



Fair Oak Farm eco-lodge tree houses

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An exciting new tourism project is taking place at Fair Oak Farm, near Mayfield, which offers luxury breaks for couples, families and larger groups. Grant funding through the Wealden & Rother Rural (WARR) Partnership will help towards the addition of two eco-lodge tree houses at the farm, using sustainable materials to construct bathroom and kitchen facilities around a studio space for living and sleeping.

The availability of self catering properties which can accommodate larger groups and families is limited in the UK, and the addition of the tree houses will increase the maximum sleeping capacity at the farm to 19 people. Visitors can cook, eat and relax as a group in the large open plan barn, or take part in on-site activities such as archery and falconry. It is expected that this new accommodation will be available from the autumn of this year. For more details, please telephone owners Ian & Penny Ledger or visit www.fairoakfarm.co.uk (<http://www.fairoakfarm.co.uk>).

"This is an excellent example of the kind of modern, high quality tourist accommodation and facilities which we wish to attract to Wealden," said Cllr Pam Doodes, portfolio holder for Community at Wealden District Council. "The provision of this calibre of facility, which promotes both the active enjoyment and understanding of the area and yet respects the special character of the High Weald, is just the sort of scheme that our Tourism Strategy seeks to support."

Commenting about aspirations for the project, owner Ian Ledger said: "It's fantastic to have support from those that recognise the economic and ecological benefits a project like this has for our community, particularly from local residents and other small rural businesses. If you can get the balance right and work together intelligently, small rural businesses in our community can thrive, not just survive, whilst protecting and enhancing the stunning environment we are lucky enough to be custodians of."

Thanks to funding from Defra and the EU under the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), over the five years to 2013, the WARR Partnership has £2.4 million to award to projects which help to improve our rural economy. Grants of up to £50,000 are available for activities such as: farm diversification; adding value to agricultural and forestry products; creation and development of micro-enterprises; tourism; village renewal and development, and the conservation of our rural heritage. For more information, and details of how to apply, visit the WARR Partnership's website at www.warrpartnership.org.uk (<http://www.warrpartnership.org.uk>), or telephone the team on 01424 787400 for advice and guidance.