

Broadband grants

Rural businesses and communities in the South East can apply for capital grants to increase their access to broadband.

The funding programme is expected to improve local services, stimulate economic development and increase social inclusion.

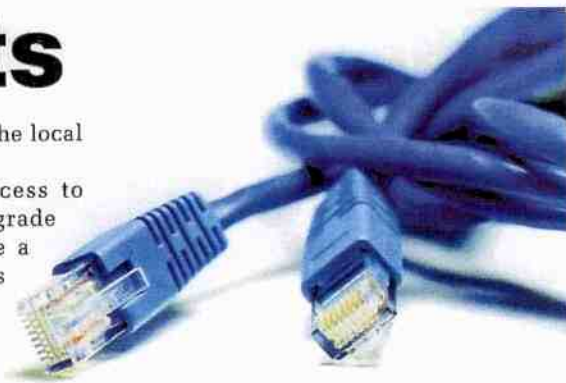
Through the rural development programme for England (RDPE), £375,000 has been made available until the end of 2010. The grants are provided through the European economic recovery programme and managed by SEEDA, the development agency.

Robert Crawford, operations director at SEEDA, said: "SEEDA has worked in partnership with local authorities and telecommunication companies to bring broadband to rural communities across the South East. This grant funding will help rural communities compete with areas that already have sufficient broadband access

and promote growth throughout the local economy."

The funding will provide access to broadband infrastructure or upgrade the existing network to ensure a minimum speed of two megabits a second is reached. Expressions of interest must be received by 31 May 2010 and fall within areas which have already been identified as "white" or "grey." "White" areas are where broadband networks do not at present exist and private investment is unlikely to build a network within three years. "Grey" areas are where only one network is in place or planned for deployment within three years, and there are no plans by any operator to deploy a second network within three years.

Mr Crawford added: "SEEDA's broadband investment to date is estimated to have provided a broadband service to over 1,500



premises, ten per cent of which have been rural based businesses. It is essential that the South East builds on this to provide every community, regardless of its location, with the same opportunities."

More information about the RDPE fund for rural community broadband is available by visiting the SEEDA website at www.seeda.co.uk

For further information, contact David Cooper at SEEDA on 01483 501304.

Budget brings some relief

Doubling the lifetime limit for entrepreneurs' relief in the budget will provide a welcome long term advantage to owners who have developed their business to the point of sale.

The potential value of the relief to an individual is now £160,000, but is still a long way behind the full ten per cent rate available under taper relief, according to Stuart Robb, southern region head of tax for Baker Tilly.

"Far from increasing capital gains tax rates, as had been predicted in some quarters, the chancellor has doubled the value of a relief that is of great benefit to all business owners, whether professionals or entrepreneurs.

"In broad terms, entrepreneurs' relief currently charges capital gains tax at a ten per cent rate on the first £1 million of gains which will now double to £2 million. For an individual the lifetime allowance represented a potential tax saving of up to £80,000: now that advantage is increased to a maximum of £160,000.

"While the headline increase in tax relief is welcome, especially for serial entrepreneurs, what is still needed is action to address the anomalies and unnecessary complexity embedded in the entrepreneurs' relief rules."

Entrepreneurs' relief provides a reduction of four ninths of the gain made when shares in a qualifying trading company are sold. The sale does not need to be on retirement: the main requirements are that the person selling or giving

Essential oils could kill the deadly MRSA hospital superbug, according to University of Brighton scientists.

Researchers tested essential oils derived from thyme plants normally used in aromatherapy and found it destroyed MRSA within two hours.

The Brighton study was triggered when Maggie Tisserand, director of West Sussex based company, Benchmark Oils Ltd, asked university researchers to conduct laboratory research with a small selection of oils. She was convinced that a specific blend of essential oils could be the answer



away the shares must have owned the shares and been an employee or office holder for at least a year before the disposal takes place. The relief is restricted to trading companies and is still beset by over-complex and inconsistent rules.

Entrepreneurs who are preparing for retirement or another step change in their business life can still lose out on the relief if, for example they sell business assets that they own personally in advance of a sale of their shares; in that case the relief does not apply to the prior disposal.

The relief is also of limited value as it only ensures that the first £2 million of capital gain during an individual's lifetime is taxed at ten per cent. The balance remains taxable at the normal rate of capital gains tax, currently 18%. For a serial entrepreneur or a very successful business owner, the £2 million limit is very restrictive.

Thyme kills MRSA superbug

to MRSA, which affects people in hospital and in the wider community.

The Brighton study concluded that Benchmark Thyme rapidly killed MRSA. Ms Tisserand said: "What is interesting is that the thyme oil we use is food grade, and in preliminary company trials shows no adverse effects on intact skin."

The MRSA bacteria is often carried on the skin or in the nostrils of healthy people but when a carrier enters hospital for an operation or any procedure that punctures the skin, bacteria can enter the body causing serious medical problems, and each year up to 5,000 people die as a result.

The research was published in the International Journal of Essential Oil Therapeutics and was carried out by a team of microbiologists led by Professor Geoff Hanlon of the school of pharmacy and biomolecular sciences.

Dr Jonathan Caplin, who conducted much of the research, said: "These are very promising results. We have shown at least in the laboratory that this blend of thyme has a very strong killing effect on MRSA.

"Now further work needs to be carried out to ascertain its effect in real cases."

Benchmark Oils is now looking for partners in order to take the research further.