



30/08/2016

Dear Minister

Post-Brexit regeneration funds for rural areas

The government statement made on 13 August 2016 that “all structural and investment fund projects, including agri-environment schemes, signed before the Autumn Statement will be fully funded, even when these projects continue beyond the UK’s departure from the EU” is very welcome.

The additional guarantee that “the current level of agricultural funding under CAP Pillar 1 will be upheld until 2020, as part of the transition to new domestic arrangements” is also most welcome.

It is also important to recognise, of course, that the current structural fund regime includes considerable funds targeted at rural communities beyond agricultural and environmentally based schemes. In particular, funds are available through the Rural Development Programme for England and LEADER. Across rural England partnerships representing local businesses and communities invested a great deal of effort to draw up strategies for the period to 2020. These funds they manage are critical in helping rural economies to grow and diversify, supporting start-up enterprises, business expansion or innovation and new economic opportunities.

The government statement on 13 August makes it clear that consideration is ongoing to determine whether to guarantee any structural and investment fund projects which might be signed after the autumn statement. In addition, close consultation will take place over the coming months in relation to a review of EU funding schemes to address the future shape of such support after the UK has left the EU.

In this respect, we strongly urge you to ensure that the economic interests of rural areas are fully included in all considerations. This stretches far beyond agriculture and the environment and it is critical that the government includes rural stakeholders in its consultation processes. A great deal of expertise and knowledge has been built up over many years in delivering the various iterations of EU funding programmes in relation to rural areas and considerable benefits have been delivered. Relatively small amounts of funding can make a significant impact in rural communities and the continuation of some form of support to enable rural economies to diversify and grow must be included in the government’s considerations over the coming months. Grants given by initiatives such as

Advocacy and support for rural communities and their services

Rural Services Network, Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@rsn.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



LEADER are typically only short term funding commitments and their continued payment should anyway become cost-neutral, were some to happen after the UK ceased paying into the EU.

Local authorities, LEPs, business support organisations, rural businesses and community organisations are very keen to engage in helping to shape the nature of future programmes to ensure that the UK benefits to maximum effect from the economic growth potential which exists in our rural communities.

The Rural Services Network looks forward to full engagement on this matter over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cecilia Motley'.

Cecilia Motley
Chair of the Rural Services Network

Advocacy and support for rural communities and their services

Rural Services Network, Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 851370
www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline