



Cheshire East LEADER LAG Update 10/6/16 – LAG Responses

Responses were received from:

Members:

Nicola Said (Marketing Cheshire)
Jake Thompson (Forestry Commission)
Steve Wilkinson (Farmer)
John Heselwood (Cheshire Community Action)
Martin Varley (Cheshire Wildlife Trust)
Robert Parton (Aqueduct Marina)
Janet Maughan (Overwater Marina)
Philip Posnett (Haughton Hall)
Cllr Rachel Bailey (Cheshire East Council)

Officers/Advisors:

Sharon Angus-Crawshaw (Cheshire East Council)
Brendan Flanagan (Cheshire East Council)

ITEM 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Action: “LAG Board Members to confirm that minutes from the meeting dated 2nd March 2016 are true and correct.”

LAG Comments:

JT: “Our meeting rooms at Delamere do not have the capacity for a LAG meeting I’m afraid.”

JH: “Happy to approve 2 March minutes.”

Approve of previous minutes?

Yes: 9

No: 0

LEADER Team Comments:

Minutes approved, will be signed by the Chair at the next LAG meeting.

ITEM 3.1: Resignations

Action: “Though we already have a nomination to replace Cllr. Gardner – please see item 3.2, below – we have a duty to ensure that the LAG remains quorate and has the required private sector representation. To that end, we ask that LAG members please suggest any potential private sector nominees for LAG membership; we would be particularly keen to hear of any nominees from the equine or other sectors that are not currently represented on the Board.”

LAG Comments:

SAC: “Have suggested that the British Horse Society North West Regional Officer Hannah Carrick be contacted. Would it be appropriate to ask the recently approved equine project lead to consider LAG membership once he has completed the process?”

JM: “I think it would be an excellent idea [to invite the recently-approved equine project to the LAG] as it would provide the board with a more informed view of the application process.”

BF: “You could ask Sarah Callander Becket representing HHA and also rural tourism businesses.”

RP: “I see Fred Percival of Spreadwise locally; he has a very successful diversified farm business. He would be someone with farming and non-farming business expertise with something to say.”

LEADER Team Comments:

Mandy Sibthorpe will discuss potential LAG membership with proposed individuals and their nominators in due course.



ITEM 3.2: LAG Member Nomination

Action: "LAG Board Members to review the attached nomination form and vote on Cllr Macrae's membership to the Cheshire East LAG and Executive Boards."

LAG Comments:

SAC: "Noted. Impressive nomination, should bring a good skill set to the LAG. "

SW: "Nomination seems okay."

JT: "I am happy for Cllr Macrae to join the CE LAG and Exec board."

JH: "Happy to vote in Cllr Macrae."

Approve Cllr Macrae to join the Cheshire East LEADER LAG and Executive Board?	Yes: 9	No: 0
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LEADER Team Comments:

Cllr Macrae will be invited to join the LAG.

ITEM 4.2: Programme Outputs and Grant Amounts

Action: "Bearing in mind that timescale issues are causing difficulties for potential applicants, the LEADER team asks the LAG to consider holding an additional Executive Board meeting at beginning of September. There is also the possibility of approving projects by e-mail if absolutely necessary, but the RPA are not keen on this approach, and Board Members will potentially miss out on a valuable face-to-face discussion regarding the projects in question."

LAG Comments:

JT: "I am happy to attend LAG exec meetings as often as necessary."

SAC: "Noted. We may wish to discuss the impact of the recent referendum too...."

JH: "Happy to have an Exec meeting in September and also decide by email if RPA will allow."

RP: "Happy to try and meet at short notice as applications become ready."

Approve of holding an additional Executive Board meeting in early September?	Yes: 9	No: 0
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LEADER Team Comments:

An extra Executive Board meeting will be held in early September, and those applicants keen to bring their application forward will be informed. Details will be sent out to the LAG in due course.

The long-term impact of the EU referendum on the LEADER programme is not yet known, but the LAG will be kept informed of any news on the programme's future.

ITEM 4.3: LAG Information Packs

Action: "Due to the bulk of each information pack, posting them out to the remaining LAG members will be costly, and due to the tight programme budget we would prefer to avoid this. Any feedback from LAG members on whether or not they would be willing to wait until the next full LAG meeting would be appreciated."

LAG Comments:

SAC: "If necessary I am sure that either Rachel Bolton or myself can arrange to deliver them directly to folk."

JT: "Approved, however – the West Lancs LAG that I sit on has a web portal that members log into to view packs etc, this cuts down on printing etc and allows members to read the info whenever they like."

RP: "Where are they held? Happy to wait until the next meeting or if passing members could collect."

Approve of waiting until the next LAG meeting to distribute remaining packs?	Yes: 8	No: 0
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LEADER Team Comments:

The Cheshire LEADER website is also able to host a password-protected page containing documents for the LAG, which could indeed be preferable for some members, particularly as we have faced issues sending large files to LAG members via e-mail. There may be some security concerns to consider due to the commercially-sensitive nature of some of the documents involved, but we will look into this and implement if viable. Regardless, the LAG member packs will still be produced and distributed to members as and when appropriate.

ITEM 5: Aligning Cheshire East Strategies to LEADER Priorities

Action: "LAG Board Members to consider the attached document which demonstrates how Cheshire East Strategy priorities can enhance the LEADER priorities, and decide if this wider information is of benefit when projects are being assessed."

LAG Comments:

JH: "I think that there is already so much information being sent out to applicants that an additional matrix of strategies (that will change over the course of the programme e.g. Sustainable Community Strategy soon to be refreshed) will only add to the bureaucracy and not necessarily improve the quality of applications, nor will it help an already complex and difficult process. If Cheshire East Council wants to understand how projects fit into their own strategies, then I think this should be an internal exercise that the LEADER Officers or CE Officers should carry out to inform the LAG at meetings. LEADER already has a Local Development Strategy which considered other strategies and priorities when it was developed. Unless the LAG is prepared to reject projects on the basis of these other strategic priorities (which I don't think it can or should) then I think we should avoid muddying the water and do this assessment as a useful piece of information for the LAG but I see this as a CEC issue rather than something the LAG needs to impose on applicants."

RP: "It will be of benefit, but should not become a document that means applications get refused. Guidance, not a barrier."

Approve of considering Cheshire East Strategies alongside LEADER priorities when assessing projects?

Yes: 7

No: 2

LEADER Team Comments:

As per the vote, the LEADER Team will consider the Cheshire East Strategies alongside existing LEADER priorities when assessing projects. Though the concerns noted above are valid, we stress that the Cheshire East Strategies will only be used to potentially give extra weight to projects at the appraisal stage, rather than being an extra set of requirements for applicants to consider. Demonstrating where a project aligns with the Cheshire East Strategies only strengthens its case for funding.

ITEM 6: Dates of Future Meetings

Action: "LAG Board Members to consider and decide whether to reduce LAG board meetings to twice yearly with electronic updates from Executive Board meetings in between."

LAG Comments:

SW: "My personal view is that twice per year is too infrequent and continuity will be lost. Post referendum... how long will this funding stream continue for?"

JH: "I would support reducing LAG meetings to twice yearly with e-mail updates from Exec in-between."

JT: "This sounds like a sensible idea."

RP: "Two planned meetings, we can always arrange an extra meeting if the changing situation demands it."

Approve of reducing LAG meetings to twice yearly with electronic updates?

Yes: 8

No: 1

LEADER Team Comments:

As per the result of the vote, we will reduce full LAG meetings to twice-yearly, with the Executive Board meetings continuing on a quarterly basis. The full LAG will be kept informed of any developments and, as noted in the LAG comments, extra meetings can always be arranged if necessary.