

## Appendix A

### The Levels and Moors Local Action Group for the LEADER Programme

#### What is LEADER?

LEADER is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). It's a French acronym which roughly translates as 'Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'.

Through the LEADER programme funding is available to:

- Private organisations
- Public organisations
- Voluntary organisations and
- Someone who wants to start a business

to help create jobs, develop rural businesses and support the local economy. Local Action Groups decide on the allocation of funding, based on a set of criteria approved by DEFRA.

#### How Local Action Groups work

A LAG is made up of people from the local community and the local public and private sector.

LAGs decide which projects they will fund in their area. This depends on their priorities but all projects must support one or more of the 6 LEADER priorities. These are to:

- support micro and small businesses and farm diversification
- boost rural tourism
- increase farm productivity
- increase forestry productivity
- provide rural services
- provide cultural and heritage activities

Projects funded under the new LEADER Programme (2014-2020) will need to focus on delivering jobs and growth, 70% of all projects funded under LEADER will need to show tangible outcomes of how they directly support the rural economy (e.g. through creating and developing micro and small sized rural businesses, offering employment etc), the remaining 30% of projects will also need to demonstrate that they are contributing to improving the local rural economy by, for example, by increasing visitors to a particular area or providing an essential rural service.

In South Somerset we now benefit from three Local Action Groups in the LEADER programme:

- *The Levels and Moors* - an established area stretching from A303 to the coast, taking in parts of Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and Mendip plus the whole of SSDC Area North.
- *Making it Local* – Is largely based on the Blackdown Hills taking in Chard and western parishes of Area West.

- *Heart of Wessex* follows the A303/A30 corridor area. It covers the remaining, parts of the district in Area East, South and West excluding Yeovil, which is too big to be considered for the scheme.

Following a process of consultation, Local Development Strategies have been developed by each of the LAGs, which were then submitted to DEFRA. Each of the South Somerset LAGs has been successful in their bids; the funding allocation for Levels and Moors is £1,635,000, which equates to approximately £1,340m grants pot and £294,300 Management & Administration. (Variations will occur over the life of the programme as the funding is drawn down in Euros and subject to variance in exchange rates).

LEADER Partnerships have an Executive Group which is made up of a combination of representatives of businesses, agencies, communities and appointed councillors from local authorities. SSDC appoints one councillor representative to each of the three LAGs from the main area of benefit. With the support of an officer from the Area Development team, the councillor's role is to ensure that information and views are transmitted to communities in the LAG catchment, to disseminate information to the Area Committee, to act as an advisor on the executive board of the Local Action Group and to evaluate how applications might benefit the economic vitality and sense of place in the Levels and Moors.

The L&M programme is managed by a programme manager, under the auspices of Somerset County Council, who act as the accountable body for this scheme and its sister scheme in West Somerset.

Meetings are usually every other month lasting about two hours a piece. Representatives need to allow time for travel and some before/after reading of papers etc. There may also be ad hoc contact in between meetings which would be via email, if decisions need to be taken outside of a set meeting.

During the previous programme, I am very pleased to say that schemes and projects in Area North did very well. Over at Barrington Court the National Trust achieved a grant of £100,000 towards the further development of their craft units and individual businesses there also received development grants. In Langport, a grant of over £20,000 helped to improve pathways on the moor and river bank and provided new signage and leaflets to promote the offer to visitors. The LEADER programme gives us a great opportunity to support the local economy and help ensure that our rural businesses continue to thrive!

If you should need any further information, please contact me:

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