



**Heart of Wessex Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday 16th November 2016**

Minutes

SSDC Offices, Churchfields, Wincanton, Somerset. BA9 9AG.

Present: Michael Mounde (MM) (Chairman), Simon Cullum (SC), Lizzy Ralph (LR), Susan Jonas (SJ), Andy Fussell (AF), Martin Woods (MW) Advisor, Peter Wheelhouse (PW) (Advisor)

In attendance: Clare Langdon (CL) – Wiltshire Council, Sarah Dyke (SD) Programme Manager, Emma Curtis (EC) – Programme Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions:

1a. Apologies: Jean Boulton (JB), Anne Carney (AC), Naomi Kimber (NK), Ali Morgan (AM), Jenny Pitcher (JP), Sue Place (SP), Helen Rutter (HR), Bridget Wayman (BW)

1b. Declarations of Interest: Received from PW, Advisor – on the Programme Management Team for Frome's Missing Links. PW signed the Register of Interests form and EC will add to DORA.

1c. Minutes of 26th July 2016 Executive Committee meeting: Approved and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

1d. Matters Arising: No matters arising

2. Project Applications: MM commented that the quality of the applications were of a very high standard and complimented the applicants and Programme Manager.

2a. Project: Nunton Farm: Milk Vending Machine (Project ref: 104283) Project Cost: £42,357 Grant Intervention: 40% Grant Requested: £16,943

Post meeting correction: Project Cost: £42,919.18. Grant Intervention: 40% Grant Requested: £17,167.67.

Introduction: SD read the introduction given on the appraisal document giving details on how the project will assist a dairy farm to expand into a new market by selling milk direct to the consumer via a Milk Vending Machine. It will create 0.47FTE initially, rising to 1 FTE. The project might, if successful lead to the opening of a farm shop. SD commented that an Environmental Health Officer had given some advice and made some recommendations and that these should be a condition on the Grant Funding Agreement if approved.

Discussion: The following points were made during discussion:

- **AF** – Commented that he was a big supporter of this project which would give the dairy industry a lift but that advice and points made by Environmental Health should be taken on board. Felt that the project was a sensible, sustainable good idea.
- **LR** – Felt that the project and application were of a high standard, created by a savvy businessman. Felt the contactless technology of the machine was on the cusp of current modern technology and was sustainable. Commented that perhaps the projected sales figures were quite ambitious.

- **SJ** – Thought it was an excellent idea and forward thinking. Felt the applicant had completed a high level of market research and that the proposals looked good. Queried the difference between the product being free range but not organic milk.
- **MW** – Really good project which would have a great way of changing people's buying habits creating a "wow" factor in the local community. Queried whether the applicant had considered insurance rates due to the expensive machinery.
- **SC** – Overall a great supporter of this project. Questioned whether a trick had been missed as this vending machine would be selling pasteurised milk as opposed to raw milk as a number of facilities are now selling raw milk.
- **CL** – In the absence of AM, CL confirmed that AM was happy with the project. CL commented that it was an exciting project.
- **PW** – Commented that it was the sort of project which he had hoped would come forward and had the potential of becoming a demonstration product for other farmers to follow suit.

Decision: Voting members voted five in favour, with none against and no abstentions. The GFA would detail the two standard conditions along with a further condition stating that the applicant must adhere to the conditions and advice set out by the Environmental Health Officer in the letter dated 27th September 2016. MM signed the LEADER FA Appraisal Form 009 to confirm approval on behalf of the LAG.

At this point CL requested that agreements be sent out next week once AM had returned from annual leave. SD agreed.

**2b. Project: Frome's Missing Links: A Walking and Cycling Destination (Project Ref: 104405)
Project Cost: £77,042.25 Grant Intervention: 62.79% Grant Requested: £48,378**

Introduction: SD read information from the appraisal form detailing that the project was to promote Frome as a walking and cycling destination by joining up a crucial missing link of an important cycling greenway. The overall project has three different stages and LEADER funding would be used towards stage 2 for funding the fencing of the missing link path alongside an operational railway line. SD informed members that the project costs had changed slightly since paperwork for the meeting had been sent out as the preferred supplier was not the cheapest. Therefore project costs were now capped at £77,042.25 which is £654.75 less than originally requested. The grant request remained the same, the grant intervention rate also changed from 62.26% to 62.79%. Proof of matching funding has been provided by the applicant. Details of beneficiaries were given.

Discussion – The following points were made during discussion:

MM – Commented that the project would be a boost for rural tourism and that there is a long history of old railways being converted into cycle and walking routes.

SC – Felt it was a wonderful project which he undoubtedly supports for approval.

MW – Requested clarification from PW on how the route would fit in context to the rest of the cycleway. PW explained geographically how the route would fit commenting that it would be a crucial length of the cycleway and out of all the sections this was a critical element. PW commented that you could currently walk the route but not cycle it and gave details on the proposed fence and surfacing of the project which would make it a viable cycling route. PW commented that the route would have to meet the safety requirements of Network Rail which are fairly stringent.

Due to his declared interest, at this point PW left the room.

MW – Confirmed he was a massive advocate of the cycle route would benefit local tourism and the local area.

SJ – Felt the project was a great idea but expressed disappointment that the project had been marked down in appraisal due to not creating a job despite having many other benefits to the local area, possibly including the creation of indirect employment.

AF – Commented he felt the project was a really good idea.

LR – A good project and would happily approve.

Decision: Voting members voted five in favour with none against and no abstentions. GFA to detail two standard conditions with no other conditions set.

PW re-joined the meeting at this point.

**2c. Project: Yarcombe Woodland Products: 21st Century Manufacturing (Project Ref: 104417)
Project Cost: £220,110 Grant Intervention: 40% Grant Requested: £88,044**

Introduction: SD confirmed that a decision on this project would not be able to be made at the meeting as the RPA QC had brought up an issue involving the appropriateness of one quotation. The applicant was currently in the process of gaining a further quotation to meet the QC request. The project itself is to purchase new technology to increase the productivity of the business which makes bespoke high quality fence panels, and related building work. SD recommended that the application was discussed and an out of committee decision made once the QC issue had been resolved. This was agreed by all.

Discussion – The following points were made during discussion:

SJ – Seems like a good project regarding issues they have having with reduced manufacturing. Felt the new machinery would use an enormous amount of power and questioned whether this had been considered in their costings. Felt it was silly the applicant had to get another quote for a product they do not want.

AF – Felt this was a great idea for business expansion.

LR – Thought the project was good in principle but questioned how the existing staff would fit in to the new structure when new jobs were created as the application did not seem to mention existing staff. The machinery would massively increase production from 35 to 200 panels per day. Would like to see more market research completed.

SC – An exciting project and application. Perturbed by comments made by the appraiser concerning the machine. Felt it was ludicrous the RPA QC were asking for a further quotation on a product the applicant does not want or need. Great project and product.

MW – The applicant will be putting in a significant amount of their own funds to support the project. The company prides themselves on a good quality product. Project would support local woodlands.

CL – In the absence of AM, CL commented that AM had a concern regarding a lack of market research and suggested that as the project were to be delayed until March 2017 as awaiting planning permission, that further market research is completed in the interim.

PW – Felt the applicant ticked all the boxes for LEADER funding.

Decision: It was agreed that approval would be sought out of committee once the further quotation had been submitted to and approved by the RPA QC. Approval would be subject to planning permission being granted and further market research being produced to support the application.

LR praised SD in her reporting process stating that the papers received prior to the meeting were very informative.

3. Update from the Accountable Body.

CL referred everyone to the report produced by AM and apologised for its late arrival. The report detailed project costs and RCA spend for all Wiltshire LAG's. CL commented that the lack of a strong pipeline of projects was causing the Accountable Body concern and without more pipeline projects coming forward, as the Accountable Body we see this as a risk to the overall delivery of the programme.

MM responded that he was disappointed by the commentary on HoW. RCA spend keeps being raised but the HoW LAG operates as a deliberate choice in a different way to other LAG's. MM commented that he felt in comparison to other LAG's the HoW was doing very well and that he looked to a more balanced commentary in the future. LR asked for clarification about the projects in the pipeline likely to progress and PW questioned the confidence in the LEADER programme due to Brexit implications. See Minute 5 for further discussion on pipeline matters

4. **Programme Update:** SD referred everyone to the general report circulated prior to the meeting (Annex A). SD circulated a letter from Alison Webster at the RPA giving an update on the LEADER programme. SD confirmed that the HoW were now able to promote and encourage applications again. SD highlighted changes to the format for LAG Forum's in 2017 and distributed a new timetable detailing four planned LAG Forum's for 2017. This change in process would allow applications to move through the process more swiftly. LR commented that she was excited about the changes being made to the LAG Forum process and felt that they would become more dynamic. CL asked if applicants had to advertise funding received from LEADER. SD confirmed that it was a standard condition for them to display a poster and the HoW had asked them to promote the programme on their websites. All present were happy with the new timetable for 2017 so it was agreed to publicise it. MM suggested that the committee may like to congratulate the Programme Management Team on achievements made to date during a difficult year – which it did.
5. **Project Enquiries:** SD circulated a new spreadsheet (Annex B) detailing the current project pipeline. This spreadsheet was based on the format AM had used for the Wiltshire LAG's. The spreadsheet detailed a healthy pipeline of projects with a number of new enquiries and outline applications being received.
6. **Programme Running Costs & Animation (RCA):** SD referred everyone to the spreadsheet provided prior to the meeting and apologised for the wrong date being shown. SD mentioned that at present the LAG was not aware whether the budget or spend allocation would change. The spreadsheet detailed spend profile throughout a difficult year. SD commented that RCA costs were currently averaging just under £13,000 per quarter and have naturally increased since EC was employed in October 2015 making them not too dissimilar to the previous programme. SD reiterated that it had been a torrid year for all LAG's. HoW was projected to shut its programme earlier than other LAG's in the area, thus requiring a balanced comparison. MM commented that the current delivery plan was from 2015-2020 and that this would need to be changed to reflect the timeline of 2018.
7. **Items requested by members:** None requested.
8. **Any Other Business:** SC commented that it appeared to be the same attendees at each LAG Executive Committee meeting and requested that the Programme Management Team encourage the other elected Executive members to attend future meetings.
9. **Date of the next meeting:** Wednesday 25th January 2017 at 6.30pm, Churchfields, Wincanton, BA9 9AG

The Chairman thanked all for attending, and also thanked South Somerset District Council for the use of the room and the excellent coffee. He closed the meeting at 20:15.

Approved as a correct record:

Signed:

Date:

LAG Executive Chairman



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