



South Staffordshire College has hosted a sustainability event to support its strategic “Sustainability Energy” plan and to outline the Government’s “Rural Economy Grant”.

Following the recent announcement of the grant, which provides an investment of up to £1million for micro and SME businesses, the College’s Workforce Development Team invited employers from across the county to a free event, “Making the Future Sustainable”, at the College’s new £3 Million Foster Learning Centre on Rodbaston Campus.

Many rural businesses from the forestry, farming, fishery, floristry, and land based industries attended the event and commented on how well it was presented. Guests heard from a variety of keynote speakers about the areas where this investment can be made, including boosting farm competitiveness, reducing energy consumption, encouraging carbon reduction and implementing waste management.

Keynote speaker Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Environment and Assets, said “Rural businesses and rural communities can be left behind, rural areas are without broadband and there has been lack of funding available to support rural businesses expand.

It is encouraging that there are enthusiasts such as South Staffordshire College who are taking ownership of the rural agenda by offering support in basic skills to the farming and land based industries, and providing courses in environmental management and renewable low and zero carbon technologies”.

South Staffordshire College’s Keith Ellis, Assistant Head of Faculty, and John Renshaw, Workforce Development Land Based Manager outlined the range of Apprenticeship programmes on offer through the College. During the evening the Workforce Development

Team spoke to businesses to see how the College was meeting their individual requirements with the range of courses available and invited them to join the Employer Networking Group.

Workforce Development Business Manager, Revathi Timms confirmed the event was a great success. “Large organisations such as Drayton Manor Park and Birmingham Botanical Gardens amongst other rural businesses are seeking advice on the various land based short courses on offer and the recruitment process for apprentices in Agriculture and Horticulture. Rural businesses will now be writing bids to access the grant to help support them in investing in new machinery, new technologies and expand their business by recruiting new staff”, she said.

If you would like to find out more about the Rural Economy Grant email apprenticeships@southstaffs.ac.uk or call

Revathi Timms on 07970 379 742.