



<p align="center">Cheshire East LEADER Local Action Group Meeting Westfields, Sandbach 23rd March 2017</p>	<p align="center">Initials/Actions</p>
<p>LAG Members Present: Janet Maughan (Vice-Chair, Overwater Marina) Robert Parton (Church Minshull Marina) Cllr Janet Clowes (Cheshire East Council) Brendan Flanagan (Tatton Park) Mike Gorton (NFU) John Heselwood (Cheshire Community Action) Cllr Jamie Macrae (Cheshire East Council) Steve Wilkinson (Farmer) Lucy Rogers (Canal & River Trust)</p>	<p>JM RP JC BF MG JH CJM SW LR</p>
<p>Officers/Advisors Present: Mandy Sibthorpe (Cheshire West & Chester Council) Sean Bell (Cheshire West & Chester Council) (Minutes) Sheila Woolstencroft (Cheshire East Council) Rachel Bolton (Skills & Growth Company) Sharon Angus-Crawshaw (Cheshire East Council)</p>	<p>MS SB SW RB SAC</p>
<p>1. Welcome & Apologies JM welcomed the LAG; apologies had been received from Sam Alston, Joanna Douglass, Ellie Morris, Philip Posnett, Tony Rimmer, Nicola Said, Chris Waterfield, Martin Varley and Stuart Yarwood.</p>	
<p>2. Conflicts of Interest CJM declared a conflict of interest in project 104284, to be discussed in item 5.2</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of Previous Meeting JM confirmed that no LAG members had any issues with the previous minutes, and signed them as an accurate record.</p>	
<p>4. LAG Membership 4.1 Election of Cheshire East LAG Chair: Following the last full LAG meeting where Cllr Rachel Bailey, the LAG Chair, opted to stand down, MS had asked LAG members to consider any nominations for the new Chair. PP indicated that he would consider standing. JM confirmed that no other LAG members wished to stand, all voted in favour of electing PP the new LAG Chair. 4.2 Nomination: A LAG member nomination had also been received for Sarah Callander-Beckett, owner of Combermere Abbey. All members voted in favour of the nomination; MS would meet with SCB to discuss LEADER and upcoming meetings. 4.3 Executive Board Membership: RP noted that Executive Board meetings have struggled on occasion to meet quorum requirements due to low attendance, and suggests that SCB be made a member of the Executive Board as well as the full LAG. All members present agreed.</p>	

5. LEADER Update

5.1 Progress report: The LEADER team and JM had recently attended a meeting with the Rural Payments Agency to give an update on national LEADER progress. Key points from the meeting included:

- Some guidance was provided regarding the UK's exit from the EU, but the future of LEADER beyond March 2019 remained unclear. As such, all LEADER teams had been asked to reforecast their grant expenditure and aim commit all available funds by March 2019.
- A new application process, based off feedback from applicants and LAG staff, would be in place by the end of April 2017. The Outline Application would be renamed to an Expression of Interest, and require less detail from the applicant. The LEADER team had some concerns that the lack of detail may lead to more applications failing at the Full Application stage. However, new guidance about the evidence required for Full Applications was much clearer and should reduce difficulties encountered at the appraisal stage.
- The RPA had begun looking at LEADER LAGs that were underperforming, and considering the potential to reallocate funds to stronger LAGs. Cheshire East was within the top 16 LAGs nationally, and 2nd in the North West. Some LAGs still had not committed any funds at all.

MS explained that the annual attestation report and delivery plan would be drafted featuring truncated spending targets for the LAG. However, projects in the Forestry Productivity and Support for Rural Services priorities were thin on the ground.

SW noted that Cheshire East has plenty of woodlands in need of proper management; is LEADER too restrictive in what it will fund? MS explained that other funding streams are aimed at forestry management, while LEADER is only able to assist with capital costs such as equipment or buildings.

5.2 Variation to project 104284:

JM declared an interest in this project and vacated the meeting.

The process of obtaining planning permission for the project had been held up, and the beneficiary had asked for a three-month extension to the special condition set out in their Grant Funding Agreement, stating that planning permission must be obtained. If planning was obtained by the new requested deadline, the project should not be heavily affected but would have missed out on summer trade which will negatively affect the beneficiary's cashflow.

RP suggested sending a letter of support for the project to the Peak Planning authority; MS explained that the LAG cannot intervene, but if Cheshire East were interested in writing independently then this would be acceptable. BF concurred and agreed to draft a letter.

The LAG agreed to grant a three month extension the special condition as per the beneficiary's request.

BF



5.3 Google Group for LAG members

A Google group exists for LAG officers nationwide to seek advice or support from one another, which had proven to be incredibly useful at times, and as such a number of members of the group suggested setting up a similar group for LAG members and wished to gauge interest. No LAG members expressed an interest in joining the Google group, but a number of them suggested the creation of a public-facing Facebook page to promote the programme. SB agreed to look into this.

SB

6. Dates of Future Meetings

21st September, 14:30

7th December, 14:30

7. AOB

RP wished to acknowledge RB's hard work on a recent successful rural funding event.

I confirm these minutes are a true and accurate record:

Signature

Name (Please print)

Date