



**SOLENT  
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# **New Forest Rural SME Fund**

## **Beginner's Guide**

**August 2020**



**TOGETHER.STRONGER**

# WHAT IS THE NEW FOREST RURAL SME FUND...?

The New Forest Rural SME Fund is a competitive fund managed by Natural Enterprise on behalf of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The New Forest Rural SME Fund seeks to support the Solent economy by providing grants to rural small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) with potential for economic growth, leveraging in private sector investment, creating or protecting jobs and assisting the rural sector in the New Forest.

The New Forest has one of the largest rural sector in the Solent LEP area. It has a vibrant rural economy with rural market towns, natural assets and a heritage that attracts tourism which makes up more than 20% of employment in the New Forest and generates £528m of direct and indirect expenditure.

This fund was launched in August 2020 and was designed to continue the positive work of LEADER, supporting the New Forest rural economy. The first round of funding (£82,000) will be committed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

The New Forest Rural SME Fund is looking to support the strongest bids which return best value for money, jobs and leverage in the rural economy and generate sustainable growth.

This is a Fund for New Forest based Rural SMEs that require **capital investment** to progress their project which will enable their business to expand and grow.

Grants are available between £2,500 and £50,000 and need to create or safeguard jobs to be eligible. Those projects that can create or safeguard a higher number of jobs will be prioritised. All projects must also demonstrate a benefit to the Island's rural economy.

Grants from Round 1 need to be claimed by September 2021 and jobs created by December 2022. If you believe you have the potential to grow your business or safeguard jobs, but require some extra funding to do so, you may be able to benefit from the fund.

For further information please contact:

[emma.bloomfield@naturalenterprise.co.uk](mailto:emma.bloomfield@naturalenterprise.co.uk) / 01983 201562  
or visit the Natural Enterprise website [The New Forest Rural Fund :: Natural Enterprise](#)

***\*Available funding permitting — the programme may close early should funds be exhausted sooner than March 2021.***

**Read on to find out more...**

## THE SUCCESSFUL BID JOURNEY

A New Forest Rural SME grant could help your business unlock new growth opportunities. If your project needs an injection of £2,500 to £50,000 in order to proceed, has the rest of its

funding in place and will lead to sustainable jobs being created or safeguarded, then the **New Forest Rural SME Fund** could be the answer.



## WHAT ARE THE KEY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA...?

To be eligible, applications must meet the following criteria:

- The bid must be for between £2,500 and £50,000 of New Forest Rural SME support.
- The bid needs to demonstrate it will create or safeguard jobs. Priority will be given to applications creating higher numbers of jobs.
- The bid must raise private investment, whether through the company's own resources, investors or borrowing. The fund can provide up to 50% of your total project costs, up to a maximum grant of £50,000. This means the bid must lever in **at least** £1 of private investment for every £1 of New Forest Rural SME support. Successful bids tend to exceed this.
- Bids must come from a wholly private organisation such as a limited company.
- Bids must come from SMEs from the rural sector based in the New Forest.
- Bids must come from SMEs able to demonstrate how their project will benefit the rural areas.
- Bids from third sector organisations, charities and community interest companies are eligible for consideration.

- Bids must not involve the delivery of a public sector project or service.

## WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITY CAN A NEW FOREST RURAL SME FUND GRANT SUPPORT...?

NF Rural SME support is restricted to the rural sector only and funding can only be used to support **capital expenditure** items.

NF Rural SME funding cannot be used for a business' existing working capital costs. For clarity this includes items such as salaries, rent, rates, utilities, stock and raw materials.

NF Rural SME funding must comply with state aid rules. The funding is offered under the "de minimis" aid heading, which permits a maximum of €200,000 of grant aid to a single recipient over a three-year period.

For more information, please see "New Forest Rural SME Fund – Technical Guidance for Applicants".

## WHAT NEXT?

If you feel you fit the eligibility criteria for this fund please submit your Expression of Interest and one of the Natural Enterprise team will contact you with feedback.

If you have any questions please email [emma.bloomfield@naturalenterprise.co.uk](mailto:emma.bloomfield@naturalenterprise.co.uk)