

## **Business Forum**

### **Minutes of meeting Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009**

**Meeting Commenced:** 1300hrs

**Apologies:**

**Present:** Richard Mulholland (Chairman), Don Graham (Cumbria Chamber of Commerce), Dave Smith (Rural Development Programme for England, RDPE), Sarah Mitchell (Regen NE Copeland), Alan Hurton (RNEC), Carol Robertson (CBC), Diane Ward (CBC), Adam Ross (AS Design), Donna Barwise (Princes Trust), Christine Robins (Catscout Writings), C Pritt (Education Heritage), Julia McCracken (Walkmill Designs), Greta Brown (The Magic Garden Holistic Therapies), Gillian McGuirk (Whitehaven News), Rachel Starkey (Cobble Hall Livery), Graham Hogg (Windscales Farm), Elaine Simpson (Home Group), Malcolm Thomas-Chapman (Shepherds Arms), John Bruckshaw (Parkside), Sandy Gibson (Parkside), Brian Maxwell (K&C Entertainment Agency), David Farrell (Farrell Sports), Mel Hanley (Gen II), David Gregory (Educommdirect), Karen Kenmare (Kenmare Tyres), M. Baird (Radio), Richard Wood (Artist), Mark Warbrick (Residential Landlord), Sheila Moffat (Work 4 You).

**Introduction:** Richard welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Don Graham (Chamber of Commerce) and Sarah Mitchell (RNEC) as resident speakers who will update the meeting with local and up to date news and introduced Dave Smith (RDPE) as being the meetings guest speaker.

Richard highlighted the Forums website [www.necopeland.co.uk](http://www.necopeland.co.uk) and invited those businesses not already using the service, to contact Alan Hurton (RNEC) 01946 816708, if they would like to take advantage of the free service provided.

**Chamber of Trade:** Don Graham (Chamber of Commerce), informed the meeting that on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at Whitehaven, Alan Lamb from Fire Safety was giving a presentation regarding legislation regarding fire safety and the requirements that puts upon the owners of premises and people responsible for premises.

There are a number of changes to legislation regarding first aiders and the use of first aid in the work place (N.B. Information on this legislation is available at [www.necopeland.co.uk](http://www.necopeland.co.uk)). With this in mind there are to be a series of half hour long sessions throughout West Cumbria and Furness led by Dave Whitehead who will brief the health and safety people regarding the new requirements for first aiders that comes into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009. E-mails will be sent out to advertise the local events.

The Chamber is now running a scheme called "Response to redundancy". The scheme is aimed at firms that are to employ people that have been made redundant and don't have the required skill set for their new role. Funds are available to re-train these people and there is also an initial wage subsidy available. Also included is funding to re-train individuals who are employed but their role is to be made redundant, to re-train them into a new role or different skill set, to relocate them within the existing organisation.

**RNEC:** Sarah Mitchell (RNEC) informed the group that preparatory work on the demolition of Ehenside School is to start this week leading up to the total demolition in the near future. The Regeneration group is working alongside the County Council, Copeland Borough Council, Town Council and others to view redevelopment of the area. A feasibility study and site investigation is required to ascertain what is available and what can be done with the site. Ideas around bringing more tourism into the area that can help local businesses and create more jobs are being looked at. As things progress then reports will be brought back to the meetings. All Forum members and guests are invited to forward their ideas on suitable uses of the site.

The proposal for a new medical centre on Birks Rd which will combine the two medical practices from Cleator Moor along with the dental surgery, the chemist and incorporate a number of other medical facilities such as M.R.I. scanning has now seen outline planning permission being granted. This will allow the project to move forward. Other services such as the Howgill Children's centre and the youth club that are close to the site are also being considered for inclusion into the new scheme.

**Dave Smith:** Dave introduced himself as a Development Officer for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). The programme is split into two areas, one programme being the Cumbria Fells and Dales, which covers the Lake District National Park in the southern part of the county and Solway Border and Eden which covers the northern half of the county. The programme is made up of European money and money from DEFRA in a 50/50 ratio. The programme is a five year programme, running from 2008/2013. There is an amount of £374m for the northwest of England and this money is further broken down into 4 Elements (Axis). The presentation today is centred on Axis 1- Competitiveness of Farming and Forestry and Axis 3 – Rural life and Economy both delivered through the LEADER method. LEADER is a method of working in local areas using local organisations to

direct work of local bodies. Solway, Border and Eden has a working strategy that was put together by local people or representatives of local organisations. This means that the programme is a bottom up decision making process whereby all decisions are made by a local action group executive (LAG) made up of local people.

The whole of the county is covered by the plan with exception of Carlisle, Barrow, Whitehaven, Workington and Kendal this is based on a population criteria mechanism. In this area Ennerdale and Lamplugh come under Fells and Dales, whereas the other parishes including Cleator Moor are covered by Solway, Border and Eden. The reason for this being governed by the Lake District National Park boundary.

One of the LAG objectives is "Increasing the growth of micro-enterprises and social enterprises". Micro-enterprises are any organisation that employs less than the equivalent of 10 fulltime people and has a turnover of less than E2m euro's (£1.5m).

Funding can be applied for under two different mechanisms:

If a grant of under £100K is being applied for then an Expression of Interest form is required which is then followed by an 8 page application form. This is a relatively simple process.

If a grant of over £100K is being applied for then the process is more complex. The full North West Development Agency process which involves an Expression of Interest Form, followed by a 28 page Concept form, followed by a 40 page application form.

Axis 1 – Competitiveness of Farming and Forestry carries 8 measures - £3.02m

Axis 3 – Rural Life and Economy carries 6 measures - £3.06m

Axis 4 – (Co-operation) Tourism

Both Revenue and Capital are available there is no split in the funding between Revenue and Capital although there are various intervention rates that apply. A major point is that all funding is paid in arrears; this is a stipulation set out by the European funders and has always been paid in this manner.

Under Axis 1 most money is available under Measure 111 which involves Training for Farmers and Foresters. A training package is being looked at in the Solway, Border and Eden and Fells and Dale's areas when it has been arranged, this training will be given free to those asking for it. Any ideas or specific training or ideas for training will be welcomed.

Under Axis 3, Measure 311 " Diversification into non-agricultural activities" allows farmers to apply for grants for projects as stated, non-agricultural activities. The Farm Diversification Measure has an intervention rate of up to 40% and carries a small number of stipulations.

Micro-enterprise carries an intervention rate of up to 50% and again has a small number of stipulations.

Funding is available under Axis 4 for tourism ventures, 'Eco-tourism', 'Emerging tourism', 'Development of tourism facilities for disabled people', 'Events' and 'Outdoor activities', all of which have an intervention rate which could be up to 100%. This will not support the further provision of bed space.

There are funds available under the Community Measure whereby funds can be gained to support community retail, asset transfers and service centres such as Cleator Moor. Grants again could be up to 100% but generally fall between 40% and 60%.

Measure 312, " Business creation and development". To date a large number of grants have been successful. Funding for new equipment, marketing and product development, market research and feasibility studies and training are among the many.

Business Planning; Every application under Measure 312 requires a Business Link Action Plan and an independently produced or assessed Business Plan. Additional funding is available to help pay for the business plan process up to £600 or half of the cost.

The outputs that would be looked for after funding would be new jobs created, increase in turn over, looking at safe guarding existing jobs

To start an application process the form "Expression of Interest" (available at [www.necopeland.co.uk](http://www.necopeland.co.uk)) should be filled and returned. This would be followed up by a visit from one of the Development Officers who would go through the paperwork and make sure the applicant understood the full process. The application form would be sent off to the applicant for completion. This would be returned with the Business Plan, the Business Link Action Plan and any relevant quotes required. All of this information is required before the claim can go off to the appraisal process. The application is carried out in house if the application is under £20,000, if it is over it goes to the Regeneration Team at Cockermouth. Once this stage has been negotiated it will then go to the Executive to make a final decision.

The funding is not set up to fund vehicles, though in special circumstances some have been agreed upon and new buildings are not in the remit.

Green energy and Low carbon energy are ideas that are welcomed. Any thoughts around these areas figure highly in this project.

Dave concluded his presentation and invited interested parties to speak to him after the meeting.

Richard thanked everybody for their attendance.

**Meeting closed; 1412hrs.**

