



Helping Village Shops Thrive

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DEADLINE LOOMS FOR STORE IS THE CORE

A NEW REGIONAL PROGRAMME SUPPORTING VILLAGE RETAILERS

The Store is the Core is a new scheme, supported by the South West Regional Development Agency, which offers professional advice to village retailers. The objective is to improve their skills, diversify their businesses, and help secure their viability for the future. The ultimate objective is to maintain an essential resource for the rural community.

The programme is led by Community First, the Rural Community Council for Wiltshire, supported by the Rural Shops Alliance, ViRSA (Village Retail Services Association) and SWAN (South West ACRE Network).

Grants of up to £5,000 will be available to retailers to assist with the purchase of new equipment, 'make over' the shop, or a variety of other options tailored to the specific needs of retailers. The programme also aims to assist at least seven communities in the South West who have already lost their village shop to open a volunteer community-led community shop enterprise. The programme will be able to support these communities with advice from a pool of specialist consultants and a grant of up to £20,000.

Ian Piper, Director of Sustainable Communities, SWRDA says:

'The South West Rural Development Agency is happy to be supporting the Store is the Core project through the Modernising Rural Delivery initiative. The project will enable rural communities across the South West to become more sustainable by helping them maintain a key local service'

The year long pilot, which started in September 2007, is now underway and expressions of interest have been invited from potential beneficiaries. The closing date for applications is February 15th. If news of this scheme has not reached you go to The Store is the Core website (www.storeisthecore.org.uk) or phone Sandra Ferneley or Tim Coomer on 01380 722475.

