five community partnerships across the region, who will be deciding how their share of at least £4.5m of RDPE funding is used over the next three years.

RDPE priorities will be developed and delivered by Local Action Groups through the new 'LEADER Approach', in which there are five LEADER areas. To find out more about your area please contact:

Northumberland Uplands	Tom Burston	01669 622 063
Northumberland Coast & Lowlands	Ivan Hewitt	01670 863 001
North Pennine Dales	Sue Ellwood	01833 696 600
Rural Roots (covering East Durham)	Louise Johnson	01429 820 214
North Yorkshire Moors, Coast and Hills	Mike Horrocks	01439 770 657

You can also find out more about these LEADER partnerships at [www.rdpennortheast.co.uk/page/leader.cfm](http://www.rdpennortheast.co.uk/page/leader.cfm)

### Case study: Park End Farms



Northumberland-based Park End Farms, secured funding through the bioNErgy programme to further develop and strengthen their woodchip operations.

The business diversified two years ago by purchasing a chipper to supply their own woodfuel requirements and to meet the needs of other chip suppliers across the region by offering a contract chipping service.

It was so successful that a more efficient and productive chipper was required to keep up with demand. Since buying the chipper earlier this year, 600 tonnes of wood has been chipped for woodfuel markets to date, strengthening supply chains.

The investment has allowed the business to expand with an additional two contracts already secured as a direct consequence of upgrading the chipping operation, securing jobs as a result.

## How RDPE can help you in other ways

### Do you want support with the environmental management of your land?

Environmental Stewardship can help you conserve the wildlife and characteristic landscape features that may be present on your land. These schemes can also help you manage natural resources, protect historic environment features and promote access to and understanding of the countryside. Agreements are formed from a collection of options relevant to your land and payments range according to the level of management required.

To apply online visit Natural England at [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) or alternatively for more information call **03000 601 117**.

### Do you want support to establish short rotation coppice and miscanthus on your land?

The Energy Crops Scheme aims to increase the amount of energy crops grown in England in appropriate locations. It offers grants for the establishment of miscanthus and short rotation coppice (SRC). These crops are used as a substitute for fossil fuels, so they can contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and help to combat climate change. All miscanthus and SRC plantings are supported at a rate of 40% of actual planting costs for coppice and £800 per hectare for miscanthus.

To request a handbook visit Natural England at [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) or alternatively call **01905 362 703**.

