



**European Union**  
European Structural  
and Investment Funds

**European Structural and Investment Funds**  
**2014 - 2020**

**Growth Programme for England**

## **ESI Funds Growth Programme Board**

### **Progress on EAFRD Growth Programme**

#### **Purpose:**

To provide the Board with an update on the current position on the EAFRD part of the EU Growth Programme.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Board is invited to note the information set out in this paper.

#### **Summary:**

During 2015, calls totalling £24.5m were issued in 27 of the 37 LEP areas with RDPE funding. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has completed processing 17 full applications arising from the March calls and the first funding offers, amounting to £1.4m, have been issued. Full applications from the July, August and September calls are also now being assessed.

The RPA is completing discussions with the LEP areas to refresh their spending priorities and agree plans for launching up to £122m worth of calls from late summer 2016 onwards. Work is also in hand to improve the quality of calls through writing workshops and local support.

#### **EAFRD GROWTH PROGRAMME UPDATE**

1. Overall, during 2015, calls totalling £24.5m were issued in 27 of the 37 LEP areas with RDPE funding.
2. The initial set of calls for EAFRD applications, issued in five LEP areas in March 2016 generated 17 full applications worth £2.4m. The Rural Payments Agency has completed assessment of these applications and has approved and contracted 11 projects in five LEP areas (Worcestershire, Coventry and Warwickshire, Greater Lincolnshire, South East and South East Midlands). The RDPE Growth Programme will be providing £1.4m towards total project costs of almost £4.4 million. Five of the projects are supporting the processing and marketing of agricultural products and the remaining six are supporting the business growth of small and micro-enterprises. As an example, RDPE is providing just under

£130,000 towards the costs of an automated flower grading and bunching line. This will create 10 new jobs and help secure the existing 80 jobs at the company.

3. A total of 41 further calls were issued in 26 LEP areas over summer 2015 in 3 tranches, with a total value of £21.2m. These invited applications for Business Development, Tourism and Food Processing projects, and ranged in size from £75k to £2.5m. The RPA received outline applications amounting to £36.86m in response to these calls. These have now been assessed by the RPA with advice from local ESIF sub-committees, and full applications worth £19.5m have been invited.
4. Defra and the RPA Rural Development Team are also finalising plans to launch up to £122m in calls over 18 months from late summer 2016, following constructive dialogue with LEP areas over their plans and ambitions for future calls. Most of these calls are likely to be open for at least a year, with regular review points to ease the flow of applications. They will, at first, focus on the thematic areas that have already been opened, i.e. Tourism, Business Development and Food Processing, but work is in hand to issue calls in other areas such as Broadband, Forestry and Renewables from early 2017 onwards.
5. Experience with the 2015 rounds identified an issue with the quality and focus of some calls as well as a high attrition rate in terms of turning outline applications into viable projects. The RPA is developing plans to address the calls issue through writing workshops, prior to the late summer round of calls; and the RPA is considering what other local support might be provided for potential applicants to improve the quality of applications.

31 May 2016  
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