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Gloucestershire First gains £1.1million to fund flood recovery action plan

Gloucestershire First, the countywide economic partnership, has been successful in its bid for funds from the Severn Trent Flood Recovery Fund.

It has been awarded £1.1 million to support the flood recovery programme established by the South West Regional Development Agency and Gloucestershire First immediately following the July floods.

The money will be used to benefit business recovery in Gloucestershire, in particular those companies affected by the floods, and to promote the fact that the county is open for business.

“We are extremely grateful for this funding, which will enable us to continue the good work already carried out to put Gloucestershire firmly back on the map,” reports Gloucestershire First chairman Chas Fellows (pictured).

“Restoring the county as a tourist destination in 2008 is a high priority and £200,000 has been earmarked to counter the negative publicity we experienced worldwide. An advertising campaign will be designed to help those sectors worst affected, such as tourism and retailing.

“In addition we will work with the local media in a campaign to promote the many events and attractions held each year within the county, to encourage local people to get behind them once more and show we are back in business.”

In a longer-term initiative, Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve will receive £100,000 to help retailers and other businesses get back on their feet – with a further £140,000 ring-fenced to support retail and tourism initiatives in Tewkesbury – including this year’s food festival and half-term activities.

The largest single sum, £500,000, will go towards a project to repair and reopen some of the many public rights of way extensively damaged by soil erosion during the floods.

“The county has 3,400 miles of public rights of way and some of the most popular remain closed. As we make every effort to encourage tourists to return to Gloucestershire, we must repair as many as we can for tourists to enjoy as well as our local communities,” said Cllr Fellows.

A Severn Vale Wildlife Highway is to be created to encourage the regeneration of habitats decimated by the floods. Volunteers will be recruited and trained in a £50,000 scheme to create new habitats, monitor sites and help with conservation measures.

“This is a wide-ranging response to help alleviate the many problems faced by Gloucestershire businesses since the floods,” said Cllr Fellows.

“We will also be using some of the funding to begin drawing up a strategy to mitigate the extent of future flood damage and will co-host a national event designed to look at resilience and disaster management.”

Martin Kane, customer relations director at Severn Trent Water, added: “The work Gloucestershire First intends to carry out will make an important contribution to the county’s flood recovery programme.

“We have entrusted Gloucestershire First with funding so it can get cash directly to the businesses which have suffered as a consequence of the floods, as well as improving local areas such as footpaths and open spaces, to bring tourism back into the county and help put Gloucestershire back on the map.”

Ends

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Gloucestershire First is the countywide economic partnership established to develop and support the economic wellbeing of the county. It brings together partners in the field of economic development to contribute to an overall strategic plan for Gloucestershire. For further details please go to www.glosfirst.co.uk

* This initiative is part of the Gloucestershire flood recovery programme managed by Gloucestershire First and kindly supported by Severn Trent Water.