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RURAL Round-up



*The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow.'*

by Emily Bronte

Let us know what you think, email us at edu@swale.gov.uk



Welcome to the **February 2016** edition of Rural Round-up which features the latest news, events and business opportunities for companies based in the rural communities of Swale.

LEADER Funding Update

LEADER is a well-established method of providing rural development funding to local businesses and organisations to:

- Create jobs
- Develop rural businesses
- Support the local economy

The funding is available, via an application process, to farmers, growers, foresters, other local rural businesses and rural community organisations. Grants of up to £50,000 are available for commercial projects grants and will typically be limited to 40% of the project's total eligible costs, so a degree of match funding is required.

The priorities that LEADER will consider funding for are:

- Support for increasing farm productivity
- Support for micro and small enterprises, and farm diversification
- Support for rural tourism
- Support for cultural and heritage activity
- Support for increasing forestry productivity

The LEADER Programme is now open and funding will be available until 2020. So if you have a project that needs funding and would like to discuss your options, please contact Huw Jarvis, Programme Manager for Kent Downs and Marshes LEADER on 03000 417 104 or email huw.jarvis@kent.gov.uk.

The Forestry Innovation Fund

The Forestry Commission has launched the Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG) to support the preparation of plans for multi-purpose woodlands which have the potential to provide a significant productive component.

The grant particularly contributes toward the costs of gathering and analysing the information land owners must consider before progressing with their project. The

grant can assist in the assessment of the natural environment; planning for landscape and water management; managing the historic environment and engaging with stakeholders.

Applicants must meet the basic criteria for an application which includes the land being of at least 30 hectares and that it has the potential to benefit the forestry sector in the long-term by providing timber or other wood products.

For further information about the scheme visit the [Forestry Commission website](#).

Free support and advice for rural companies

Signs of growth in the countryside may be few and far between this month but it is a perfect time for company owners to consider how they can grow their business.

A business advisor has recently been procured by Swale Borough Council to help local companies grow. The advisor can provide free advice on matters as diverse as marketing, identifying and applying for funding, writing a business plan and keeping accounts.

To meet the advisor, simply contact the Swale Economic Development Team on 01795 417398 or email edu@swale.gov.uk and we will arrange an appointment for you when most convenient.

Shortcuts to starting a business

It can be difficult to take those first steps into the somewhat bewildering world of launching a business. There can be a sizeable gap between the initial idea and the next stages on the journey to running a successful company.

Swale Borough Council and the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce are running a season of workshops to help. Designed for those taking their first steps, the session covers how to set up a company, write a business plan, keep accounts and find customers.

The workshops take place at the start of each month, with the next meeting on **Thursday 3rd March 2016**. If this sounds like something you or someone you know might be interested in, contact the Economic Development Team on 01795 417398 or email edu@swale.gov.uk.

The England Coast Path Update – Iwade to Grain, Kent

Natural England is progressing plans for a long distance walking route along the coast of England – the England Coast Path. The organisation is working with Kent County Council, district councils, key agencies and interested parties in the areas of Kent which are affected by the proposals.

Preparation for the Iwade to Grain stretch is about to begin and Natural England is consulting with local organisations to gain a greater understanding of the local area, and agree a timescale for the work.

Launch of 2016 Kent Excellence in Business Awards (KEiBA)

Businesses across the county have the opportunity to shine in the 2016 Kent Excellence in Business Awards (KEiBA).

The award scheme was officially launched on Thursday 7 January at the Port Lympne Hotel.

Every year KEiBA showcases the strongest, most vibrant companies and business people from across Kent.

Now in their eighth year, the awards are staged and produced by Kent County Council and the KM Media Group.

Winning a KEiBA is a powerful and effective marketing tool for any company and winning helps organisations stand out from the crowd, send a positive message to customers and attract new business.

Businesses can enter up to four categories including Apprenticeship of the Year, Business Commitment to the Community Award, Employer of the Year, Start Up Business of the Year and Young Entrepreneur of the Year. To start your entry visit: www.keiba.co.uk. The deadline is **Friday 26 February 2016**.

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