



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Annual Review

January to December 2012

West Midlands European Regional Development Fund Programme 2007 - 2013



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in Your Future
European Regional
Development Fund 2007-13

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Any enquiries regarding this publication and the West Midlands European Regional Development Fund Programme should be sent to:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Programme Delivery Team: West Midlands
5 St Philips Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 2PW
Telephone: 0303 444 6587
Email: WM.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Setting the Scene

Overview of the Programme

The European Regional Development Fund Programme, which runs from 2007 to 2013, is one of the funds established by the European Commission to help local areas stimulate economic development. The Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for the management of the Programme.

The West Midlands Programme has been allocated 400 million euros to invest in projects which will support local businesses, local people, create jobs and more specifically:

- Achieve a significant increase in the productivity of the business base
- Reduce unemployment and inequalities
- Ensure that the region's economic growth is achieved in a sustainable manner

To achieve these objectives, the Programme is focussed on supporting activities within five priority areas:

- **Priority 1: Promoting Innovation, Research and Development**
Increasing investment in research and development through helping businesses take forward new innovation, sharing of knowledge and developing and demonstrating new technology.
- **Priority 2: Stimulating Enterprise Development**
Increasing business performance through supporting high growth businesses, improving resource efficiency, providing access to finance and developing a strong entrepreneurial culture.
- **Priority 3: Sustainable Urban Development**
Improving the performance of key urban areas through regenerating local areas, encouraging investment and new businesses, creating job opportunities and helping communities most in need.
- **Priority 4: Developing Inter-Regional Activity**
Working with European partners to learn and improve, share and apply best practice and solve problems.
- **Priority 5: Technical Assistance**
Helping to manage, promote and evaluate the delivery of the Programme.

Review of the Year

Achievements and Challenges

The last 12 months has been my first full year as Chair of the West Midlands Local Management Committee and I have found the role to be interesting and rewarding. Through leadership of the Committee, and by working with partners, to date we have been able to help award just over £276 million of ERDF funding awarded to over 150 projects. You really can see year on year the vital benefits and much needed support being made available to individuals within the local communities and businesses located there. Latest figures show that through funding awarded so far, 25,300 jobs will be created or saved and 45,130 people will be helped to start a business or improve the performance of existing businesses.

Through this support, together with effective management and delivery of projects, I am pleased that we have met our annual spend target for 2012. This has not been an easy task and would not have been possible without a lot of hard work from our partners, supported projects and members of the DCLG West Midlands Programme Delivery Team. This achievement has demonstrated to me the impressive determination and can-do attitude of the West Midlands partners. As Chair of the LMC I would like to thank all our partners and projects personally for the effort, involvement and support shown in achieving this result.



We have been busy this year with a whole host of activities. Back in April we introduced a new way of managing and delivering ERDF across England through the introduction of a standardised national approach. From revised forms and guidance to an online system to submit claims, the changes were aimed at making management and delivery of ERDF funding across all Programmes easier for DCLG and partners. So far this has delivered many benefits but nothing is perfect and we will continue to improve this during next year.

Our focus for the early part of 2013 will be to award the outstanding funding we have within the West Midlands Programme. We made great strides in doing this during the year with bidding rounds launched in March, June and October. A wide variety of projects were submitted which we were able to support.

Achievements and Challenges

Promoting the impact of ERDF has also been key this year. As part of this we have hosted two visits from Communities Minister Baroness Hanham to the West Midlands who came to see first hand the benefits that ERDF funding is bringing. In March she visited the £4.5 million ERDF supported project Castle Hill Vision in Dudley. As part of the visit the Minister officially marked the start of the groundwork at the site for the new Archive building.



This was followed in May where the Minister took time to visit the Prince's Trust at the Custard Factory, taking part in Birmingham's version of Dragon's Den, and also the Nishkam Centre on the Soho Road, to meet beneficiaries who were receiving support through these two projects.



Its been a busy year but one which has truly highlighted to me not only importance of funding such as ERDF to local people and areas, but also how important it is to work together to achieve great results.

I am delighted to have been part of the ERDF Programme in the West Midlands for another year and look forward to working with you on the challenges ahead for 2013.

Terrie Alafat, Director
Department for Communities and Local Government
Chair of the West Midlands Local Management Committee

Project Case Studies:

Priority One

Promoting Innovation, Research and Development

Built Environment Climate Change Innovations (BECCI):

This ERDF supported project provides the opportunity for businesses to learn about and get involved in the developing area of energy efficiency within the housing market. Through BECCI local businesses within the West Midlands can access support which demonstrates new techniques and products that can be applied in the housing market to improve energy performance and reduce costs and carbon emissions. Supported by just over £580,000 ERDF, specialist help is on offer to look into potential new business opportunities that are available to companies that can offer innovative products in this field.

Human Interface Technologies Applied Research Centres:

Over the next 3 years, 400 businesses and individuals in the West Midlands holding potentially lucrative and successful innovative digital ideas will get the chance to put them to the test through the use of unique facilities at the £2.9 million ERDF supported Human Interface Technologies Applied Research Centres. Based at Coventry University and Aston University, the centres will provide invaluable access to specialist researchers with expertise in this area, and cutting edge technology,

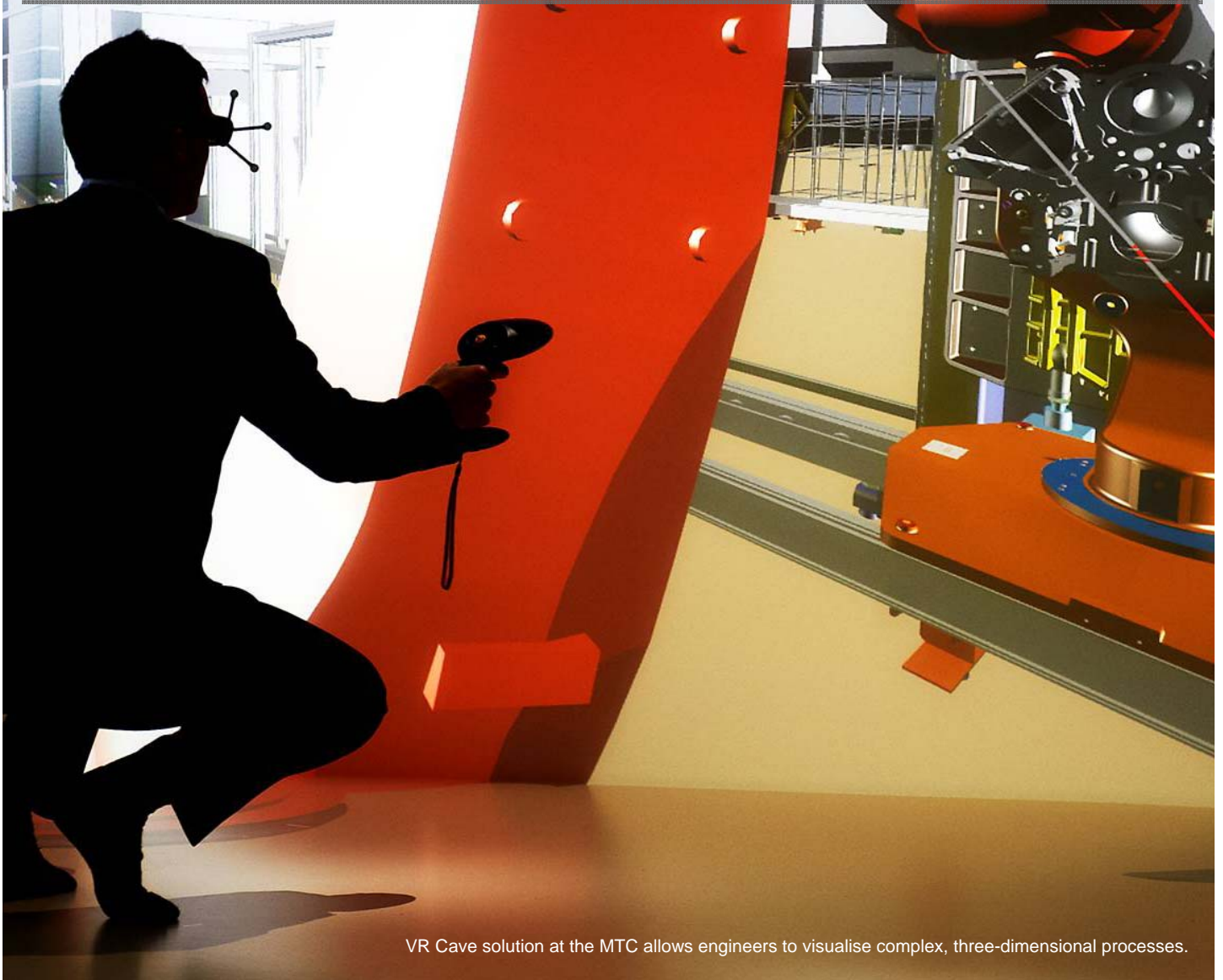
helping individuals to realise their ideas and start up new high tech businesses. This project allows new groundbreaking, innovative and novel technologies to be developed in the West Midlands which explore and develop the different ways we use digital technology to interact with each other and the world around us, and turn them into profitable business ideas.

BSEEN:

Supported by £1.3 million from the ERDF Programme, BSEEN provides valuable support to graduates with an entrepreneurial flair located within the local area. Over the next few years 450 individuals will be able to access specialist support through the project helping them to start up a new business venture. The support on offer is being made available by Aston University, the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University. Supporting graduates to develop and start small businesses which in turn will create jobs and ensure we retain valuable skills are retained are key priorities for the ERDF Programme.

Promoting Innovation, Research and Development

CASiM2: Manufacturing businesses in the West Midlands have the chance to test new product prototypes and innovative ideas using virtual simulation technology available through the £2.6 million ERDF supported CASiM2 project. The innovative technology on offer at the University of Birmingham and the Manufacturing Technology Centre in Coventry (pictured) will help businesses save time and money with costly repeat experiments testing new ideas. The project will help to raise awareness of the new technology and the benefits, followed by a demonstration of its capabilities at these centres of expertise. CASiM2 brings together public and private sector organisations providing businesses access not only to the technology, but also to valuable market credibility through the participation of leading companies, Airbus and Rolls-Royce.



VR Cave solution at the MTC allows engineers to visualise complex, three-dimensional processes.

Project Case Studies:

Priority Two

Stimulating Enterprise Development



Enterprise Programme: Formed by a combination of two ERDF projects totalling £1.5 million of investment, The Prince's Trust Enterprise Programme works with disadvantaged young people aged 18 – 30, to move into self-employment and jobs, through a practical course and mentoring. The support can then lead to available loans between £1,000 and £5,000 to help start the business and get it off the ground. The work being delivered was recognised in May with a visit by Minister Baroness Hanham who on her visit met Drew Roper from Walsall. Drew's passion for animation was spurred on after seeking help through the Programme to set up his own animation business called Yamination.

Stimulating Enterprise Development

Interiors and Lifestyle Networks:

Over the last three years, Interiors and Lifestyle Networks has focused on the development of the Interiors and Lifestyle Futures community by offering support to West Midlands businesses to gain access to or expand into the high-value interiors and lifestyle markets, but also facilitates the development of profitable partnerships and collaborations between like minded businesses for future activity ventures. Supported by £300,000 of ERDF funding and Based at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, this project has provided a range of activities including business improvement workshops to networking events, marketing, branding and product innovation seminars. All activities have been aimed at providing the means for growth helping to develop new opportunities in these niche markets.

Growing the Social Enterprise Sector in the West Midlands Phase 2:

Through this £583,000 ERDF funded project, hands-on support is being provided to businesses at a local level, helping to nurture and develop small growing sectors such as social enterprises into thriving and profitable businesses. Support, advice and guidance is provided right from the early stages of

developing business ideas at a one to one level and through group workshops, providing the know-how and vital help to get an idea up and running. Over the last 4 years, phase 1 has already shown a positive impact with over 625 people supported looking to set up a social enterprise. Phase 2 will ensure this important support service continues until 2015.

Mercia Fund 1:

Bright ideas emerging from universities in the West Midlands are becoming a reality. Over the next 3 years, innovative technology ideas that have been developing quietly through research or in laboratories now have the opportunity to be tested, developed and brought to market through available investment. Support by just over £1 million of ERDF funding, Mercia Fund 1 offers two types of investment. The first initially prepares and supports the start of ideas focussed on key technology areas such as electronics, advanced materials, medical technologies or information communication. The next stage investment enables, the testing, developing and getting the ideas ready for launch and future investment. Unlike most funds, this is an evergreen fund where investment returns are re-cycled into new investments allowing other ideas to take shape and benefit from the fund's continued investment activity.

Project Case Studies:

Priority Three

Achieving Sustainable Urban Development

Burslem Building Improvement

Scheme:

In 2011, the Burslem Building Improvement Scheme was awarded £1.2 million ERDF funding to help with the restoration of Burslem into a thriving town and a hub for up-and-coming creative and professional businesses. Work is well under way to help to affirm the town's growing reputation as the creative quarter of Stoke-on-Trent by transforming derelict buildings into attractive business units for creative companies leading to new jobs for local people.

Coventry, Bedworth and Nuneaton Links to Opportunity:

Long awaited plans to help improve transport links around Coventry and Nuneaton are finally taking shape after £3.5 million ERDF funding was awarded for an improvement project that will provide vital access to jobs for local residents, help attract fresh business investment and improve the overall accessibility in and around the local area. As part of a wider set of improvements being led by the Department for Transport in the Coventry and Nuneaton area with a total overall value of £23.4 million, activities will include the creation of new rail stations at the Ricoh Arena in the Foleshill Area of Coventry,

and at Bermuda Park in Nuneaton – both providing access to key business, retail and leisure areas. Coventry station will also undergo an upgrade with a new bay platform increasing the frequency of trains to the station, and also forming a key part in the large commercial developments planned at Friargate.

West Bromwich Public Realm:

Plans to transform West Bromwich into one of the Black Country's premier towns are underway with a programme aimed at improving and linking-up spaces between new developments in the town centre including The Public and Sandwell College. Supported by £4 million of ERDF funding, the scheme will further improve the image and appeal of the town centre to visitors and help attract fresh inward investment and job opportunities. It includes visual improvements through artwork, landscaping, street furniture and the creation of a new square. To date new paving and trees have been planted along the high street, ringway and residential areas. Design work is also underway for the Metro Plaza scheme which will connect the metro and bus station with the town centre. The improvements will be completed by summer 2015.

Achieving Sustainable Urban Development

Photograph taken by Nicholas Hatton, student from Staffordshire University



Middleport Pottery : The ceramics industry of Stoke-on-Trent is getting a helping hand to revamp and reignite with the transformation of part of the former Grade II* listed Middleport Pottery site into vital workspace units for local creative industry businesses, and the creation of a new visitor attraction sharing the story of this traditional British ceramics heritage. Support of just over £1 million ERDF will help Burslem to capitalise on its ceramics heritage, help support businesses, create jobs and boost the local economy. Led by the Prince's Regeneration Trust's, the plans to regenerate this precious piece of British industrial heritage is also supported by funding through the Regional Growth Fund.



Any enquiries regarding the West Midlands European Regional Development Fund Programme contact the Programme Delivery Team: West Midlands on:

WM.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk.