
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The East Midlands Regional Select Committee held its fourth evidence session on 29 June with the Regional Minister Phil Hope MP, Tom Levitt MP (PPS to Phil Hope MP) and Jonathan Lindley (Regional Director, GOEM) all giving evidence. During this session the Committee explored a number of issues including *emda's* budget, accountability, stakeholder engagement and new duties under SNR proposals. Phil Hope MP made a very positive endorsement of *emda's* work, noting our effective and efficient approach to economic development and that *emda* has been particularly successful in supporting the region through the economic downturn. On 7 July, the Committee concluded its oral evidence gathering with a final session with *emda's* Executive Team. Paddy Tipping MP was absent from both sessions due to ill health and Bob Laxton MP assumed the role as Committee Chair. Despite this, it is still anticipated that the Committee will endeavour to publish a report prior to the summer recess.

1.2 An event was held at the Japanese Embassy on 4 June to announce the signed agreement between Loughborough University and the Japanese Olympic Committee. The Japanese will use Loughborough as their training base in the run up to the 2012 Games. The first team will visit as early as August this year as they prepare for the IAAF Athletics World Championships in Berlin. Final numbers are still being worked through but it is anticipated that 15 sports will use Loughborough between now and 2012 with somewhere between 200 and 550 athletes and their support staff visiting the campus. It is also anticipated that these athletes will bring with them media, family and other supporters. We have been working closely with Loughborough University on this project for some time and will continue to do so as we seek to maximise this important opportunity for the region. Plans are already shaping up around business events, cultural and education links.

1.3 Trent Bridge in Nottingham hosted a series of matches during the ICC World Twenty20 in June – the only ground outside London to be chosen as a host venue for this prestigious tournament. Match tickets were 92% sold out and a global audience of many millions saw games from Nottingham. Most teams taking part in the tournament played matches at Trent Bridge which meant crowds were drawn from all sections of the population – both within and from outside of the region. The tournament was the first major event attracted to the ground since *emda's* £2.5m investment in its redevelopment. A detailed economic impact assessment of the tournament is underway with the first draft of the report due in late August.

1.4 At the invitation of Peter Mandelson and *emda* Chairman Bryan Jackson, the Chinese Ambassador visited the East Midlands on 19 June to learn about the scale and status of manufacturing in the region. Ambassador Fu had previously expressed the view that the UK was a service economy and, as a result of the global crisis, in serious decline. She was accompanied on her visit by UKTI Chief Executive, Sir Andrew Cahn. Hosted by Dr Jackson, the visit has brought about a positive shift in Ambassador Fu's perception.

It attracted significant and positive local media interest and was filmed for China Central Television. Visits were made to three companies and Loughborough University, with thirteen companies attending the lunch with the Ambassador.

1.5 On 13 July the Chairman and I met the Government's new Enterprise Ambassador Sir Alan Sugar to discuss the Business Link service and its support to SMEs. This was followed by Sir Alan visiting three of the region's businesses on 14 July to hear at first hand their experience of the service.

2. Raising Productivity

2.1 Employment, Learning and Skills

2.1.1 On 26 June the Skills Minister, Kevin Brennan, announced that 13 college building projects, from the 180 that had been submitted, had been prioritised under the **Further Education Capital Programme**. *emda* had worked closely with the national Learning and Skills Council to develop criteria to help prioritise the 13 projects, which will now need to demonstrate savings of between 12-20% before final approval is given. The only college in the East Midlands is the Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education in Corby. The existing college facility currently sits within the Parkland Gateway development. It is a requirement of this development that the existing campus is demolished and relocated within the town centre, which in turn will free up land for employment and housing use (also see paragraph 3.2.3).

2.1.2 From 30 June to 4 July the **Science in the Peak Festival** was held at the University of Derby in Buxton to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects to students and raise awareness STEM-related career opportunities. Funded by *emda* and Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership, the festival combined a fun-packed programme of STEM activities with interactive exhibitions and talks from leading scientists. Targeted at young people from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire schools, a total of 4,800 young people and their teachers attended the event and a further 1,500 parents and children attended the free family Fun Day on Saturday. The project specifically targeted schools not previously engaged in STEM activities and high profile individuals including Johnny Ball, Quentin Cooper (presenter of BBC Radio 4's the Material World) and Blue Peter's resident astronomer Anton Vamplew, contributed to the success of the event.

2.1.3 Representatives from *emda* were in attendance at the regional final of **East Midlands Young Enterprise Company of the year 2009**, held in Lincoln on 18 June. The competition is funded by *emda* (£560k between 2007 and 2010) and forges links between schools and industry, aiming to inspire and equip young people to learn and succeed through enterprise. A business, run by budding entrepreneurs from The National School in Hucknall won the title of East Midlands Young Enterprise Company of the year from 178 entries and they will take their company, Yuna, forward to the UK final of the HSBC Young Enterprise Innovation Awards. They also won the Institute of

Directors Award for Best Team of Directors. Yuna recycle materials to make saleable products.

2.1.4 Learndirect is the Government's nationally recognised brand for learning with the largest e-learning network of its kind. Andrew Morgan presented the **learndirect Small Company Award** at the East Midlands Regional Award Ceremony, held in Derby on 25 June. *emda* sponsored and judged this award which recognises businesses with fewer than 250 employees who have supported staff to undertake learndirect learning and have recognised the value of upskilling their workforce. Barton Precision Engineers Ltd based in Nottingham, who won the award, will now go forward to the national final to be held in London in October.

2.1.5 Phil Hope MP contributed to an *emda*-led roundtable discussion on **graduate internships** during his visit to the University of Derby on 29 June. Senior representation from all of the regions higher education institutes ensured a challenging debate and key aspects concerning graduate employment were presented to the Minister for consideration by the Government.

2.2 Enterprise and Business Support

Enterprise

2.2.1 On 24 June 57 **Business Champions** and delegates celebrated Vocational Qualification Day at Bulwell Academy in Nottingham. The purpose of the event was to engage Business Champions in education and to support the employability agenda. Sir Alan Jones, Chairman Emeritus of Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd, gave a keynote speech on the importance of raising the skill levels of the next generation and increasing business engagement within education. There has been significant support for Bulwell Academy, with four Champions already supporting it and another five offering support on the day. The National Apprenticeship Service and Toot Hill School at Bingham also received offers of support from Business Champions as a result of the event.

Business Support

2.2.2 Business Link activity has continued to give real help for businesses throughout the economic downturn with over 4,000 free **Business Link Health Checks** being delivered since 1 April. In addition, 70 businesses have benefited since December from the **Business Turnaround Grant** which provides £1,500 per business, 100% funded, to bring in a Turnaround specialist to help them work through at significant issues facing the business.

2.2.3 *emda* held a **Solutions for Business Support Planning Workshop** on 30 June. The aim of the day was to encourage closer collaboration in moving to the new National Product Portfolio and to ensure that we maintain alignment going forward. 25 Local Authorities and other partners delivering publicly funded business support came together to discuss the Solutions for Business portfolio and how it is being implemented in the East Midlands.

2.2.4 Since my last report, a further 19 businesses have joined **High Growth East Midlands's** Growth Readiness programme for 2009, taking the total to 42 businesses so far against a target of 61. With a further 35 being assessed for suitability, it is expected that the remaining places will be filled by the end of July. The total number of businesses recruited onto HighGrowth East Midlands this year will exceed 2008, despite the challenging economic climate. GHK consulting has recently completed an interim evaluation of the programme for the period January 2008 to May 2009. This showed to date that 801 jobs have been created or safeguarded, with a return of £12 for every £1 of *emda* investment.

2.2.5 In 2008 *emda* funded Business Link to deliver **SME Awareness Raising for Public Procurement** to enable SMEs across the region to gain the technical skills to compete more effectively for public sector contracts. It provided information sessions and workshops, leading to a Meet the Buyer event. Feedback from SMEs indicated that they valued the initiative and had already won £950k of new business. In the economic downturn, new markets for SMEs in the public sector have become even more important, so a further programme of workshops, information events and Meet the Buyer events to help 600 businesses was launched in June and will run to March 2010.

2.2.6 Research into the **business support needs of disabled people** is nearing completion. This ground-breaking piece of work aimed to examine the relationship between the business support offer available to those who are disabled and compare it to the self-stated needs of disabled entrepreneurs from across the region. A significant number of providers across the region contributed to the report, as did a wide range of disabled professionals. The research has fed into the National 'Valuing Employment now - Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities' Strategy launched by Phil Hope and Jonathan Shaw, who are the joint lead Ministers for the strategy, on 24 June.

2.2.7 Since starting in 2008, 514 businesses against a target of 300 have received help from Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership's ICT campaign - **Derbyshire WellConnected**. The majority of businesses helped to date have been either professional services companies or in the tourism sector and now the campaign organisers are urging farmers and retailers to get on board and to improve their profits through the implementation and use of ICT. One example is the Bakewell Tart Shop, which is now receiving help to identify how the business can improve its online sales.

Business Investment

2.2.8 Since my last report, four new **Grant for Research and Development (GRD)** offers have been made by the Business Investment Team totalling £335k, including an offer of £120k to a Nottingham based company to develop new cavity wall insulation material.

2.2.9 A further seven companies have been awarded grants totalling £1.4m, under the **Grant for Business Investment (GBI)** scheme.

2.2.10 Following the launch of the **East Midlands Transition Loan Fund (TLF)** on 3 February, Business Link, who are acting as the first point of contact for the fund, have received 210 enquiries from businesses currently facing problems in obtaining credit through banks and other traditional routes. The TLF, which was first announced in the Government's Pre-Budget Report last November, provides individual loans of between £50k and £250k for up to three years on a commercial basis. The fund manager has received 67 business plans to date, approving 12 loans totalling £1.2m and safeguarding 509 jobs. 41 loans have been declined, mainly due to ineligibility under the Government's criteria for TLFs. The fund manager is currently working on a further 14 business plans totalling £1.9m.

International

2.2.11 The 2008-9 success results were announced on 17 June to coincide with UKTI's Annual Review.

2.2.12 Since the start of April we have two confirmed *emda* involved international investment successes with a total of 430 associated jobs created/safeguarded (against annual targets of 35 and 2,800 respectively):

- LED lights business E-Lighton of Taiwan has taken a six-month free virtual tenancy in Nottingham under the East Midlands VIP Global Fast-Track programme. They look to grow their business, take on premises and create 10 new jobs. Support was provided by the Inward Investment Team.

2.2.13 Other international activities to note:

- We attended Telematics Detroit and ITS Americas. The visit generated 18 leads from companies considering the UK market.
- We attended the Paris Airshow which resulted in contacts with other regions promoting aerospace plus a project that could create 100 jobs in the region.
- We hosted roundtable events with Indian and Australian intermediaries as well as an event focussed on low carbon investment from Scandinavia. These were to promote the region and encourage professional services firms to refer their clients who are looking for a UK base and produced two leads.
- We attended Green Ventures, a leading environmental show in Berlin, and met with 9 potential investors, resulting in 2 leads which are being followed up.
- We attended the Cambridge-based environmental event, Cereals, specifically to meet with a potential Biogas investor from Germany.
- We attended the Biological Production Forum in Duesseldorf together with Medilink. One significant new lead was identified; we shall be also following up a number of other potential opportunities.
- We attended a Waste to Energy event in Munich to meet with potential companies interested in investing in the UK. This is a forerunner to a larger conference which the German Trade Association is planning to hold in London in January and which *emda* is sponsoring.
- We hosted a visit to the region by the London Bureau Chief of German Daily newspaper *Handelsblatt* who is writing an article on the modernisation of the UK rail industry and was keen to visit the Derby Rail cluster.

2.2.14 The India Business Bureau jointly hosted a dinner in Leicester with Leicestershire Asia Business Association celebrating regional business with India. Guests of honour were the Consul General for India and the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP, who outlined her role as new Chair of the UK India Business Council. Attendees were provided with a handout of regional strengths to help inform them in their dealings with Indian business and potential investors. Relations with Indian and UK banks were strengthened, increasing their willingness to act as Indian inward investment conduits and support a common promotion of the region and Leicester as a centre for Indian finance.

2.2.15 The East Midlands China Business Bureau (EMCBB) hosted a seminar on opportunities in Southern China, Hong Kong and Macao. EMCBB also co-hosted with 8 regional universities a bi-lingual **Chinese student employability** event to link East Midlands companies with students. 23 companies attended with 200 students. Topics included an update on the Points Based System from a local immigration law specialist; and developing a CV to meet businesses needs locally. Students were also put in touch with companies currently recruiting.

2.2.16 On 19 June the Regional China and India Bureaus, together with **East Midlands European Office** (EMEO), held an international business seminar for the region's SMEs. The event focused on funding support available at the European level to promote business to business cooperation between East Midlands businesses and those in China and India. The European Business & Innovation Centre Network in Brussels highlighted the range of international partnerships and networks available to the region, as well as forthcoming project opportunities. The regional Framework Programme 7 support service also presented opportunities for companies within the EU Research Framework Programme 7 and how the development of research-driven clusters can bring together public authorities, universities and business.

Tourism

2.2.17 137 entries to the **East Midlands Tourism (EMT) Enjoy England Excellence Awards 2009** have been received from businesses region-wide. The top applicants in each of the 16 categories, including best B&B, sustainable tourism and best tourism experience, will be short-listed and independently mystery-shopped. The awards ceremony for finalists will be held on 8 October at The Athena, Leicester.

2.2.18 The third **Q-Book** ('Q' for Quality) entitled '**Think Smile**' has been launched. It is an on-line industry guide designed to help tourism businesses in the East Midlands extend a friendly welcome to visitors from overseas. It contains a series of practical measures and top tips that tourism businesses can take to overcome the cultural and linguistic challenges associated with looking after overseas visitors. The on-line guide contains a series of pod-casts of interviews with beacon businesses and industry representatives, along with basic foreign language tuition in Chinese, Dutch, French, German and Japanese. 'Think Smile' has also been developed with the London 2012 Olympic Games in mind and as a resource for those destinations that will be training camps for overseas national Olympic teams.

2.2.19 The results of the second **EMT barometer survey** looking at industry performance in May have been received. Key headlines show that:

- Over the bank holiday periods 1 in 3 of the region's tourism businesses welcomed more visitors compared to the same time last year.
- 83% of businesses are predicting a good summer, despite the current economic climate. Although there has been a move towards later booking as holidaymakers are looking for the best deals
- Lower budget holiday options i.e. self catering, caravan and camping sites reported faring particularly well as visitors look to reduce the overall costs of their short breaks and holidays rather than foregoing them altogether.
- While the general picture is one of optimism, some sectors have seen a marked change in activity. Business tourism in particular has been hit with 38% of those surveyed who rely on corporate business experiencing a decrease in bookings and income compared with last year. This impact is more apparent in the cities that traditionally attract larger number of business visitors but anecdotal feedback suggests that high end rural hotels are also feeling the affect with their corporate business declining significantly.

The next survey will take place over August bank holiday

2.2.20 EMT commissioned a **Transport and Visitor Study** on behalf of the Donington Grand Prix economic group, which identified park and ride and accommodation locations as part of a sustainable transport approach to the 2010 grand prix. The study will be developed to include support activity for the marketing of the Grand Prix by Donington, involving the Destination Management Partnerships.

2.2.21 The **Ride Welland Equestrian Tourism and Leisure** project was launched in 2006 with the aim of gaining wide spread recognition for the Welland area as the location of convenience and choice in England for quality equestrian tourism and equestrian leisure. This is being achieved through the development and co-ordination of off-road toll rides, planned routes on bridleways and horse-friendly accommodation. The project has also developed a website which acts as a resource for both riders and businesses. Information about the toll-rides, planned routes and where to stay can all be found on the Ride Welland website which became live in June and allows riders to find new routes, download maps and find all manner of equestrian services such as farriers, feed merchants, vets and equestrian centres. Businesses also benefit from the website as they are able to add themselves to the business directory feature, giving them a web presence and an easy way to get themselves found online.

2.3 Innovation

2.3.1 The **Germinator Programme**, which is being delivered by Medilink East Midlands and BioCity Nottingham and part financed by ERDF, was launched at a special Growth Investment Network event on 24 June. Three Leicester companies, BioAstral Ltd, Gamma Technologies Ltd and Spectral ID, are the first to benefit from the project aimed at providing intensive incubation support to businesses that would otherwise miss out on funding because they are at the very earliest stages of development. Together they will

receive a package of support including funding for a ‘venture champion’ who will drive forward the commercialisation of their innovative new products.

2.3.2 The first 3 Innovation Support grants were approved by the **Transport iNet** during June. The iNet launched their supply chain brokerage programme for the automotive and motorsport sectors at an event at Silverstone. The brokerage scheme is designed to help companies climb up their existing supply chain or enter new ones (even in new sectors) using innovation as the catalyst.

2.3.3 10 June marked the official opening of the **Think Tank** offices in Lincoln. The £7.1m building, designed by the architects of the London Eye, houses 21 managed offices, nine workspaces and conference and meeting facilities. Incorporating the latest environmental technologies and high-tech specification, it is built for local innovative businesses as part of the East Midlands Innovation Strategy, which recognises the need to create physical places where all types of business innovation will be encouraged, developed, celebrated and supported. At the recent Regional Building Excellence Awards, Think Tank was chosen from all categories and received the Chair's Award. The project has been funded by *emda*, ERDF, City of Lincoln and Lincolnshire County Council, and is part of an overall programme to drive up innovation within Lincolnshire.

3. Ensuring Sustainability

3.1 Transport and Logistics

3.1.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) is taking forward a new approach to transport strategy and investment. The **Delivering a Sustainable Transport System** (DaSTS) agenda flowed from the 2006 Eddington report on Transport and Productivity and the Stern report on the Economics of Climate Change; so it is expected to result in transport priority schemes and measures that contribute more directly to the low carbon agenda. For the first stage of the process the regions were asked to:

- define key regional transport objectives and challenges based on current strategies and transport policies; and
- identify gaps in regional knowledge and evidence to inform future strategy and potential transport funding priorities from 2014 onwards.

RDAs and Regional Assemblies were asked to lead on this largely technical process and *emda* and EMRA have played a key role in taking this forward; with the East Midlands response being submitted by the deadline of 30 June. The DfT should respond during July and this will determine which areas of research and further evidence base development are undertaken, funded largely by the DfT with some regional contributions (including ‘in kind’ input and resources). The DfT will also be undertaking some research at the national level that will help to inform discussions between national and regional partners about transport options through 2011-12, with a view to informing national and regional transport priorities and investments. Given the timetable, the latter stages will clearly be of direct relevance to the Single Regional Strategy development process.

3.1.2 The **Digital Britain** report was published by Government on 16 June. It identifies the critical role that digital technologies will play as part of a new industrial strategy for the UK. The report makes wide ranging recommendations across a number of policy fields, many of which extend considerably beyond RDA responsibilities. The report, however, specifically identifies £23m of existing RDA funding to pilot a range of business support interventions for SMEs to assist them to exploit advanced ICT. The Digital Britain report confirmed the Government's intention to deliver a Universal Service Commitment (USC) for broadband of 2MB/s by 2012 with £200m of funding made up of contributions from the underspend in the national Digital Switchover Help Scheme and a contribution from the Strategic Investment Fund. The Government also indicated that they intend to pursue what is being called a 'Phone Tax' on all land lines to support the roll-out of next generation (super-fast broadband) to reach 90% coverage. The report also identified £30m to the Technology Strategy Board to advance Digital Britain-related innovation nationally. Although welcome in terms of the nature and scale of national action, little detail currently exists on how these funds will be put into practice and whether they will be sufficient to deliver the Government's objectives, particularly in rural areas. BIS will be consulting over the summer on arrangements for a Network Design and Procurement Group that will be tasked to manage the USC; and as the lead RDA on broadband and ICT we expect to be invited to participate on a proposed BIS Advisory Board and play a role coordinating input and discussion with the Government and amongst the RDA family.

3.2 Land and Development

3.2.1 The Regional Assembly formally launched the consultation exercise on the **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Options** on 30 June and consultation will last until early October. This forms the first major stage of the RSS partial review process, which began in autumn 2008. The Options document proposed broad strategic spatial options related to the distribution of development across the region (by Housing Market Area) and its relationship with planned and committed transport infrastructure. We have been involved in developing the Options document as part of a 'virtual team' arrangement with EMRA and will continue to support the future stages of the process. From April 2010 we expect to be more officially involved with a lead role in taking the RSS partial review through the remainder of the process alongside our local authority counterparts.

3.2.2 At its annual national award ceremony held on 19 June the Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) named **Corby Railway Station** as the winner of the IHT/ Costain Award for Effective Partnerships. The IHT Awards celebrate innovative achievements and reward case study examples of best practice that can be emulated by other professionals within the transportation industry. In the case of Corby Railway Station, the Award was given in recognition of the close partnership working that enabled the £8.3m (with an *emda* contribution of £4.75m) station to be constructed on time, on budget and to a very high standard. It is estimated the new train station will unlock an estimated £200m of further commercial investment in the area, creating more than 1,200 new retail and office jobs.

3.2.3 On the 12 June another milestone in the regeneration of Corby was reached with the completion of the **Corby Cube** roof at a ‘topping out’ ceremony. Work on the construction of the £32m scheme, of which *emda* has made a contribution towards capital costs of £5m, began in February 2008 and is scheduled to be completed next year. The Corby Cube will provide a host of facilities including a 445 seat theatre, library, council one stop shop and offices, a council chamber, a terraced roof garden and bistro, creating around 500 new jobs. This is part of a much wider regeneration project known as Parkland Gateway that will see the opening of a new 50 metre Corby Pool facility, financed by Corby Borough Council, as well as the release of two major development plots through demolition of the existing pool and theatre.

3.2.4 Regeneration of the former **Steetley** colliery site is progressing well: the new precast concrete manufacturing facility rolled out its first unit on 24 June. The unit, for a Ministry of Defence project, marked a key milestone for Laing O’Rourke’s vision for off site manufacturing and is the first of four stages of operational start-up that run through to January 2010. Laing O’Rourke is proposing to call the site EXPLORE after one of its subsidiary companies involved in research and development and innovative solutions.

3.2.5 On 18 June HM Treasury formally announced the approval of a £172m funding package required to deliver the **Avenue Project**. The Avenue, a 98 hectare site in Wingerworth near Chesterfield, will now be remediated to create employment opportunities, land for new homes and public space. The site is one of the most contaminated in Western Europe and the most complex single project within the Homes and Communities Agency-administered National Coalfields Programme. VSD Avenue our contracting delivery partner, a consortium of UK and European companies will commence work in earnest on 3 August. The clean up works are likely to last four years, using a combination of innovative contaminated land remediation technologies to deliver high quality, sustainable regeneration.

4. Achieving Equality

4.1 **The Level Centre**, a RIBA award-winning arts centre for people with learning disabilities in Derbyshire, has been shortlisted for two further prestigious awards – the British Construction Industry Awards and the Prime Minister’s Better Public Building Award. The centre was part funded by *emda* and opened in December 2008.

4.2 **Fold Hill Foods Ltd**, situated near Boston, Lincolnshire, has received a grant offer of £280k from RDPE to install an automated filling line and handling system for premium plastic packaging for pet food. The investment will enable the business to pack the product at a 400% increase in volume per hour and the predicted cost savings are £130k a year. This speed increase, together with reductions in costs will increase overall profitability and prove more flexible and adaptable to the changing requirements of customers. The new production line will enable the business to increase its competitiveness, increase its capacity for business growth and retain the 109 people that it currently employs.

4.3 RDPE funding of £569k has been approved for the Branston Ltd **Anaerobic Digestion Plant and Water Recycling Facility** in Lincolnshire. Branston Ltd is one of the UK's biggest potato buyers, packers and distributors. The project will use out of grade potatoes to feed an anaerobic digestion plant, producing electricity for use on site. The solid residue left at the end of the process will be used as a soil conditioner or to fuel an existing biomass boiler. This will be the first facility of this nature in the East Midlands and the project includes a programme of demonstrator activity.

4.4 The 3 Local Action Groups (LAGs) which were approved for funding under Rural Development Programme for England's (RDPE) **LEADER** approach are now operational. The Groups are located in the rural areas of North Nottinghamshire, North Northamptonshire and the Wash/Fens area of South Lincolnshire. These Groups, which determine requests for grant aid in accordance with Local Development Strategies agreed with *emda*, will now join the existing LAGs based in the Coastal Action Zone, the Lindsey Action Zone and the Peak District and Bolsover/North East Derbyshire to deliver a combined £13.2m of RDPE funding within their geographic areas across themes including farm diversification, support for micro businesses, tourism, heritage and training.