

	Initials/Actions
<p>West Cheshire & Warrington LEADER Executive Board 1st March 2017, 11:00am Cheshire View, Christleton</p>	
<p>Board Members present: David Felix (Chair), All-Saints Church, Daresbury Chris McGloin, Mersey Forest Elizabeth Aldridge, Warrington Borough Council Andrew Hull, Sandstone Ridge Trust Charlotte Harris, Cheshire Wildlife Trust Nicola Said, Marketing Cheshire Stuart Roberts, SFR Farming</p>	<p>DF CM LA AH CH NS SR</p>
<p>Advisors/Officers present: Joanna Douglass – LEADER Programme Manager (West Cheshire & Warrington), Cheshire West & Chester Council Mandy Sibthorpe – LEADER Programme Manager (Cheshire East), Cheshire West & Chester Council Ellie Morris – Programme Manager (Rural & Market Towns), Cheshire West & Chester Council Sean Bell – LEADER Support Officer, Cheshire West & Chester Council Sandra Lloyd (Visitor) – Senior Project Officer (Rural & Market Towns), Cheshire West & Chester Council</p>	<p>JD MS EM SB SL</p>
<p>1. Welcome and Apologies DF welcomed the Board; apologies were received from Chris Brown-Bolton, Joanne Butterill, John Heselwood and Guy Darragh.</p> <p>2. Minutes of previous meeting DF asked the Board if they had any issues with the previous minutes. No issues were raised; minutes were signed as an accurate record.</p> <p>3. Conflicts of interest No conflicts of interest were declared.</p> <p>4. Board Membership Update JD explained that CM had taken Danielle Lea-Smith’s role at the Forestry Commission; he would therefore continue to sit on the LAG and Executive Board, but representing the Forestry Commission rather than Mersey Forest.</p>	

5. LEADER Update

JD discussed the LAG's progress, key points included:

- A new Applicant Handbook had been issued, offering clearer and more concise guidance.
- The LAG's first two projects, a children's nursery and all-weather riding arena, were now fully implemented and in use.
- A Forestry Productivity application was ready to be presented to the Board at this meeting, but the applicant was forced to withdraw their application at the last minute due to financial issues. JD noted that she was looking at ways to develop forestry projects alongside CM. CM asked if there were any examples of forestry projects from other LAGs, SB noted that a project almost identical to the one intended to be presented to the Board at this meeting had been funded by the 'Making it Local' LAG in Devon (http://makingitlocal.org/catalogue.php?cat=1185&subCat=0&item_id=15063). SR noted that he had expected more applications from biomass burners; MS suggested that market saturation may be a factor.
- The LEADER team were working on their annual delivery plan and attestation report, but were awaiting precise guidance on the required format.
- Outline Applications and enquiries continued to span all priorities except Forestry Productivity.
- One LAG had chosen to withdraw from LEADER entirely due to a lack of interest; it was assumed that its funds would need to be reallocated to other LAGs but the RPA had offered no guidance on this, and instead asked LAGs to contact them if an overspend looked likely.
- The RPA were working on a revised application process, guided by feedback from LAG officers, and hoped to implement it in April 2017.

6. Projects for Consideration

Millmoor Farm Holiday Lets – Project 104495

This project aimed to provide an additional new two-bedroom bungalow in addition to the farm's existing successful holiday lets which have run at an extremely high occupancy rate of 96%.

The applicant diversified into tourism in 1995, originally operating a B&B that later turned into full self-catering holiday lets with RDPE support. The total project cost for the new bungalow would be £123,428, with a grant request of £49,371. The project aimed to create 1.5 FTE jobs, working out at a grant cost of £32,914 per job, below the suggested average of £36,005 for this LEADER priority.

Support for the project was demonstrated by letters from competitors, as well as evidence showing that repeat visitors book up to a year in advance. The applicant had also demonstrated a good relationship with their bank, with the bank offering a loan for the full project costs, with interest only being applied after the LEADER grant is paid. Planning permission for the project was also evidenced.

MS noted that the applicant seemed to misunderstand the section of the Full Application concerning project outputs, but this was a simple misunderstanding and did not impact on the project's value for money. As such, the project was suggested for approval.



AH added that a long standing business that clearly works in cooperation with its competitors seems a safe bet.

DF confirmed that all voting members present agreed to approve the application for funding as per the Appraiser’s suggestion, no objections were raised.

Farndon Community Centre: Kitchen Refurbishment – Project 104516

The applicant – Farndon Community Trust – began renting the Community Centre from the Parish Council last year and has since grown its membership by 300%. This project the fitting of a new kitchen and associated building works, as the current catering facilities were no longer fit for purpose. The applicant supplied a letter of support from a catering firm who frequently worked at the Community Centre but needed to bring a mobile catering unit in order to operate.

The project would allow the Trust to employ one full-time Steward. Total project costs were £12,545, with a grant request of £9,835. Under the LEADER priority of Support for Rural Services, the LAG suggests an average of £35,285 per job, so this project represented excellent value for money. It also provided a good fit with the Local Development Strategy’s aim of supporting community resilience.

AH noted that a similar project in Tattenhall had been a huge success, and now hosts many events that simply could not have taken place without it.

DF confirmed that all voting members present agreed to approve the application for funding as per the Appraiser’s suggestion, no objections were raised.

7. AOB

None raised.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

28th June 2017

4th October 2017

I confirm these minutes are a true and accurate record,

Signature:

Name (please print):

Date:

