

March 8th 2005

£9.7 million to manage impacts of aggregate extraction

A £9.7 million grant scheme has been launched today (8 March 2005) by the Countryside Agency and English Nature to manage the impacts that aggregate extraction can have on the environment and local communities.

The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) Partnership Grant Scheme, funded by Defra, aims to support projects which benefit landscapes, heritage, biodiversity, geodiversity and communities in England affected by aggregate extraction.

The scheme will have an allocation of around £5.7 million in 2005/2006 and £4 million in 2006/2007 which will be targeted at land and community-based projects, with an additional £1 million in each year for marine projects. The Partnership will also be working closely with English Heritage, who will continue to administer a grant scheme for projects relating to the historic environment.

The joint delivery approach of the new ALSF Partnership Scheme is part of the work to bring together the activities of English Nature, Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service, as announced by Margaret Beckett on 21 July 2004 in the Rural Strategy.

Indeed, Environment Minister Elliot Morley, said: "Closer partnership working will both simplify the application process for customers and increase the benefits to individuals, communities, landscapes and the environment.

"It is great to see organisations like English Nature and the Countryside Agency working closely together on this important issue in an early demonstration of the benefits of a new Integrated Agency.

"Extracting sand, gravel and rock in the past had a significant effect on the environment. This fund aims to address this environmental cost by enhancing old aggregate extraction sites."

Tracey Slaven, Director for the Countryside Agency, said: "The ALSF Partnership Scheme is an early demonstration of the real benefits we can deliver by bringing together our interests in landscape, recreation and nature conservation. This shared approach should deliver welcomed benefits to potential applicants in terms of accessibility, consistency and transparency."

Andy Brown, Chief Executive of English Nature, said: "The launch of the scheme demonstrates the commitment of English Nature, Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service to improve services to all of our customers. Over the past three years, the ALSF grant scheme has produced practical, on the ground, results for wildlife, geology and local communities affected by aggregate extraction. The launch of this new scheme can only strengthen this work further."

Initial applications for funding under the ALSF Partnership Scheme will be made through a single contact point with the forms available for completion and submission on English Nature's website (www.english-nature.org.uk). The Grants Management Team will be available to advise applicants at all stages of the process

and will continue to provide the high standards of customer service to which communities have been accustomed. Contact them on 01476 584821.