

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)	
North West Partner e-bulletin	
Issue No 1	December 2008

Introduction

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is delivered in the North West region by three delivery bodies: Natural England, The Forestry Commission and the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA).

A Steering Group of these three bodies is independently chaired by the Chair of the North West Rural Affairs Forum (NWRAF). This group reports to the NW Rural Strategic Group quarterly to monitor programme delivery against the EU approved Regional Implementation Plan - copy on NWDA website, link:
<http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/Draft%20RDPE%20NW%20Implem%20Plan.pdf>

As part of our commitment to work together we have agreed to combine our reporting on the RDPE for sharing with regional partners to increase understanding of the operation of the RDPE in the North West. This is the first of these combined reports in 2008. The NWRAF members will receive the report and they can further disseminate the information to their stakeholder organisations.

We hope you find this update helpful and please contact the relevant people listed for further information.

Have a good Xmas.

NW RDPE Steering Group



Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) socio-economic programmes (Axes 1, 3 and 4)

The role of the NWDA is to lead on economic development and regeneration of the North West. The rural economy makes a significant contribution to our regional economy and RDPE will work to radically improve rural areas until 2013.

In the North West local priorities have been identified by sub-regional partnerships. Funding will be delivered by the Leader approach and by the NWDA through partners based on these local priorities.

In addition Defra have asked the Regional Development Agencies to target part of the funding specifically at the livestock sector. In the Northwest this funding will account for approximately £18million. Working with NFU, CLA, Environment Agency and other organisations we have developed a programme of activity. £6.6million is available initially via six preliminary projects. Some examples of the support which will be available are animal health and welfare advice which involves vets going out to farms to carry out herd/flock health planning; nutrient management advice and planning; resource and energy auditing advice.

The NWDA invited applicants to apply to run these projects, and contracts have now been agreed. This means that early in the New Year the livestock sector will be able to access independent advice and monetary support. Contact details will be placed on the NWDA website.

Advisors will first help farmers to develop relevant action plans designed to increase productivity and save money.

Follow-on funding will become available to support capital investment requirements identified by the work done under these initial projects. Once plans have been drawn up, farmers can apply for these grants.

At the same time the Leader Local Action Groups (LAGS) are forming across the region and preparing to deliver. Using the Leader approach the NWDA invited local groups to design and implement their own packages to support businesses, maximise training and skills development and provide new opportunities.

Excellent progress has been made in Cumbria with the two groups (LAGS) covering the entire sub-region - North Cumbria (Solway, Borders and Eden); and South Cumbria (Fells and Dales) – having recruited their staff who are ready to help deliver £15million. The Merseyside LAG contract was approved mid-November and they are preparing to get started. The NWDA has approved funding for Pennine Prospects for part of Greater Manchester (led by Yorkshire Forward) and funding for south Cheshire through the Northern Marches group (led by Advantage West Midlands). Discussions with three LAG groups in Lancashire are progressing well to start in the New Year.

More information is available at www.nwda.co.uk/rdpe

Axis 2 - Forestry Commission English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) update

North West England Region

English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) November 2008

The English Woodland Grant Scheme Prospectus 2008 opened in May this year. The prospectus is our allocation of funding across the suite of grants we operate and is for payment in the financial year 2009-10. Approximately £1.2M is available annually through EWGS.

Grant Type	Funds remaining £'000	Closing Date	Current Status
WCG	0	Closed	Closed
WPG/WAG	43	28 February 09	Open
WRG	0	Closed	Closed
WRG – PAWS	0	Closed	Closed
WMG biodiversity	37	28 February 09	Open
WIG access	7	28 February 09	Open
WIG biodiversity	7	28 February 09	Open
WIG red squirrel	7	28 February 09	Open
WIG SSSI	7	28 February 09	Open

The above figures are indicative against our original allocations. We will continue to accept applications for those grants which are still open above these limits against the potential of winning national office support for additional spend.

For further details on the current prospectus use the following link: [Prospectus 2008](#).

The application window for Woodland Creation Grants (WCG) closed at the end of September. In the North West we were over-subscribed, against a budget figure of £488,000, having 51 applications totalling £579,000, creating 338ha of new woodlands in the North West. All of these schemes were successful in meeting our requirements for delivery of public benefits, which supported our business case in winning additional funds to approve all of them.

With regard to the suite of grants available for the stewardship of existing woodlands which includes regeneration grants (WRG), improvement (WIG) and management (WMG) grants, we have seen high demand. However in meeting this demand we have been successful in winning additional Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funds for spend in 2009-10. This has been achieved by being able

to bring forward some 2009-10 schemes to 2008-09 freeing up additional funds for 2009-10. This means that at this stage in the prospectus year we still have funds available for Woodland Improvement Grants, Woodland Management Grants for Biodiversity works, Woodland Assessment and Woodland Planning Grants. Non-RDPE grants i.e. Woodland Regeneration and Woodland Management Grants for Access are now closed to new business for 2009-10 spend year.

Within the North West we see strong potential to further deliver against the Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests and the Regional Forestry Framework. We encourage you to apply for the remaining funds available for spend in 2009-10.

Please note latest closing date for applications is 28 February 2009.

Next year in line with the opening of the new prospectus we will be holding two Customer Liaison Meetings (north and south within the region). At these meetings we will be wanting to discuss issues relevant to you with regard EWGS or other tree, woodland or forestry related issues. Invites and requests for items to discuss will be sent out in the New Year. I would be interested to receive any thoughts you have on the need, content and structure of these meetings.

Could I take the opportunity to thank those customers who have had to apply for Single Business Identifier (SBI) and to register their land in connection with their applications this year. Your patience in this process has been appreciated.

Richard Topley, who was Woodland Officer for Lancashire and North Merseyside, has now joined the Newlands team. We wish Richard well in his new role. Paul Vickers and James Bickley are in the interim, until a replacement is in post, covering Richards's previous area.

Kevin May
Grants, Regulations and Partnership Manager.

Sources of further information

1. If you require further information contact your local Woodland Officer –
Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester:

Paul Vickers (01606 889912); paul.vickers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Lancashire: currently shared between Paul Vickers and James Bickley

Lancaster City/South Cumbria: James Bickley (017687 76616) james.anderson-bickley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

West Cumbria: Peter Fox (017687 76616); peter.fox@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

East Cumbria: Jim O'Neill (017687 76616); jim.o'neill@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

2. For NW E specific grant details on the Web see:
www.forestry.gov.uk/northwestengland-grants

Forestry Commission – North West England

Axis 2 - Natural England Agri-Environment Schemes

Launch of New Approach to Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Targeting

Natural England launched its new HLS targeting on 26 November. This represents the culmination of 12 months of development work and the staff involved would like to thank regional partners and stakeholders for their input and co-operation during this period.

The rationale behind the new approach is to secure appropriate management in those areas where environmental outcomes across all objectives of the scheme are likely to be greatest – i.e. agreements that will achieve best value for money.

In the North West this approach has resulted in the identification of 19 'multi-objective' target areas covering some 40% of the region. For more details on these and associated information please click on the link below:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/grants-funding/es/hls/targeting/default.aspx>

The next stages are to develop supporting guidance documentation and a regional targeting plan and Natural England staff will look to work closely with partners to determine the most effective way of delivering HLS in the region.

New Environmental Stewardship Handbooks

Natural England has published new Environmental Stewardship (ES) handbooks. These cover every available ES scheme and apply to all agreements starting on or after 1st October 2008. Printed versions are available from Natural England offices or online by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/grants-funding/es/default.htm>

Entry Level Stewardship Online

It is now possible to apply for Entry Level Stewardship online by following the link below:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/grants-funding/es/els/online.htm>

For further information on Environmental Stewardship in the region including HLS targeting developments please contact Helen Kirkby:

Tel 01768 860717 mob 07900608069

Helen.kirkby@naturalengland.org.uk

North West Land Management Advisory Service (LMAS)

This is a new team in Natural England established to help farmers and land managers improve their land management for the benefit of the environment through farm advice provision.

The team will:

- Offer practical, commercially realistic advice on Entry Level Stewardship, Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship
- Advise on moving into Environmental Stewardship from previous schemes
- Advise existing Environmental Stewardship agreement holders
- Work closely with other organisations providing advisory services

The work of the team will be delivered mainly through a programme of events such as evening meetings, farm walks and clinics. Initially the team will focus on the promotion of Entry Level Stewardship.

For details of forthcoming events in the North West please click on the link below;

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/farming-wildlife/events.asp?region=nw>

If you wish to know more about the work of the team please contact one of the following:

Alex Lowe– Senior Project Manager Farm Advice 01270 754127

Alexander.J.Lowe@naturalengland.org.uk

Mark Stubbs – LMAS Adviser Cheshire & Lancashire 01270 754275

Mark.stubbs@naturalengland.org.uk

Richard Potts – LMAS Adviser Cumbria 01768 860713

Richard.Potts@naturalengland.org.uk

Current Regional Scheme Data

Approximately 70% of agricultural land in the North West is now managed under the provisions of agri–environment schemes. Of the total number of farmers with agri–environment agreements over 7% are in Higher Level Stewardship. Further data is provided in the table below:

Entry level Stewardship (ELS) – (Organic) Entry Level Scheme (07/08 figures in brackets)

	(O)ELS No	Area (ha)	1 st year cost	OELS No
NW Region	4,786 (990)	383,149 (106,133)	£11.42 m (£3.15m)	143 (37)
Cheshire	1,146 (260)	85,184 (19,160)	£2.85m (£0.63m)	63 (16)
Cumbria	1,783 (440)	191,294 (57,945)	£5.62m (£1.72m)	52 (18)
Greater Manchester	113 (29)	8,409 (1,996)	£0.25m (£0.07m)	5 (1)
Lancashire	960 (253)	89,977 (26,572)	£2.42m (£0.71m)	19 (2)
Merseyside	77 (8)	8,285 (458)	£0.28m (£0.01m)	4 (0)

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) – Total figures (07/08 figures in brackets)

	HLS Number	HLS Area (ha)	HLS 1 st Year Cost
NW Region	322 (110)	39,745 (14,491)	£5.01m (£1.75m)
Cheshire	62 (17)	2,181 (482)	£0.83m (£0.17m)
Cumbria	177 (64)	26,704 (11,199)	£2.92m (£1.29m)
Greater Manchester	4 (2)	121 (46)	£0.05m (£0.02m)
Lancashire	75 (25)	10,589 (2,815)	£1.17m (£0.25m)
Merseyside	4 (2)	149 (10)	£0.04m (£0.01m)

Classic Schemes – Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Areas

	Number agreements	Area (ha)	Annual area payments
NW Region	2344	222,439	£13.71m
Cheshire	201	4,910	£0.99m
Cumbria	1768	194,672	£10.96m
Greater Manchester	36	509	£0.15m
Lancashire	293	21,743	£1.39m
Merseyside	46	603	£0.21m