

Subject: Norfolk County Council: Still time to apply for share of £4.5 million for rural Norfolk and north Suffolk projects

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## Still time to apply for share of £4.5 million for rural Norfolk and north Suffolk projects

**\*Link to photos of one of the projects to receive funding, Aylsham Community Gym, at bottom of release\***

Almost £3 million of funding has been allocated to rural businesses in Norfolk and north Suffolk through an initiative managed by Norfolk County Council and there is still time to apply for the remaining funding.

This funding is from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) delivered via Defra. In the UK this fund is managed by the Rural Payments Agency and distributed via the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The Local Action Groups (LAGs) deliver the funding under the 'LEADER' approach, which decentralises the decision and funding powers allowing the partnership to support the rural economy at a local level. The LAGs comprise representatives from businesses, community organisations and public authorities, and aim to help micro and small businesses and community organisations create and sustain employment within their respective areas.

Cllr Keith Kiddie, Chair of Norfolk County Council's Business and Property Committee, said: "The recent launch of Norfolk's Rural Strategy has highlighted the importance of investment in our rural economy and, in particular, of seeking to replace EU funding after the UK leaves the EU. It's imperative that we take advantage of the opportunity this LEADER funding presents.

"A wide variety of projects have been funded so far and it's always worth an initial discussion with your Local Action Group to see if your project idea may be eligible. If you do decide to apply, you'll be given help and support all the way through the application process."

Around £4.5 million of funding is still available for rural businesses to apply for through the scheme. Eligible projects need to deliver against the priorities set out for each respective LAG area but, broadly speaking, they must support one or more of the following: increasing farm productivity; micro and small enterprises and farm diversification; rural tourism; provision of rural services; cultural and heritage activity; increasing forestry productivity. Funding has been

guaranteed by the UK government for all projects that are contracted by 29 March 2019.

Since Norfolk and north Suffolk's LEADER programme started, the five LAGs (Brecks, Broads, Waveney Valley, Wensum and Coast and West Norfolk) have awarded almost £3 million to 69 rural projects.

One of the organisations to successfully apply for funding is Aylsham Community Gym based in the town's Drill Hall, which has been given a grant from Wensum and Coast LAG to help purchase some new fitness equipment.

Aylsham Community Gym treasurer Janet Bower said: "We're a small not-for-profit group run by volunteers and are very pleased to receive this funding as it will help us improve the service for our 120 members at the same time as enabling us to keep our fees at an affordable level.

"We'll use the money to purchase more equipment for the gym, including a recumbent bike with different positional settings for those who may find an ordinary bike difficult.

"I think it's important for people to realise that this funding isn't just for businesses and the agricultural industry. Aylsham Community Gym offers a safe, friendly, professional service for local people who wish to improve their fitness. We qualified for a grant because we provide a service that's not otherwise available in this area.

"The initial application is straightforward, the next stage is more detailed and lengthy and it's helpful to have some IT skills, but the LAG staff are very helpful and will go through it all with you.

"I'd strongly encourage other organisations to apply – in our case, a grant of nearly £5,000 isn't bad for a few hours work!"

Other businesses to benefit from LEADER funding include:

### **Brecks LAG**

- Flaming Good Firewood Ltd, Hingham - a grant has been awarded to help with the cost of purchasing some firewood processing equipment that will enable the business to expand
- Machined Precision Components Ltd, Watton – have had a grant approved for a new computer numerical control machining centre that will enable them to meet a growing demand for their products

### **Broads LAG**

- Hall Farm Poultry House, Repps with Bastwick – this farming partnership has been awarded a grant to purchase some state-of-the-art equipment to make their soon-to-be finished poultry house more efficient and productive in the handling and packing of their free range eggs

### **Waveney Valley LAG**

- Winbirri Vineyard - awarded a grant to aid business growth by introducing a mechanised production process (disgorging) to the winery
- HE Hipperson Limited, Beccles – awarded funding to support the business to replace an existing houseboat with a pre-manufactured glamping pod and a floating pontoon to rent out for short breaks and holidays at Gillingham Dam

### **Wensum and Coast LAG**

- Neil Thompson Boats, Wells-next-the-sea - awarded a grant to expand the boat building business by creating a new marine centre at The Old Limeworks
- Swannington Farm to Fork, Swannington – awarded funding to help expand the butchery by redeveloping and converting buildings onsite at Woodlands Farm

### **West Norfolk LAG**

- Wereham village hall, Wereham – a grant has been given to help build a new accredited Passivhaus village hall

- Facilitate IT Limited - has been awarded a grant to help create a bespoke system that will enable businesses to manage their staff training needs more effectively

Andy Thorpe, Norfolk County Council's Local Action Group Manager, said: "There's just over a year left for businesses to get their applications in. We advise anyone thinking about applying for a grant to get in touch with us now so that we can ensure that they don't miss out."

Rural businesses can find out more about their Local Action Group, how to apply for funding and see a list of all the meeting dates and deadlines at [www.norfolklags.co.uk](http://www.norfolklags.co.uk)

### Notes to editors

The Local Action Groups (LAGs) deliver this funding under the 'LEADER' approach, which means that LAGs enlist the energy and resources of local people and organisations in public, private and third sectors, through forming a partnership. This decentralises the decision and funding powers to the local level presenting a 'bottom-up' approach.

The five respective LAG areas comprise:

- The Brecks (including parts of northern Suffolk)
- The Broads
- Wensum and Coast
- Waveney Valley (including parts of northern Suffolk)
- West Norfolk

LEADER ("Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale"), meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions', is a 'bottom-up' approach which enlists the energy and resources of local people who come together as an empowered group to develop an area.

This funding is from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) delivered via Defra ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm)). In the UK this fund is managed by the Rural Payments Agency and distributed via the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The overarching aims of the programme are to:

- Contribute towards improving the environment and the quality of life in rural areas
- Strengthen the rural economy by helping micro and small businesses to create and sustain employment within the area
- Improve competitiveness, particularly in the agriculture and forestry sectors

More information can be found at [www.norfolklags.co.uk](http://www.norfolklags.co.uk)

### For political comment

Cllr Keith Kiddie (Conservative), Chairman of the Business and Property Committee, on 01379 644 750

Cllr Colleen Walker (Labour) on 01493 782272

Cllr John Timewell (Lib Dem) on 07717 881857

### For further information please contact:

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- Aylsham Community Gym - cross trainers [Aylsham Community Gym - cross trainers](#)
- Aylsham Community Gym - flexible bar class [Aylsham Community Gym - flexible bar class](#)



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