

## **Progress Report – LEADER Programmes in Area West**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To update the Committee on the projects that have been supported through the two LEADER Programmes operating across Area West.

### **Public Interest**

The whole of rural South Somerset benefits from the LEADER Programme, which supports locally designed rural development and enterprise initiatives. This is a 5 year EU funded programme that went live in November 2015. It focuses on supporting rural job creation and economic development. There are 3 schemes operating in South Somerset.

Due to BREXIT the programme will finish early, all projects should be contracted by March 2019 and the current guidance is that project spend should be completed (ie final claims paid) by December 2019.

### **Recommendation**

That Members note and comment on the report.

### **Background**

Projects funded under the new LEADER Programme (2015-2020) focus on delivering jobs and growth, 70% of the projects funded under LEADER will directly support the rural economy (eg: through creating and developing micro and small sized rural businesses). 30% of projects will also need to demonstrate that they are contributing to improving the rural economy. The programme has 6 priorities:

- (1) increasing farm productivity
- (2) micro & small enterprise and farm diversification
- (3) rural tourism
- (4) rural services
- (5) cultural & heritage activity and
- (6) forestry productivity.

The launch of the programme was delayed for over 9-months due to the 2015 General Election and a total revision of all the documentation required. During this period the Programme Managers undertook an active programme of awareness raising. A first call for expressions of interest was put out in November 2015.

In Area West there are 2 LAGs; Making it Local that covers all but 3 wards and Heart of Wessex that cover the remaining 3 most easterly wards of Crewkerne, Eggwood and Parrett. The attached map shows the extent of all 3 LAGs.

## Making It Local

Making it Local (MIL) covers all of the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB areas, along with the surrounding market towns; this includes Chard, Ilminster and the wards of Blackdown, Neroche, Windwhistle and Tatworth & Forton.

The Accountable Body for MIL is Devon County Council and the Project Manager and Admin Officer are based in Exeter, but also make use of offices in Honiton and Sidmouth. Councillor Martin Wale sits on the Executive for the LAG. The website [www.makingitlocal.org](http://www.makingitlocal.org) keeps people up-to-date with details of the programme.

Making it Local is the best performing LAG in the country; it has approximately £120k remaining, due to the fluctuations in exchange rates and it is accepting EOIs until 30 July 2018 with full applications by 31 August. So far there have been awards of £1,582,823 to 50 projects across the MIL area, the following projects are located in Area West:

- **Ferne Animal Sanctuary** - £98,245 grant, intervention rate 22.11%. This enabled them to build and equip a new visitor centre, which has resulted in 3 new jobs
- **Perry's Cider** - £21,744 grant, intervention rate 40%. Towards the purchase of kegging equipment allowing them to now sell barrels of cider to pubs, this created 2 new jobs.
- **Glanville** (Farmer) - £12,498 grant, 40% intervention rate. To purchase rumination collars
- **Scott** (Farmer) - £34,710 grant, 40% intervention rate to install a voluntary milking system
- **Whitestaunton PCC** - £2,576 grant, 15% intervention rate. Restoration of church bells
- **Snowden Hill Farm Chard** - £33,600 grant. 40% intervention rate. One Pass Strip Till Drill.

In summary 6 projects from the Area have benefitted with £204,374 of grant resulting in project investment of £720,135

## Heart of Wessex

The Heart of Wessex LAG covers south Wiltshire, part of Mendip, the Area East part of South Somerset and part of Area West. The Managing Agent and Accountable Body for the heart of Wessex LAG is Wiltshire Council. The Project Manager and Administrator are based at Balsam Centre in Wincanton. Cllr Mike Lewis, Area East, serves on the Executive for the LAG. All Members in the area of benefit have been kept in contact through the newsletter from the LAG and further details of the programme are on the website: [www.heartofwessex.co.uk](http://www.heartofwessex.co.uk) . All of the areas covered by this LAG in South Somerset are new to LEADER programmes.

- The Heart of Wessex LAG has allocated £1,108,858 of LEADER grant funding to 32 projects across the LAG area. Two of these are in Area West
- The LAG Forum is open to all interested businesses, community groups and individuals. The Forum exists to enable the wider community to get involved in shaping the programme, hear from successful projects and to help promote the availability of grants
- There are 5 projects working towards submitting applications to be considered by the LAG Executive at the July meeting = £287,138 (will then be 93% committed). The remaining headroom, therefore is £105,335.
- Heart of Wessex Total Project Allocation £1,485,388.00. Total committed to date £1,092,715 (74% of project allocation)
- Potential further investment in project pipeline = £521,382
- The Heart of Wessex LAG is now closed to new project applications, pending the availability of any further funding
- All grant funds are paid retrospectively and all claims must be fully evidenced

- Business advice is available from various sources to help businesses establish and grow. This includes the NDO (economy), SSDC Economic Development Team and a range of other sources/websites for various aspects of business growth, funding, etc. A factsheet has been produced to help businesses find the help they need

The 2 grants allocated in Area West are:

- **Yarcombe Woodland Products, Hinton St George** £88,044 grant, intervention rate 40% - to enable the company to build an extension to an existing workshop purchase and install an automatic panel manufacturing machine and stacking line to increase production to meet high demand. Total project value £220,110
- **Baker Kingston Farms, Haselbury Plucknett** £24,932, grant intervention rate 40% total project value £62,330- Dairy productivity improvement project

In summary 2 projects from the Area have benefitted with of grant of £112,976 resulting in project investment of £282,440

### **Next steps**

Both Programmes have a full pipeline of projects. Applications are now closed to new enquiries for HoW and close shortly for MIL. Projects are now being implemented and the teams are working with beneficiaries of the grants to ensure successful delivery of their projects.

In the case of MIL, an additional sum of £249,175.06 was added to available funds from a LAG that closed. The current guidance from the RPA states that all funds should be contracted by end March 2019.

### **Financial Implications**

None directly arising from this report.

### **Corporate Priority Implications**

The current Council Plan states that:

- We want a strong economy, which has low unemployment and thriving businesses – one of stated ways which we will address this is to:
  - Work in partnership to deliver investment and development that local people value

### **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

In due course this designation could provide a way of supporting local employment and promote local produce/services in our communities contributing to greater self-containment, thereby reducing carbon emission.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Rural communities are vulnerable to isolation from services & markets and face higher transport costs. This programme provides an opportunity to support locally important economic initiatives.

**Background Papers:** See websites

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