



News from the

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Gamlingay Community Centre Secures First Greensand Ridge Rural Development Grant

A £204,550 grant to help transform a dilapidated community centre into a vibrant, modern community hub, capable of meeting the needs of the whole community has been secured by Gamlingay Parish Council. [07-06-2010]

Known as the 'Gamlingay Community Eco-Hub', the £1.5 million project will provide an accessible community venue for local library, health and pre school nursery services and for a host of other indoor sport and leisure activities, including dance, kick boxing and badminton. It will also be available for hire for functions, including weddings, conferences and training.



[Above - Architect's impression of the Gamlingay Community Eco-Hub]

Bridget Smith, Gamlingay Community Eco-Hub project facilitator said:

“We are really grateful to the Greensand Ridge Local Action Group for awarding us this grant and for the help and advice they have given. Our project is a great example of how to combine much-needed community facilities with energy efficient technologies to

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create a high quality, environmentally friendly community centre. It will also support the development of Gamlingay as a visitor destination, especially for walkers and cyclists.”

The Gamlingay Community Eco Hub is the first project to receive grant funding under the **Greensand Ridge Rural Development Programme**, a £3 million programme which aims to stimulate the local economy of the Greensand Ridge area and to help its rural businesses and community enterprises become more competitive and sustainable.

The programme is managed by the Greensand Ridge Local Action Group, a partnership of local business and community interests who have produced information on how people can apply to the programme for funding and the types of activity it is seeking to support.

Charles Whitbread, Chair of the Local Action Group said:

“We are delighted to be able to support this exciting and innovative community project. As well as delivering a much needed, low carbon community building, the project will also help to create and safeguard additional local jobs and businesses associated with the operation of the new centre”.

Caron Kendall, Greensand Ridge Programme Manager said:

“We are really excited to have made our first grant offer and hope that it will now serve to stimulate further interest in our multi million pound investment programme for rural development in the Greensand Ridge.

“We are particularly keen to hear from local farmers, rural businesses and community enterprises who are looking for funding to support the development of ‘green’ tourism and leisure and local food and drink projects. At a time of economic slowdown, this fund represents a unique opportunity to inject significant public funds into improving our local economy and quality of rural life.”

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For more information about the Gamlingay Community Eco Hub project, or on how to apply for grant funding under the Greensand Ridge Rural Development Programme, contact Caron Kendall at Beds RCC on 01767 626465 or visit: www.greensand.org.uk

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Contact: Caron Kendall, Greensand Ridge Programme Manager, mobile: 07971381182; or email: caronk@bedsrcc.org.uk

Notes for Editors:

1. The **Greensand Ridge Local Action Group** is a newly formed group which currently consists of 39 members, representing local community and rural business interests from across the Greensand Ridge area of Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Its terms of reference require that at least 50% of the group's membership must be from the private or voluntary & community sectors. The Group meets on a regular basis throughout the year to identify and fund rural development programmes and projects that meet the needs of the Greensand Ridge area.

2. The area covered by the Group is identified on the attached illustrative pdf, which can be reproduced for use with any publication associated with this release.

3 The **Greensand Ridge Rural Development Programme** is funded through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) - a £3.9 billion, seven year (2007-13) rural investment programme jointly funded by the European Union and United Kingdom (through Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to:

- Safeguard and enhance the rural environment
- Improve the competitiveness of the agriculture sector
- Foster sustainable and thriving rural businesses and economies

In the East of England region, the programme is administered by EEDA (East of England Development Agency), which has £65 million of RDPE funding to distribute amongst projects over period 2008-13, of which £21 million will be delivered through the community led, bottom-up 'Leader approach'. The Greensand Ridge Local Action Group is one of six in the East of England to have secured investment funding under the Leader approach. The only other Local Action Group area in Bedfordshire is The Chilterns with approximately £500,000 to invest in rural development projects in the southern part of the county. Further info visit: www.eeda.org.uk/rdpe.

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4. The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) is the driving force behind sustainable economic regeneration in the East of England: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. EEDA's vision is for the East of England to be an ideas driven region that is internationally competitive, harnesses the talent of all and is at the forefront of the low carbon economy. For further information visit www.eeda.org.uk

5. The **Greensand Ridge Local Development Strategy 2008-13** was published by the Local Action Group in 2008 and will be kept under annual review over its lifetime. The strategy's high level vision is to establish the Greensand Ridge as a 'green lung' for the people of Bedfordshire and surrounding area. It sees the area as forming a key part of this wider area, offering environmentally-friendly tourism and leisure opportunities to millions of people within a short journey, as well as high-quality locally produced food. The area's farms, woodlands and associated businesses will supply renewable energy and sustainable construction materials, while becoming exemplars in resource efficiency.

The Local Action Group will use the strategy to seek to influence government policy and programmes and to secure the necessary public and private sector investment to realise its vision for the area.

6. The investment prospectus has been produced to publicise the £2.4 million of RDPE investment funding available and to outline the types of rural development activity and project which the Local Action Group is looking to invest in, and how to go about applying.

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