

Exhibition supporters celebrate launch

Organisers, partners and sponsors of the Anglia Business Exhibition assembled at Hintlesham Hall, near Ipswich, for the official launch of this year's event.

The 2015 exhibition, which is due to take place at Trinity Park, Ipswich, on Wednesday, May 6, will be the biggest yet, with space for around 200 trade stands.

ISSBA (the Ipswich & Suffolk Small Business Association), which has organised the annual event since its inception, is again being supported this year by Suffolk Chamber of Commerce as main partner, with a host of other businesses line-up as second-tier partners and sponsors.

For full details, turn to page 10 of today's BusinessEast supplement.



■ The launch of the 2015 Anglia Business Exhibition at the Hintlesham Hall hotel.

Picture: LUCY TAYLOR

Seek help to unlock EU millions, firms are urged

Sarah Chambers

sarah.chambers@archant.co.uk

Millions of pounds of European cash is available to businesses but bewildering red tape can hold them back in securing their share, a regional conference has been told.

Around 70 delegates attended the first ever Essex Means Business Project Europe event in Chelmsford, which was organised by Essex County Council's Funding and Investment Team.

Kevin Bentley, Essex County Council cabinet member for economic growth and infrastructure, said the conference was "a great success".

"There is millions of pounds of funding available, but EU bureaucracy can leave businesses bewildered," he said. "I hope delegates went away feeling that they had the key to Europe's safes."

George Kieffer, chair of the South East Shadow European Structural Investment Fund Committee, told delegates that £180million is available to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which covers the counties and unitary authorities of Essex, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Kent, Medway and East Sussex, from 2014 to 2020.

The biggest funds are the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund.

The £83m European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is aimed at innovation, supporting competitiveness in small and medium-sized enterprises, and the shift to a low carbon economy.

This considerably widens its scope compared with the 2007-13 period, when it was restricted in the East of England to low carbon projects.

"The scope is much wider and

“Bring us your ideas and projects and we can advise you whether they meet the criteria.

George Kieffer

targets those sectors that require support. Bring us your ideas and projects and we can advise you whether they meet the criteria. All the funds require match-funding by the beneficiaries of at least 50%, doubling the investment in the SELEP and Essex economy," said Mr Kieffer.

European Social Fund cash – a total of £83m – is available for employability, social inclusion and skills development projects.

SELEP will be working with the Department for Work & Pensions and the Skills Funding Agency,

which will bring match-funding for three quarters of the amount available to target priorities outlined in SELEP's European Structural & Investment Funds Strategy.

The remaining quarter will be match-funded by Big Lottery and will support social inclusion and combating poverty, he explained.

There is also money available from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The £14.5m fund is available for rural medium, small and micro enterprises and projects covering tourism, knowledge and skills of the rural economy, renewables and broadband.

"The Funding and Investment Team at Essex County Council have a track record of success helping applicants for European funding and I urge you to involve them early on to help you frame applications and complete the supporting paperwork," said Mr Kieffer.

Movers and shakers



Page 4

EADT Business Awards



Pages 5 and 12

Energy sector prepares for conference



Pages 6 and 7

Tourism experts to visit county



Page 9

Commercial property



Page 11