



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Our ref: RFI 7352
18 March 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Information on Defra budget dedicated to business support for 2013/14.

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 25 February 2015, about money invested in 2013/14 for the Rural Growth Network, Rural Broadband, Rural Development Programme for England (2007–2015), Growth Deals, and the Food and Drink Export Plan, including details on impact evaluation of these policies. Further to our telephone conversation of 9 March 2015, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

As per our telephone conversation, much of the information you requested is reasonably accessible and therefore we are not providing it pursuant to section 21 of the FOIA. However, in order to be helpful the links are set out below.

Rural Growth Networks (RGNs)

Five RGNs covering Cumbria, Heart of the South West, The North East, Warwickshire and Swindon and Wiltshire received no direct funding from Defra in the financial year 2013/14; all funding (£14.18m) was provided in 2012/13. As discussed, decisions on allocation of this money within the respective RGNs, is addressed locally based on specific priorities. Some information on each pilot may be found through the following links:

- **Cumbria**, the RGN is part-funding the Growth Hub programme (supporting existing SMEs and start-ups) <http://www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk/>
- **Heart of the South West**, the RGN is funding a new support package; <http://www.business-supportsw.com/>
- **North East**, the RGN business support programme has helped support Rural Enterprise Development Officers <http://ruralconnect.biz/>
- **Swindon and Wiltshire**, RGN funding has allowed greater rural coverage through the provision of additional resources to the Wiltshire Business Support Service, <http://www.theenterprisenetwork.co.uk/>
- **Warwickshire**, the RGN is coordinating existing business support schemes <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ruralgrowthnetwork>



RGN Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation programme is in place to assess the growth impacts of the five Pilots. This evaluation deploys methods including quarterly monitoring of headline outputs and spend, a longitudinal dimension of 10 individual case studies, half yearly process evaluations, with a final impact evaluation report to be undertaken in late 2015.

Details of the RGN monitoring and evaluation can be found at:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=2&ProjectID=18215>

Rural Broadband

During our discussion you advised you did not require information on rural broadband, as such, I have not provided anything other than that shown below under RDPE.

Growth Deals

Defra provides no financial contribution; these deals are the responsibility of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. Information on the Growth Deals can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=growth+deals>

Rural Development Programme for England (2007 – 2013)

Financial support under the RDPE (2007 – 2013) Socio Economic Schemes covering Leader, Skills and Knowledge Transfer Programme, Rural Economy Grant, Farm and Forestry Improvement Scheme, Farming Recovery Fund, Rural Growth Network Micro Enterprise Scheme¹, Regional Development Agency Legacy Schemes and The Dairy Fund are detailed below.

You expressed a wish to receive information both in respect of the amount contracted under these schemes in 2013/14, as well as the amount paid out. You will appreciate that the latter figure includes activity contracted in earlier financial years.

- In 2013-14, activity to the value of £46,917,917 was contracted, including £745,294 for the Rural Community Broadband Fund.
- In 2013-14, £81,449,057 of RDPE funding was paid out, including £42,137 for the Rural Community Broadband Fund.

RDPE Evaluation

A number of RDPE evaluation reports are available on line as follows:

- **Ex-Ante Evaluation of the RDPE, 2007-13**; a legal requirement of Council Regulation 1698/2005; evaluation methods used were a mix of process, impact and economic evaluation.

¹ Addition RDPE money provide to 4 of the 5 RGNs.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350783/CH4.2+Annex+1.pdf

- **Mid-Term Evaluation of the RDPE, 2007-13**; a legal requirement of Council Regulation 1698/2005; its timing is set by the Regulation. The methods used were a mix of process, impact and economic evaluation.
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/countries/uk/mte-rep-uk-england_en.pdf
- **Ex-Post Evaluation of the RPDE, 2007-13**; a legal requirement of Council Regulation 1698/2005. The methods to be used will involve a mix of process, impact and economic evaluation. The contract for this will be let by spring/summer 2015.
- Of potential interest is the **Evaluation of the RDPE Network**. This evaluation used a participative method which involved an extensive programme of carefully targeted stakeholder consultations, an online survey of actual and potential network participants, a programme of regional stakeholder workshops and case studies.
<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18890>

Food and Drink Export Plan

No direct funding was provided by Defra for implementation of the Food and Drink Export Plan in 2013/14. The intention of the plan was to bring together all the export activities across government and industry in support of food and drink exports. Financial support to businesses wishing to export is provided through UKTI and UKEF. A report one year on from publication of the plan is available on "Open to Export". This covers the progress made against the agreed actions in the Action Plan and other advice to business, including case studies; this is available through the following link: <http://opentoexport.com/article/uk-food-and-drink-international-action-plan-one-year-on-2>

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely,


Defra FOIA and EIRs Team
InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to [REDACTED] Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF