

Congratulations to the Wells and Walsingham Light Railway on being the first project to receive funding under the Norfolk Coast and Broads Rural Development Programme.

The Garratt Boiler project has secured a grant of £38,300 to support the building of a new steam locomotive for the light railway. The new capacity created by this funding means more visitors will be able to enjoy the attraction of a steam train trip between Wells and Walsingham in future years and this will encourage higher levels of tourism-related expenditure in the area.

Owner and creator of the railway, Lt. Cmdr. Roy Francis commented “We are extremely pleased to be awarded this funding for our railway. Without an extra locomotive we have been turning people away because we haven’t had enough seats during peak times. With this funding, we can run two steam locomotives, increasing our capacity to accommodate coach parties, and generate enough work and income to afford an apprentice engineer”.

The new steam boiler and locomotive will be created over the next few months with the support of engineering students and one apprentice as part of their Performing Engineering Operations Part 2 course at the College of West Anglia in King’s Lynn. Volunteers from the railway will also be learning new skills and supporting the project.

The Norfolk Coast and Broads area is one of three programmes operating in Norfolk and Suffolk. Local Action Groups also operate in The Brecks and the Waveney Valley and jointly the three Local Action Groups have secured over £10 million from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), European funding which is managed by the East of England Development Agency, to invest locally between now and 2013.

Funding support is available for agribusiness development and diversification, water use and distribution, sustainable rural tourism, local food and rural businesses development.

End.

Notes:

Wells and Walsingham Light Railway:

The Wells and Walsingham Light Railway line is the longest 10.25” narrow gauge steam railway in the world. It first opened in April 1982 and runs the unique Garratt locomotive “Norfolk Hero”, which was specially built for this line. The line runs from the harbour town of Wells to the picturesque town and pilgrim shrine of Walsingham, and takes passengers on a scenic tour including five bridges and views across lovely countryside. For more details about the railway and running times see:

www.wellswalsinghamrailway.co.uk

Rural Development Programme for England:

Norfolk Coast and Broads, The Brecks and Waveney Valley Local Action Groups are supported under the Rural Development Programme for England by EEDA, Defra and the EU, and managed by the Rural Enterprise Hub at Easton College in partnership with Norfolk County Council.

The 'Leader approach' is based on the principle of a bottom up governance, and central to this is a Local Action Group (LAG). Each of the three areas has a LAG in place that will use this funding to support farm businesses, tourism initiatives, micro-enterprises and entrepreneurs within their respective areas. The LAG is made up from representatives from the private and public sectors with an interest in their local area.

Funding for eligible projects is available between now and December 2013. For more information about involvement in the LAGs or funding opportunities, see www.ruralhub.info/lag. Alternatively contact the local facilitator in each area;

Brecks: Steve Howard at showard@easton-college.ac.uk

Norfolk Coast and Broads: Carol Allen at callen@easton-college.ac.uk

Waveney Valley: Paul Mace pmace@easton-college.ac.uk

Rural Enterprise Hub:

The successful bid for the Rural Development Programme for England Local Action Group funding was put together by the **Rural Enterprise Hub at Easton College** in conjunction with **Norfolk County Council**, which acts as the accountable body for the partnership programme. **The Rural Enterprise Hub** works to help farms and rural businesses prepare for the future. **Easton College** offers training courses for individuals and businesses and is committed to excellence in its delivery of training to the rural sector.

EEDA:

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 www.eeda.org.uk

