

Ideas on how Rural Funding can benefit Visitor Economy Businesses

Visitor Economy Case Studies

LEADER Programme Funded Projects 2014-22

Introduction

This document is for businesses operating both within the visitor economy and those looking to expand into this sector. It will provide an overview of the benefits of business support in the form of external grants and funding by presenting four successful projects from a range of different businesses and organisations. The aim of the document is to provide insight and act as inspiration for how funding could benefit your business.

The specific funding that will be focused on is the LEADER Programme, which although now discontinued, other funding is available or has replaced this Programme. Nottinghamshire County Council provides free business support to small and medium sized enterprises (through the D2N2 Growth Hub) to direct you to appropriate grant schemes.

Background

The LEADER Programme was a community-led local development scheme that has facilitated development projects across the EU. The Programme was funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and implemented under the Rural Development Programme for England by Local Action Groups.

LEADER grants contributed toward the cost of projects that would improve rural communities by the provision of services and infrastructure or the development of public spaces or cultural or tourism facilities. The projects funded have subsequently created new jobs, increased productivity, improved services, and promoted sustainable growth for the rural economy.

Of these successful projects, below are four case studies.

Case Study 1 - Hawton Waters: Luxury Lodges

Background

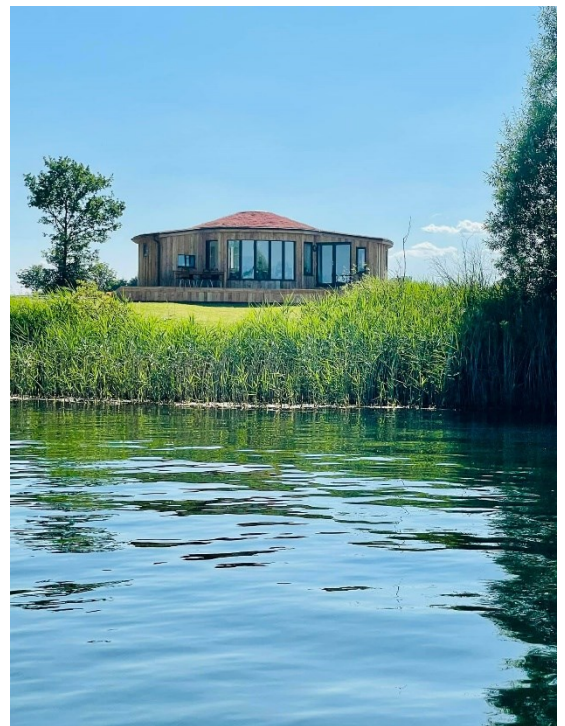
Hawton Waters is a micro-business trading as a tourism operator, providing accommodation for rural retreats in the Newark countryside. Their business is situated on a large plot of land which comprises of a fishing lake, large open space, and over 150 acres of established private woodland.

Project

Originally offering caravan pitches and stays in luxury bell tents, the business wished to expand its range of accommodation and visitor capacity by building 6 high-end lodges. Not only could this increase business and direct employment opportunities for Hawton Waters but also encourage further tourism in the local area.

Funding

To purchase the 6 lodges required a total expenditure of over £166,000 and with a successful application, funding was granted



for investment on creation and development of non-agricultural activities. The LEADER Programme contributed £19,600 towards the total project cost.

Outcome

As a result, Hawton Waters have increased their visitor capacity and are likely to increase their yearly overnight visitors by 105. The knock-on effect of increased visitor numbers spills into the surrounding local economy – helping to create jobs, promote spending and allowing other visitor economy businesses (including pubs, cafés, restaurants and water sports providers) to establish concurrently.

Case Study 2: North Leverton Windmill Trust – Regeneration and Sustainability Project

Background

North Leverton Windmill is an historic building near Retford with its construction and milling operation dating back to 1813. It serves as both a tourist destination and a functioning windmill to this day. The site of the windmill also houses two additional historic buildings of the Windmill Warehouse and the Railway Hut.

Project



This project was one of regeneration and sustainability with the North Leverton Windmill Trust looking for infrastructure improvements to enable its sustainable operation into the future and cement its place as a quality tourist destination. They aimed to regenerate the Windmill Warehouse and connect it to the National Grid in the hopes of converting it into a visitor and educational centre, allowing insights into how the windmill operates and opportunities to view historical documents and memorabilia. Additionally, they aimed for the Railway Hut to be transformed – with it becoming a fully restored amenity space for visitors.

Funding

To achieve the project goals, almost £70,000 was required. After successfully applying for funding from the LEADER Programme, the North Leverton Windmill Trust secured 80% of the total cost as a grant.

Outcome

The new visitor centre in the windmill warehouse was opened in September 2021, over the Heritage Open Days Weekend. This now allows visitors to see a working model of the windmill and live streaming of the windmill in operation – specifically aimed to those unable to visit the upper floors of the windmill itself. Combined with the Railway Hut's regeneration and its use as a windmill shop, the North Leverton Windmill can now boast of attracting 2500 day-visitors each year.



Case Study 3 - Friends of the Trent Vale Trail: Trent Vale Trail - Phase 2a

Background

The Trent Vale Trail is a multi-user route around the village of Collingham (outside of Newark) – through the surrounding wetland and connecting smaller villages with Newark and the Fledborough Viaduct. The trail is accessibility- and family-friendly for everyone from walkers and cyclists to wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Project

The first section, from Newark to Collingham, had been open for several years before aspirations of a new project garnered momentum. Friends of the Trent Vale Trail submitted an application for *expanding rural leisure and sustainable green tourism* by means of a project to join the route up through Collingham to Besthorpe. The Trail, planned to suit all ages and abilities, would join visitor attractions up along the way and intended to enable local trips to be made without reliance on motor transport.

Funding

The total size of the project was almost £170,000 and, due to the Trail being a non-profit making tourist amenity, it was eligible for funding up to 100% of the total project cost. As a result of its successful grant application to the LEADER Programme, it received full funding.

Outcome

Friends of the Trent Vale Trail have achieved their goal of expanding green and sustainable rural tourism opportunities. The additions to the Trail have contributed to bringing approximately 8400 day-visitors to the local area of Collingham each year whilst also ensuring there is a high-quality wheelchair friendly trail.



Case Study 3 - Patchings Art Centre: Augmented Reality Trail



Background

Located outside the village of Calverton, The Patchings Art Centre is a visitor attraction promoting the enjoyment of art. It provides a range of services from an art gallery and café to woodland walks. Additionally, it hosts an annual art festival each summer celebrating arts, crafts, and design.

Project

Looking to expand its tourist attractions, the Art Centre applied for funding to contribute toward implementing an augmented-reality artist trail. This tree-lined artists' trail planned to feature paintings throughout history with visitors able to use a free phone app to see and hear augmented reality versions of master artists interacting with visitors and their surroundings.

Funding

The total scope of the project, including the development of the mobile phone application, was just over £130,000. The successful application for funding from the LEADER Programme enabled the project to be almost entirely covered, with Patchings Art Centre needing to find only £180 to meet the cost.

Outcome

The project met all its aspirations, enabling a unique and free visitor attraction in rural Nottinghamshire. The result of this successful project was the opening up of one full-time equivalent employment role with the attraction enticing over 7000 day-visits per year.

In Summary

Across the LEADER Programme's life, Nottinghamshire has had 62 successful applicants receive grants worth roughly £3.5 million, with almost one third of this money funding visitor economy projects. From these four case studies alone, this one programme has helped fund accommodation development, visitor attraction regeneration and diversification, and walking trail expansion. These successful projects have led to an increase in day visitors per year of 19,000 and North Nottinghamshire alone extending their overnight stay capacity by 27,000 visitors.

Access to funding remains critical for rural business growth and whilst the LEADER Programme has concluded in the UK, similar non-European funding schemes are to take its place. One example of this is the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This Fund is complementary to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the UK Government has made 3 Local Authorities in Nottinghamshire eligible for additional funding (Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, and Rushcliffe) who will consult local rural partners to deliver the Fund. Indicative allocations to these councils have been released already with payments due to start in April 2023.

As with the LEADER Programme, REPF is set to fund projects that support rural businesses or rural communities. Examples of these include the creation or expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses. Since REPF has planned to succeed the LEADER Programme, it is likely that projects similar to the case studies explored would have also been eligible for funding from REPF, dependent on whether the projects were within the mentioned Local Authority's boundary.

Further support

Nottinghamshire County Council helps provide direction to businesses by delivering free business support to SMEs through the D2N2 Growth Hub, including helping to locate appropriate funding schemes. This includes guidance on how you might be able to access funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

For more information, visit: [D2N2 Growth Hub](#)