



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



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

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

**Call for applications to support investments in co-
operation and partnerships to develop and market
tourism in rural areas of Stoke-on-Trent and
Staffordshire**

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Managing Authority	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire
Call Reference	32RD15TO0002
Deadline for the submission of applications	Friday 8 January 2016 at 1700 hours

Read the [Growth Programme](#) guidance. This explains what applicants must do to apply for a grant, how grant applications are assessed and how to meet the terms of a grant funding agreement if an application is successful.

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1. Call Context

1.1. Background

A single European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme has been set up to combine three separate European Funds. These are:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The Growth Programme provides funding to help projects in England that create jobs and economic growth. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has responsibility for managing EAFRD. Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages these grants on behalf of Defra.

Government has allocated £177 million of rural development funding from EAFRD for grants in the Growth Programme. These grants are available for:

- funding and developing micro, small and medium-sized rural businesses including food processing
- funding for small scale tourism infrastructure and tourism co-operation

1.2 Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are private sector-led partnerships between local authorities and businesses. Each LEP has set out in its ESIF strategy the local priorities for this funding the aim of which is to achieve economic growth in its area. There are 39 LEPs covering England, 37 have an allocation of rural development funding. To apply for this funding the project must be located in a rural area in England.

1.3 Other Rural Development Funding

Other rural development support for agricultural and forestry businesses will be available through LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), the Countryside Productivity Scheme and Countryside Stewardship.

1.4 Local Context

This call invites applications for investments that establish and develop co-operative partnerships seeking to improve and promote the local rural visitor economy.

Research conducted on behalf of Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (SDMP) shows that visitors spend £645 million each year in the

county. Almost 60% of this spend is in rural areas. The tourism sector employs around 16,744 people, hosts 15.1 million day visits and 1.1 million overnight stays. However, the research indicates that employment levels in the sector and the number of visitors to the area is below the national average for England.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire [ESIF Strategy](#) and [Strategic Economic Plan](#) identify tourism as a sector with potential for growth. SDMP has highlighted the following issues that prevent growth of the visitor economy for rural Staffordshire:

- low levels of spend by visitors staying overnight
- lack of visitor awareness of Staffordshire's rural assets, including the natural environment and attractions
- low levels of cooperation between small and medium sized enterprises, agencies and partnerships
- lower than average level of activity to promote the offer for visitors including local festivals and events, food and drink and walking, cycling and canals

This call seeks applications looking to address these issues through co-operative working and partnerships leading to improved marketing, development and promotion of local visitor attractions.

2. Call Overview

2.1 Purpose of the Call

Supporting tourism in rural areas

This call seeks applications that support local cooperation and partnerships in developing, improving and promoting the tourism sector in rural areas.

The rural tourism sector offers a significant opportunity for growth in developing the all year round destination offer and improving the quality of tourism products. This can benefit the wider economy of rural areas through high spend on rural attractions and accommodation as well as an increase in tourism based enterprises and job opportunities.

By providing EAFRD investment, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP aims to support the creation of distinctive and high quality destinations based on what each individual destination can offer. This call provides support for:

- rural businesses, charities, community groups, trusts, local partnerships and public bodies seeking to promote co-operation in the tourism sector to develop a better local rural tourism offer

2.2 Support Available

This call seeks applications from:

- rural businesses
- charities
- community groups
- trusts
- local partnerships
- public bodies

Grants are available for investments in developing and promoting tourism among small operators in rural areas.

The aim of this call is to encourage applications for new activity that offers a strategic and co-ordinated approach to the promotion of visitor attractions in rural areas. This includes

- support for destination organisations (DO) or other partnerships to create a new destination plan (DP)
- encouraging smaller operators or visitor attractions in rural areas to work together to develop new DOs, networks or partnerships that cover a range of destinations or markets and identify and develop new opportunities

New DPs must set out:

- priorities for growth, development and management of the rural tourism areas
- roles and responsibilities of the partnership members
- specific sectors that require support
- actions required to develop the image and brand of the locations
- promotional activities

Examples of support include:

- develop new DPs to market the tourism offer in rural parts of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP area including villages, groups of villages or rural market towns

- set up new DOs that work together to develop supply chains and market and promote new tourism offers in rural areas
- develop, market and promote local food and culture in rural areas

Applications that demonstrate one or more of the following criteria are a priority for this call:

- new clusters of small operators wanting to work together to promote tourism activity in a destination
- increase the length of time visitors stay
- increase in annual visitor spend

Applications that can show how the proposed activity will lead to an increase in the number of overnight visitors are a higher priority for support. This call can support the planning, research, promotion, management and delivery of a particular project. Such projects must address the issues preventing growth in the rural visitor economy.

2.3 Size of grants available

Grants will be available for this call from £35,000 up to £75,000. State aid rules will apply which may affect the amount of grant offered. Further details on state aid rules are available from gov.uk.

Applicants can apply for a grant to cover up to 50% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of a project for this call would therefore be £70,000. The above is applicable to commercial operators. Where the application is for project activity by a non-profit making organisation then grants are available to cover up to 100% of the project's total eligible costs.

Applicants must pay for any costs not covered by the grant with private funding, such as savings or a bank loan, not other public funds. If private funding isn't used, Rural Payments Agency (RPA) may ask the applicant to repay any grant money already paid and may cancel any future payments.

2.4 Total Funding Available

The total grant funding available for this call is **£100,000**. Funding will be offered to a maximum of 2 projects, but the actual number of projects supported may be lower, dependent upon the scale and range of the projects coming forward. All applications are competitive and for this call, RPA will assess applications after the close of the deadline.

3. Outputs to be delivered

Applicants need to show how their project will contribute to the achievement of the following total outputs for the call:

- increase of 15% in number of day visitors
- increase of 30% in number of overnight stays
- increase of 20% in visitor spend
- creation of 2 cluster/project specific destination plans
- support of 5 co-operation projects
- benefit 100 tourism businesses
- develop 1 destination organisation

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate how they will deliver the outputs, committed to within the proposal along with any methodology used. Further details on the evidence requirements for each output will be available at full application stage.

Applicants will also need to ensure robust project management systems are in place that will capture and record the outputs. A detailed description of the systems will need to be provided at full application stage. All projects will be required to collect evidence to show that outputs have been achieved and report progress with each claim.

4. How to apply

There are two stages to the application process. Applications will be assessed at both stages and only the strongest will be successful. The 2 stages are:

- Stage 1: an outline application
- Stage 2: a full application

Further details on how to apply for a grant and an outline application form are available from gov.uk. The applicant will only be invited to submit a full application if their outline application is successful.

Work must not start on any part of a proposed project before the applicant has received and signed a grant funding agreement from the RPA. This includes ordering or paying a deposit on materials or equipment.

5. Information to consider before making an application

5.1 Eligibility

There will be standard eligibility requirements for each type of grant offered. Applicants will need to refer to gov.uk for further information on each of the types of grants available.

5.2 Register with Rural Payments

Before applicants can submit an application for a grant from the Growth Programme, they will need to register on [Rural Payments](#). If the applicant is already registered on Rural Payments, they will not need to do this again.

5.3 Cross Cutting Themes

All applications received under this call must demonstrate how the Cross Cutting Themes have been addressed in the project design and development. The cross cutting themes for all projects are sustainable development and equality and diversity. Further details on these can be found in the Outline Application form.

5.4 Quotes

Applicants must ensure that they obtain best value for money when buying goods or services. Important information on the number and format of the quotes required to demonstrate best value are available from gov.uk. Applicants will be required to submit these if invited to develop a full application.

5.5 Publicising the Grant

When a project is successful in obtaining rural development funding through Growth Programme, the grant beneficiary will be required to publicise the grant. The RPA will provide beneficiaries with further information with the grant funding agreement but they may expect beneficiaries to:

- mention it in any press releases or when communicating with customers, for example in newsletters and on their website (if applicable); and

- display a poster, plaque, or billboard, including EU logos, depending on the amount of funding received and the type of investment.

If the applicant does not do this, the RPA may apply a penalty by deducting payment from the grant.

6. Support

Guidance on how to apply for a Growth Programme grant is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/growth-programme-grants-for-the-rural-economy. Applicants can call the Rural Payments helpline on 0300 0200 301 or Email GPEnquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk for further support if required.

7. Submitting applications

Send the completed outline application form to growthapps@rpa.gsi.gov.uk. The RPA will email to confirm that they've received it.