

Investing in **your** future



West Midlands European  
Regional Development Fund  
Programme 2007 – 2013

investing  
in **your** future  
European Regional Development Fund  
European Union



[www.advantagewm.co.uk](http://www.advantagewm.co.uk)

# Contents

## Introduction and overview

### Priority one

Priority one focuses on investing in research and development and innovation in the West Midlands.

- Page 4** Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)  
Innovation Vouchers  
Low Carbon Vehicle Technology Project (LCVTP)
- Page 5** Aerospace Technology Exploitation Project II  
Innovation Networks
- Page 6** SPEED WM  
Premium Vehicle Customer Interface  
Technologies Centre of Excellence Project  
Advanced Materials Programme –  
Creating and Characterising

### Priority two

Priority two supports projects that stimulate enterprise development by improving business performance and developing a stronger entrepreneurial culture, which is critical in creating a sustainable economy for the West Midlands.

- Page 7** Digital Media Investment Readiness  
Small Business Loans and Mentoring
- Page 8** Advantage Proof of Concept Fund  
West Midlands Food Partnership (WMFP)  
MAS – WM Automotive Response Programme
- Page 9** Environmental Advisory Service  
West Midlands Industrial Symbiosis Network  
West Midlands (SME) Internationalisation
- Page 10** The Early Advantage Limited Partnership

### Priority three

Priority three is focussed on stimulating renaissance within key urban areas through job creation and helping communities most in need. In the West Midlands, Priority three is being delivered through five sub-regional packages which complement each other to develop a co-ordinated approach to regeneration.

- Page 11** Coventry and Nuneaton
- Page 12** Black Country  
North Staffordshire
- Page 13** Birmingham  
North Solihull

### Priority four

Priority four is dedicated to sharing best practice across regions in different member states. This is done through case study visits, work exchanges and shadowing, workshops and conferences to optimise knowledge transfer and stimulate inter-regional co-operation.

- Page 14** Technology Networks
- Page 15** Bridge to Growth Europe  
Developing Centre of Excellence Networks  
in Translational Research and Service Delivery



## Introduction and overview

The West Midlands European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme is providing €400 million of investment to create jobs and support businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises.

### **As a vital funding stream from the European Union, the programme has three key objectives:**

- to achieve a significant increase in the productivity of businesses in the West Midlands
- to reduce unemployment and inequalities
- to ensure that the region's economic growth is achieved in a sustainable manner

To achieve these objectives ERDF funding is awarded to projects that focus on priority areas of activity including innovation and R&D, enterprise, sustainable urban development and inter-regional activity.

### **As a result of the funding awarded to date:-**

- 18,136 jobs will be created or safeguarded
- 8,634 people will be helped to find a job
- 7,977 people will be helped to start a business
- 2,541 new businesses will be created
- 16,610 businesses will be helped to improve their performance, including SMEs and social enterprises
- Over £103 million of public and private funds will be invested within the region

## Overview

In 2007 the West Midlands was awarded €400 million through the current ERDF Programme and since this time ERDF funding has been demonstrating just how vital it is to the businesses, people and overall regeneration of the West Midlands.

To date £155 million has been awarded to 97 different projects throughout the region and it's this wide variety which is a particular success of the Programme. From helping the region to capitalise on its strengths through the Low Carbon Vehicle Technology Project, to supporting important local businesses with the equipment they need for success such as Lumejet. We have seen job creation in local communities from a large number of projects and benefited from the knowledge of European partners with the Technology Networks project.

Supporting businesses and individuals in the West Midlands through challenging economic times has become one of the most important roles for the ERDF Programme, not only helping to keep and create jobs but also supporting small and medium sized businesses in tough times. The Programme has been able to respond quickly and flexibly, through introducing new initiatives such as MAS-WM Automotive Response Programme, not only to meet the short term needs of businesses but also to encourage innovation to help them

grow and support the future economic success of the region.

It is testament to the ERDF Programme's strong partnerships that it has been able to continue to support projects through changing economic and political times. Partnership working will continue to be key to the successful delivery of the Programme and its targets by 2015.

As the Department for Communities and Local Government takes over management of the West Midlands ERDF Programme later in 2011, the overall aim remains the same – getting the funding to the right projects, helping them to deliver and ensuring the future success of individuals and businesses within the region.

We hope that this brochure will demonstrate to you the amazing work that is going on at projects throughout the region so far. We would like to celebrate this success with you and show you how the Programme is investing in the future of individuals and businesses within the West Midlands.



**Mark Foley**



**Director of European Programmes**



## Priority one

### Promoting innovation and research and development

#### Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)

**One of the UK's leading programmes to boost business competitiveness and productivity has received more than £12m from the ERDF Programme in the West Midlands.**

Aimed at capitalising on the knowledge, technology and skills in the region, opportunities to forge innovation partnerships, known as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), are being developed between companies and graduates through help from the region's universities.

Designed to increase the competitiveness of West Midlands' businesses by the application of new and innovative ideas, the programme aims to triple the number of businesses that can be supported, adding £220,000 to the turnover of each, as demonstrated by past beneficiaries. It will also deliver an increased supply of business-experienced graduates and promote commercial awareness among teaching and research staff.



Mark Hayward, Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associate and Roy Taylor, Managing Director of Malthouse Engineering Co. Ltd

In November 2010, the good work of the KTPs was highlighted with the Cisco Prize for New Technologies at the Lord Stafford Awards, as a graduate of the University of Wolverhampton, working as part of a KTP with the Advanced Business Development Network (ABDN), set up a new system allowing £200,000 of new business to be developed through the network.

With an overall target of setting up 210 KTPs and increasing Gross Value Added (GVA) by 4.5 million by 2014, the programme is focused on delivering a positive long-term impact on the regional economy.

#### Innovation Vouchers

Part of the Solutions for Business programme - a package of funded business support products and services designed to help businesses start, grow and succeed - Innovation Vouchers enable SMEs in the West Midlands to buy £3,000 worth of expertise from one of the 13 Universities in the West Midlands area.

The scheme benefits from £375,000 ERDF funding to help increase the potential for innovation in SMEs and has been particularly effective in overcoming some of the barriers that have traditionally discouraged SMEs from working with universities, such as finding the appropriate expert and accessing their support quickly, and the perception that universities only work with large companies. Example projects include:

- New product / process development
- New business model development
- Efficiency audit, process change
- Supply chain management and logistics
- New service delivery and customer interface
- New service development
- Product and service testing and economic impact assessment
- Innovation / technology audit
- Exploiting new web technologies for the region and/or industry Market research

A total of 200 Innovation Vouchers have been allocated to stimulate innovation and collaboration with a university with the aim of leading to a long term relationship and improved access to other business support mechanisms.

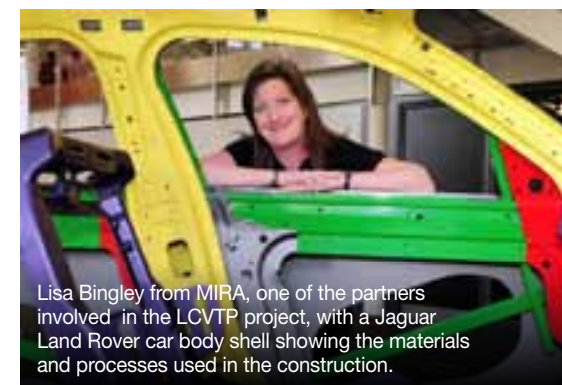
#### Low Carbon Vehicle Technology Project (LCVTP)

**The West Midlands ERDF Programme is investing £9.5m in a Low Carbon Vehicle Technology Project (LCVTP), designed to accelerate the introduction of next generation low carbon vehicles through advances in key technology areas such as batteries, motors, materials and aerodynamics.**

Partners in the LCVTP include Jaguar Land Rover, Tata Motors, Zyteck, Ricardo, MIRA, WMG at the University of Warwick and Coventry University. The project will also involve UK suppliers and SMEs within the region.

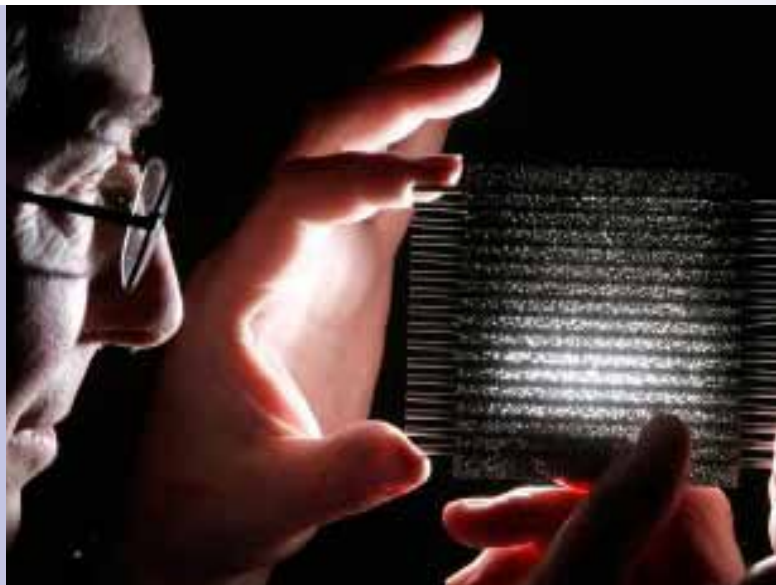
Independent research on the LCVTP alone estimates it will create between 3,000 and 11,500 jobs in the UK by 2020, with the majority of those being in the West Midlands. At the same time, it will safeguard jobs in the supply chain as businesses switch to low carbon opportunities. Research estimates wealth creation of up to £2.8bn.

This initiative demonstrates the region's growing reputation for innovation and excellence in the emerging low carbon and green technologies which is helping the region to become a centre of excellence in this field.



Lisa Bingley from MIRA, one of the partners involved in the LCVTP project, with a Jaguar Land Rover car body shell showing the materials and processes used in the construction.

## Priority one



### Aerospace Technology Exploitation Project II

**A regional programme aimed at encouraging the development and exploitation of new technologies by SMEs in the Midlands aerospace supply chain has received over £730,000 from the ERDF Programme.**

The aerospace industry plays a vital role in the regional economy with over 700 companies spread across the West and East Midlands, employing over 45,000 people.

A heat transfer surface developed by Meggitt Control Systems of Birmingham, with the University of Birmingham and two local SMEs.

The Aerospace Technology Exploitation Programme II (ATEPII) will help more companies in the West Midlands, particularly SMEs, to develop new technologies through collaborative working in order to address emerging market requirements for future aircraft.

This is the second phase of a pioneering programme that will continue to help aerospace firms, develop innovative new technologies and ultimately attract new orders.

### Innovation Networks

**Over £925,000 of ERDF funding is helping to raise innovation levels amongst West Midlands SMEs through providing grants to develop innovative products, processes and services.**

Innovation Networks was devised to help overcome the main barriers to innovation which small businesses face. This centres around the lack of funding and skills within organisations to take a new idea from its inception to launching it on the market. A variety of hands-on support can be offered to SMEs from the development costs of parts, materials and prototypes, to testing and marketing activity.

### HotSpot™

A company who has received support from Innovation Networks is Games Education Ltd who have developed the HotSpot™ – an automated timing device that allows coaches of many sports to utilise technology to create the best training environment.

The timing device is now selling well with over 104 units having been bought by a variety of prestigious sporting organisations including Chelsea and Blackburn Rovers football clubs and the British Lawn Tennis association. Several national tennis academies around Europe have bought units and the sales team have just returned from a successful sales drive in USA.

Michael Crooks and Fraser Harban,  
Partners of Games Education Ltd  
who developed the HotSpot™





## Priority one

### SPEED WM

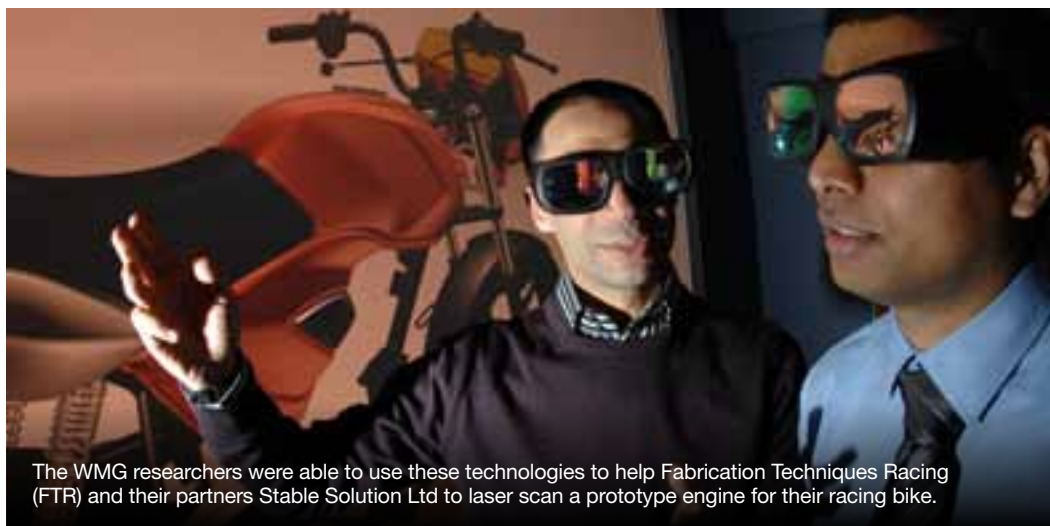
**An ERDF project is set to explore and enhance the entrepreneurship potential of students in the region and support them to establish their own businesses.**

Over £2.5 million of ERDF has been awarded to the University of Wolverhampton for the Student Placement for Entrepreneurship in Education (SPEED) project, which ultimately aims to improve the performance of regional businesses by transferring enterprise knowledge from higher education institutions (HEI) through practical business engagement with students.

This graduation-focused project will provide 1,200 students with the opportunity to develop their business ideas and gain support from business development staff and academics to make their plans reality. Effectively this enables students to create their own businesses, providing an opportunity for self-employed work placements rather than the traditional employer-led approach.

By the end of 2011, SPEED WM will have helped to deliver jobs whilst also increasing the number of graduate businesses in the region with 140 new businesses established.

### Premium Vehicle Customer Interface Technologies Centre of Excellence Project



The WMG researchers were able to use these technologies to help Fabrication Techniques Racing (FTR) and their partners Stable Solution Ltd to laser scan a prototype engine for their racing bike.

**The West Midlands ERDF Programme has part-funded a laboratory that gives engineers in manufacturing companies 'super powers' for example by helping a Midlands-based company build a super bike that has finished 2nd in the first ever MotoGP2 race in Qatar.**

The bike's designers have joined other engineers in Midlands manufacturing companies, large and small, which have effectively been granted the super powers of laser vision and x-ray eyes thanks to the £5 million lab launched at Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) at the University of Warwick.

The new Premium Vehicle Customer Interface Technologies (PVCIT) Centre, which has received over £2 million of ERDF funding, brings together a unique package: high resolution laser scanners, x-ray technology in a precision CT scanner and the UK's highest resolution 3D visualisation "Power Wall". These technologies will provide Midlands manufacturers with the abilities that would normally be associated with superheroes and supercomputers rather than engineers and can be applied to products as diverse as body armour to car design.

### Advanced Materials Programme – Creating and Characterising

Leading academics at the University of Birmingham and the University of Warwick are working together through the Science City Research Alliance (SCRA) to put the West Midlands at the forefront of advanced materials research thanks to over £5.3 million from the ERDF Programme.

The project: Creating and Characterising the Next Generation of Advanced Materials will help the region to establish itself as an international competitor in advanced materials research and development and in knowledge transfer. The funding for research infrastructure and state-of-the-art equipment and facilities when allied with the expertise at the two universities creates a unique capability across a vast range of materials and covering all aspects of materials synthesis, analysis and characterisation.

Working with companies in the region, the project aims to create 40 jobs and four new businesses, support a further 70 businesses, assist 50 graduates into employment and improve the skills of 200 people in the region as well as leverage of a further £15 – £20M worth of R&D investment into the region.

## Priority two

### Stimulating enterprise

#### Digital Media Investment Readiness

**ERDF funding is giving a boost to the screen media industry in the West Midlands through a project with Screen West Midlands to strengthen, support and promote digital media businesses.**

Supported by £289,310 from the ERDF Programme, the Digital Media Investment Readiness project covers a number of different strands including industry events, development labs and development funding - which will enable SMEs to develop concepts into full products before pitching to an investment panel.

#### InCahoots

One company working with Screen West Midlands through the project is InCahoots (a newly-formed division of Television Junction). After attending a Digital Treasures event and Ideas Tank to discuss product development, this traditional TV production company expanded its remit and formed a partnership with Clusta to develop an

innovative digital media archive project.

Now known as WeVee and launched last year, it gives users on line access to a moving image archive shot in the West Midlands over the last century. WeVee allows users to edit footage and create short 'mash-ups' to music.

The project overall will increase the number of screen, image and sound businesses in the region and their turnover and in turn raise the profile of the West Midlands' digital media both locally, nationally and internationally.



Digital Treasures Event at The Public, West Bromwich.

#### Small Business Loans and Mentoring

**Access to funding is a vital part of encouraging innovation and business growth in the West Midlands. The global financial crisis has made it increasingly difficult for entrepreneurs and small businesses to secure small loans, even if they have viable business propositions. There are a number of projects being funded by the West Midlands ERDF programme which aim to provide much needed small loans for both start-ups and existing SMEs looking to grow in the region.**

Over £1.24 million of funding from the West Midlands ERDF Programme is being used to help the Prince's Trust support young entrepreneurs. This youth charity has helped more than 74,000 young people set up in business since 1983. The Prince's Trust provides low-interest loans, business training and mentor support for young people who are keen to start their own business.

The Aston Reinvestment Trust has received almost £1.5 million to help provide finance for start-ups and early stage businesses

that need small loans to grow in Birmingham and Solihull.

Loans of £10,000 to £50,000 are being made available to new business start ups and existing SME's through the Black Country Reinvestment Society. This project has received £3 million ERDF to provide access to funding for new and existing businesses planning to develop and expand in the Black Country.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust is using over £740,000 ERDF to help provide loans to new businesses start ups and existing SMEs in the area who have viable propositions but which are unable to access

all of the finance they need to implement their plans.

Finally new start-ups and existing businesses in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire will be able to access loans of up to £50,000 thanks to MRRT, a small business loans project which has received over £1.25 million of ERDF funding.

Capriena Linton from Wolverhampton, received help through the Prince's Trust project to set up her own hair salon business.



## Priority two

### Advantage Proof of Concept Fund

**Businesses and entrepreneurs all over the region are receiving a boost to innovative ideas through the Advantage Proof of Concept Fund. Designed to support innovation and product development in the West Midlands, £3.1 million ERDF was awarded to the project which is helping move proof of concept ventures toward commercial viability.**

The Advantage Proof of Concept Fund is designed to support established and start-up businesses developing innovative new products and processes and to assist in the spin-out of new enterprises from universities in the West Midlands. It supports businesses to investigate, advance and protect early stage innovative business ideas and to commercialise new innovations.

This is a true collaboration project delivered through a number of regional organisations, including the University of Warwick Science Park, Connect Midlands, the University of Wolverhampton, Malvern Hills Science Park, Staffordshire and Black Country BIC and the Central Technology Belt.

### West Midlands Food Partnership (WMFP)

**The West Midlands food and drink industry is receiving a huge boost of just under £860,000 from the ERDF Programme. Delivered by Heart of England Fine Foods (HEFF) through the West Midlands Food Partnership (WMFP) project, this initiative improves the competitiveness of Food and Drink SMEs in the region, getting them ready to seize the opportunities created by the predicted 40 per cent growth over the next five years in locally and regionally sourced premium foods and products.**

Historically small businesses would find it difficult to access these market opportunities and make contact with the larger players in the market. The project seeks to address this by providing a series of UK Trade Development opportunities, where businesses will be given the opportunity to access the supply chains in supermarkets, catering suppliers and other outlets through trade shows, meet the buyer events and trade briefings.



Through the WMFP programme, Heart of England Fine Foods has secured listings for 58 food and drink SME's in 188 Midcounties Co-operative stores as part of the supply chain development work.

### MAS – WM Automotive Response Programme

**The West Midlands ERDF Programme was able to act quickly to help businesses in the region during the economic recession. The West Midlands Taskforce – a partner group made of public and private sector**

**representatives – identified a package of interventions to address the immediate needs of businesses. Included was the development of the Automotive Response Programme.**

Support was particularly important for the automotive sector which plays such a critical role in the regional economy. Over £3.5 million of ERDF

was used to launch the programme with a further £1 million provided due to high demand. It was delivered by the Manufacturing Advisory Service and provided robust, restructuring support to companies to ensure the future of the automotive sector in the region.

As a result 201 West Midlands manufacturers received 100% funded,

strategic business support and it has conservatively reported that the programme created over 400 and safeguarded over 3000 jobs in the West Midlands. In terms of sales for the supported businesses, it created over £100 million of brand new business and safeguarded sales in excess of £165 million.



## Priority two

### Carbon Reduction

As the sustainability agenda produces both opportunities and challenges for businesses in the West Midlands, ERDF funding is being used to help companies to meet ambitious carbon reduction targets.

### Environmental Advisory Service

**With an increase in environmental regulation, raw materials and waste disposal costs, the demand for support with environmental issues, particularly from SMEs, is growing. Over £500,000 ERDF has been used to help fund the Environment Advisory Service (EAS), which provides resource efficiency support to West Midlands companies looking to make financial savings and improve their environmental performance.**

Delivered through Business Link and labelled 'Improving Your Resource Efficiency', the programme has provided a broad range of free business-focused support – from telephone advice to face-to-face, expert environmental consultancy – targeted at helping businesses to cut costs. Businesses were also

able to access a consultancy grant to assist with the implementation of resource efficiency improvement projects.

SME businesses that have participated in the programme have received expert advice from technical advisors to assist them to realise a number of business benefits including cost savings, improved environmental credentials and improved reputation with customers and stakeholders. Between 2009 and 2011 over 400 business's received one to one support to help identify their scope to making financial savings, over £4 million of potential savings have been identified through these visits including reductions in raw materials use, energy, water and waste minimisation.

### West Midlands Industrial Symbiosis Network

**Almost £1 million in ERDF funding is also being used to help identify opportunities where waste products from one industry can be recovered, reprocessed or re-used by other industries, reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, cutting carbon emissions and creating greener jobs.**

The West Midlands Industrial Symbiosis Network (WMIS Net) is managed by International Synergies, the world's leading expert on the practical application of industrial symbiosis and the company behind the UK's National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP).

The project focuses on working with businesses within the food & drink, metals, construction and automotive/aerospace sectors, highlighted as priority industries for the West Midlands.

Participating businesses will be provided with the tools and techniques to enable them to accurately identify in-house resource streams and then prioritise them in terms of being able to find a profitable outlet or input.

Once this data has been collected by the businesses, they are invited to attend a 'Synergy' workshop where International Synergies' team of experienced industrial symbiosis practitioners analyse the data and identify profitable links between the companies.

In addition, the information is also be input into NISP's national resource database system, that contains information on material streams from over 13,500 companies countrywide, to further increase the opportunities for synergies and matches across the region, which in turn will yield a combination of environmental, economic and social benefits.

For businesses involvement in the project potential benefits include cost savings as land fill tax is avoided; additional sales as waste products are translated into assets with a value; new business opportunities and innovation through the reprocessing of by-products; and greater efficiency and environmental savings across multiple industries.



Businesses from the region working together at a WMIS Net workshop.

### West Midlands (SME) Internationalisation

**Over £3 million ERDF is being used to support a trade development scheme to help increase the regional export share and encourage diversification of the West Midlands export base.**

The West Midlands (SME) Internationalisation project is being run by UK Trade and Investment West Midlands (UKTI-WM) and Coventry University Enterprise Ltd (CUE). The partnership enables UKTI to support those SMEs which have a significant impact on increasing regional share of export activity.

The project is also developing centres of market excellence to provide expertise on specific markets and an international innovation centre to assist SMEs looking to enter international markets.

The project will support 528 SMEs by the middle of 2012, creating 264 jobs and safeguarding a further 42. The key aim is to increase both the number of exporters and the value of their exports, increasing Gross Value Added (GVA) to the region.

## Priority two

### The Early Advantage Limited Partnership

**The West Midlands ERDF Programme is helping to support fledgling businesses in the region through a venture capital fund. £4 million ERDF is being used to support the Early Advantage Limited Partnership ('EALP'), formerly known as the Advantage Early Stage Equity Fund, which aims to invest in up to 50 early stage businesses, the majority of which will be start-ups, attracted by the fund manager Midven directly, or identified through business angel networks, professional advisers, other fund managers, university technology transfer offices, science parks and business support initiatives. Midven is a privately owned specialist venture capital company based in Birmingham with a successful track record of investing in existing small and medium-sized enterprises in the Midlands over 15 years.**

The project is designed to address the "Equity Gap", as a result of which small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in particular can find it difficult to raise relatively small amounts of risk capital. This is particularly true of early stage businesses where the risks of failure are high.

The EALP fund was established in December 2009. To date the fund has invested £1.4m in 10 companies leveraging in £4.6m of co-investment. Its first investment in January 2010 was in Anaxsys Technology, which subsequently launched its first product in October 2010. Many of the EALP's investments have been made alongside local business angel networks and some of the companies invested in have subsequently attracted investment from national venture capital funds.

#### Lumejet

A Coventry printing technology company, Lumejet, is one of the beneficiaries of the EALP, receiving an investment of £125,000 alongside business angel investment

of £375,000 to develop products aimed at capitalising on the demand for high-quality digital print, enabling it to bring its multi-LED technology from prototype towards volume production.



Philip Jarvis, Chief Executive of Lumejet Ltd.

## Priority three

### Sustainable urban development

#### Coventry and Nuneaton

**£12 million from the ERDF Programme is being used to assist the economic and social renaissance of the Coventry and Nuneaton Regeneration Zone (CNRZ) by encouraging job creation, stimulating enterprise and targeting those communities most in need.**

The Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region has a dynamic economy and is an engine of growth for the region. However the sub-region still suffers from some significant areas of deprivation.

Many of these underperforming areas are within the CNRZ with a population of approximately 207,000 people and covers much of northern Coventry, Nuneaton and Bedworth. This economy has traditionally been over-dependent on manufacturing and continues to lose jobs within this sector as a result of strong global competition.

The Coventry and Nuneaton ERDF Package aims to make significant changes by revitalising local economies, encouraging inward investment, increasing energy efficiency and productivity, promoting community enterprise and employment and improving travel to work.



“Far Gosford Street is a high-profile area and the restoration of its historic physical fabric and the creation of a vibrant local economy will help change the perception of Coventry and encourage enterprise.”

Mark Foley,  
Director of European  
Programmes

#### Far Gosford Street

One example of a project funded by the package is the transformation of Far Gosford Street, one of Coventry's most historic areas, into a vibrant cultural quarter and centre for creative enterprises.

This radical plan includes over £1.2 million ERDF and is also being supported by Coventry City Council, Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire

Partnership and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The funding is being used to purchase land and help with the continued restoration of 15th century Grade II listed buildings on the street.

The project has already seen the opening of the Creative Hub in one of Coventry's oldest buildings which will act as a focus for business, resident and visitor activity. The neighbouring

Heart and Hand pub has also been sensitively restored to provide new business space and residential accommodation.



## Priority three

### Black Country

**The North and South Black Country Priority Three Packages have been granted £12 million ERDF each to help secure the revitalisation of the Black Country economy to make it a confident 'can do' place.**

The Black Country is home to a diverse population of almost 1.1 million and is representative of the industrial heritage of the West Midlands. Despite some of the major strengths of the Black Country and its efforts to transform its image and industrial make-up, there continues to be clear evidence of economic, social and environmental deprivation.

The sub region suffers from fewer highly skilled, high earning people living and working in the area and has some of the most severe concentrations of poverty. In fact the Black Country is one of only three sub-regions in the UK to have experienced decline in private sector employment and in net population.

The North and South Black Country packages are taking the opportunity to address these issues, supporting the objectives of the Black Country Study to grow the population to 1.2 million and raise income levels to 90% of the UK average (currently 81%) by 2031.

Both the North and Black Country are working together to deliver four

key priorities with the ERDF funding: stimulating physical improvements and access, securing an enterprise community, tackling worklessness and creating a sustainable environment.

#### WorkWise

WorkWise is one project that has been funded by the Black Country packages. This initiative is being delivered by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (CENTRO), using £817,990 ERDF as part of a programme to tackle transport related barriers to employment which are preventing the Black Country's most disadvantaged groups from accessing employment opportunities.

It offers a number of services, including travel advice and guidance via, tailored journey planning for travelling by bus, train, tram, on foot, by bike or car-sharing. WorkWise also offers unemployed people free tickets for travel to interviews and free travel passes for the first three months of a new job working across all four unitary authorities in the area.

By the end of the project, CENTRO and its delivery partners aim to have helped 4,782 Black Country residents in the most economically excluded groups back into work, with a target of 1,341 people assisted by the end of March 2011.

### North Staffordshire

**The £12 million North Staffordshire ERDF Priority Three Package is being used to engage deprived communities, address worklessness, reduce the economic disparity between parts of the sub-region and raise the profile of North Staffordshire.**

Renowned for its international ceramics industry, North Staffordshire's fortunes have been hit by the sustained manufacturing decline, resulting in it falling behind other UK sub-regions.

Despite ongoing inward investment in the area, North Staffordshire still faces significant economic and social challenges and as a whole, the sub-region lags behind on every economic indicator with low earnings and a declining population.

Specifically the package has four main areas of focus:-

- Building on the urban core – attracting and retaining a diverse range of service companies to the City Centre to bring economic stability and growth
- Business knowledge – developing business opportunities and removing barriers to better exploit people's creativity and entrepreneurialism
- Communities – removing barriers to work and improving access to existing and emerging employment opportunities
- Image and place making – raising the profile of North Staffordshire by supporting marketing initiatives to improve its cultural and business attractiveness.



### Enabling Town Centre Transformation

Over £665,000 from the North Staffordshire ERDF package is being used to set up town centre regeneration teams in the three towns of Burslem, Stoke Town and Longton.

It is vital that with redevelopment focus on the City Centre and University Quarter of Stoke on Trent that these old town centres aren't left to decline, particularly as these historic centres contain the majority of the listed buildings in the area.

The ERDF funding will enable the transformation of these town centres by setting up Regeneration Boards of local people to oversee the development of the area. Delivery plans are being developed for a programme of activity in each town to regenerate declining centres. A programme of short term 'quick win' interventions is being combined with longer term strategic planning in each town through the creation of focused masterplans designed to set out a flexible template for long term regeneration.

## Priority three

### Birmingham

**Birmingham has made tremendous progress over the last twenty years and is regularly hailed as one of Europe's success stories. The £24 million Priority Three ERDF Package being delivered by Birmingham City Council will build on the strategic success of major capital schemes such as Millennium Point and Eastside which have created significant new employment in the city.**

The key challenge for the Birmingham package is to try to better connect the economic opportunities in the city centre with neighbouring communities, especially in East Birmingham, which has some of the highest levels of worklessness in the West Midlands.

The package will focus on 'regional investment and local growth', aiming to transform the economic role of Eastside and Digbeth and link these more directly through arterial routes to the city centre and out to major new growth areas including the M42 corridor, Birmingham International Airport and Longbridge.

The ERDF funding will enable the creation of new employment opportunities and support communities to increase their economic viability and access to new jobs. The key priorities are providing access to employment and environment, enterprise and business growth and worklessness and skills.

### Tyseley Property Assistance Programme

This project provides funds to new and existing SMEs in Tyseley to improve premises, access and infrastructure to boost their economic competitiveness. In support of the Tyseley Low Carbon Enterprise District, the programme will create more than 40 new jobs as well as safeguarding a further 170.

### Golden Square

Over £700,000 of ERDF funding is being used to help develop a new public square at the heart of the Jewellery Quarter aimed at stimulating investment in the local area and creating an attractive environment for visitors and businesses.



### North Solihull

**The £10.5 million North Solihull ERDF Priority Three Package covers a total of 12 wards that had fallen into the ERDF Programme definition of urban areas of decline.**

The package aims to help reduce the significant socio-economic disparities that divide these areas from the rest of the Borough and capitalise on opportunities for new employment and enterprise.

The ERDF areas face many socio-economic challenges with high levels of worklessness, low levels of connectivity with surrounding economic opportunities and concerns over the next generation of entrepreneurs and employees. There are also further threats from the ongoing decline in manufacturing in the region and a lack of inward investment in the North Solihull area.

The ERDF package is supporting the 'Regenerating North Solihull' programme, which is one of the single largest projects of its type in the UK. The vision is of a 'Solihull where there is no gap of inequality'.

The key priorities are to address worklessness in the area and link residents to employment opportunities, as well as stimulating the growth of investment and business activity in the area by improving links to the wider economy, capitalising on the employment opportunities arising from the redevelopment of Chelmsley Wood town centre and the new village centres.

### Generating Employment Opportunities

**The Generating Employment Opportunities team are part of a ERDF funded project, delivered by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, specifically aimed at helping local employers recruit in areas where there is high unemployment.**

The project aims to engage with 200 local businesses with the main focus of helping them gain a competitive advantage by having a skilled workforce. The project will also contribute to reducing worklessness in the wider package area by engaging with those residents that are not in employment and through the external employment support provided by partners will help to address any negative attitudes towards work. By having an appropriately skilled workforce this will contribute to improving SME productivity and competitiveness and ultimately contribute to increasing the GVA of the region.

## Priority four

### Developing inter-regional activity



Karen Ison, Senior Project Manager and Michelle Connors, Jay Gohill, Project Officers at a promotional meeting for Technology Networks ERDF project in the Health and Design Technology Institute at Coventry University.

### Technology Networks

**Technology Networks is a major project run by Coventry University Enterprise that with over £230,000 of support from ERDF has established dedicated research and development partnerships between organisations (SMEs, Research Centres and Universities) in the West Midlands with partners in the European Union.**

The network consists of six regions in six countries in five clusters and encourages investment in R&D by regional companies, as well as showcasing internationally the R&D capacity of the West Midlands.

As well as promoting the transfer of good practice, it is also encouraging the application of lessons learnt and

stimulating interregional co-operation to improve the competitiveness of network partners. This is being achieved through a programme of more than 12 one-week placements for SMEs with the support of a researcher and a grant towards travel and expenses. Knowledge gathered at the placement is then turned into a case study to share best practice within the network.

This project is concerned with increasing the profile of the region, and developing mutually beneficial relationships with partners in the EU and beyond. It also acts as a catalyst for R&D investment by SMEs to encourage them to become more competitive and diversified.

“The project promotes the transfer of good practice, works towards applying lessons learnt, and stimulates inter-regional co-operation”.

Coventry University Enterprise at Coventry Technology Park



## Priority four

### Bridge to Growth Europe

**Bridge to Growth is a West Midlands marketing initiative aimed at attracting businesses and inward investment to the Region and helping them to establish themselves.**

Supported by ERDF funding, the scheme offers businesses a complete package of expert tax, legal and business advice specifically designed to attract and assist knowledge-based innovation-led companies into the West Midlands for the first time at minimal cost and risk.

The popular and highly successful scheme was set up in 2006 and has so far attracted businesses from the USA, Japan, India, Australia, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and Belgium to the region.

Good transportation links, low set-up and operating costs and a comprehensive package of support were key considerations when Australian-born Marcus Edwards was looking to expand his business, beforeUdig, into the UK market.

Established in 2002 in Australia, beforeUdig helps contractors and excavators to locate underground assets, such as pipes and cables before excavations start.

Marcus Edwards, UK Managing Director of beforeUdig



Traditionally this was done by contacting utility and asset owners in the area individually. beforeUdig takes this hassle away by using computer software to provide all the information needed.

Through help from Bridge to Growth, Marcus was attracted to the region as it not only offered support to help set up his business, it was also within easy reach of customers and a skilled workforce.

### Developing Centre of Excellence Networks in Translational Research and Service Delivery

**Translational medicine is at the forefront of drug development that may one day lead to truly personalised medicines. It involves scientific research to discover the origins and mechanisms of disease and identify specific biological events, biomarkers, or pathways of disease. These insights are then used to develop new diagnostics and therapeutic methods and products.**

Led by University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB), the project is in line with ambitions to ensure current investment in the NHS is used not only to improve patient care and the efficiency and effectiveness of the NHS, but also used to engage new healthcare practices with new

technologies to boost local and regional economies.

This ERDF supported project is part of a broader set of initiatives led by UHB with the aim of Birmingham being designated as an academic health centre which will sustain its ability to turn knowledge into clinical excellence and through innovation and productivity into economic prosperity.

Through a series of international networks with centres of excellence across Europe, this project will promote exchange of knowledge in certain areas of translational medicine through a combination of knowledge transfer placements, study visits, workshops, research studies and clinical trials, especially in the areas of service evaluation, haematology, diabetes, liver disease and cell therapy.