



**Heart of Wessex Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

**Minutes**

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

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**Present:** Lizzy Ralph (LR), Susan Jonas (SJ), Colin Winder (CW), Simon Cullum (SC), Andy Fussell (AF), Naomi Kimber (NK), Mike Lewis (ML), Helen Rutter (HR) Advisor, Bridget Wayman (BW),

**In attendance:** Sarah Dyke (SD) – Programme Manager and Emma Curtis (EC) - Programme Officer

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** LR welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed the meeting was quorate.

**1a) Apologies:** Received from Anne Carney (AC), Ali Morgan (AM), Peter Quintana (PQ) Peter Wheelhouse (PW), Martin Woods (MW), Jenny Pitcher (JP) and Gary Collinson (GC)

**1b) Declarations of Interest:** Received from NK and CW, agenda item 2b. NK is a business associate of the applicant and CW a friend of the applicant. Declarations of Interest were added to the Register of Interests.

**1c) Minutes of previous meeting held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017:** Approved and signed as an accurate record of the meeting

**1d) Matters Arising:** None

2. **Project Applications**

Prior to the applications being considered CW asked SD to explain how VAT was dealt with during the application process. SD explained that if the applicant is VAT registered then the project costs do not include VAT as the applicant will claim the VAT back directly from HMRC. If the applicant is not VAT registered then they are requested to provide a letter from HMRC and VAT can be included in the full costs.

- a) **Remote Scrub Clearance (Project Ref: 106481) Project Cost: £47,700 Grant Intervention Rate: 40% Grant Requested: £19,080** SD gave an overview of the project detailing how the applicant was applying for funding to invest in a specialist remote control flail mower and mulcher and associated equipment, capable of cutting various types of flora including tall grass, reeds, brambles and invasive woody scrub up to 100mm in diameter. This project would allow the business to bring more work in house, cut down on the costs of contractual labour and provide 2 new FTE's within 2 years within the business. The appraisal score for this project is 42 out of a possible 52.

**Discussion** – The following points were made during discussion:

**BW** – Concerned as the applicant appeared to be a tree surgeon aiming to diversify and felt this would be better done starting with strimmer's and cutters. Felt that the LAG may be awarding a grant to a business which isn't competitive to make it competitive may have an adverse impact on other businesses. SD explained that grants are for business innovation and growth and this project fits the programme funding criteria.

**AF** – Felt it was an extremely good project and piece of machinery, competitive with a USP.

**LR** – Commented that the FA had detailed how work had been lost by the applicant as due to not being competitive and how this piece of machinery would allow them to be so. Felt the project was new and innovative and a lot of research had been undertaken. Applauded the business in striving to sustain activity all year round.

**CW** – Referred to new planning applications and the requirement for historic hedges to be maintained. Felt the product would be able to assist in this.

**SC** – Commented the machinery would open up more contacts and contracts due to huge demand and would be a tonic for growth allowing the business to transform.

**SJ** – On first reading of the application felt it would be an ecological disaster but after reviewing the appendices concerns were alleviated after discovering the machine would have three cutting heads. Felt the mower would not be suitable for riverbanks and expressed concern regarding appropriate use of the machine.

**ML** – Supportive of the project but questioned whether the HSE report and CHAS certificate covered this type of equipment. Asked whether staff needed training and qualifications in order to use the machinery. SD commented that the certificate of accreditation supplied from CHAS should cover this but would check and a note would be added to the file detailing whether a qualification was needed.

**LR** – no further comments so asked members to move to a vote.

**Decision:** All voting members voted unanimously to support the project. LR signed section B4 of the approval section on the Full Application Appraisal Form.

- b) Improving Nutrient Efficiency (Project Ref: 106717) Project Cost: £43,144 Grant Intervention Rate: 40% Grant Request: £17,257.60** SD gave information about the project detailing that the applicant was applying for grant funding to support the purchase of new GPS controlled machinery (a 9 metre Pichon Dribble bar and a KRM MZW Base Fertiliser spreader) to enable the applicant to apply inorganic fertiliser and slurry more accurately with the use of new technology, thus avoiding overlaps in the fields, reduce the time involved in the application, saving fuel and reducing the risk of pollution in case of adverse weather conditions. The appraisal score for this project was 45 out of a possible 52.

**Discussion** – The following points were raised during discussion:

**LR** – Asked whether the three quotes received were all from local suppliers and if they would close in price. SD confirmed that they were all from the SW. LR commented that although the machinery may not be innovative it would be to the local area.

**SJ** – Noted that the appraiser had recommended more research be undertaken but that this would be difficult to do. Felt it was a good project which she would support.

**AF** – Felt the application was a bit confusing as it doesn't involve organic farming but conventional farming. Questioned how many dribble bars were being purchased. SD confirmed it was just one bar. Stated that it was not new technology and therefore not innovative but was a good piece of kit and good for the environment.

**SC** – Stated that the cheese from the associated business was very good and was in support of the project.

**ML** – Questioned the finances as there appeared to be a substantial rise in fixed assets as they had risen by £8million in one year. After checks to the Audited Accounts supplied with the application, this was found to be an administrative error in the Appraisal documentation where an extra digit had been added. ML supported the project commenting it would assist cheese production.

**CW** – Felt the project was not very innovative.

**BW** – Stated the project was not innovative. SD commented that it met requirements as it would increase farm productivity.

**LR** – no further comments so asked members to move to a vote.

**Decision:** All voting members voted unanimously to support the project. NK abstained from voting due to her declared interest. LR signed section B4 of the Full Application Appraisal Form.

- 3. Programme Update:** LR referred all to Paper B General Report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions. No issues were raised but BW requested feedback on recent surgery sessions which SD gave. SD stated that in the New Year the LAG were considering sector specific events which would be targeted across the different national priorities. LR stated that there could possibly be seven projects to consider at the next meeting and that the date of the South West Dairy Show was actually the 4<sup>th</sup> October and not 5<sup>th</sup> October as stated in the report. The LAG would be exhibiting at the East Somerset in Business event at Haynes Motor Museum on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. LR commented that thought was being given to future LAG Forums and that an idea may be to hold a LAG visit rather than a structured meeting. LR said that an approved project had been approached in regard to the scheduled November meeting but that no response had yet been received. LR urged any members to come forward with and share any ideas they may have on future forums. Members agreed that the LAG meeting be postponed until the spring in order to arrange visits to successful projects.
- 4. Programme Running Costs & Animation (RCA):** LR referred everyone to Paper C Financial Report circulated prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions. No questions were asked or issues raised.
- 5. Project Enquiries:** LR referred everyone to Paper D Project Pipeline Report circulated before the meeting commenting that it was an extremely healthy pipeline. SD commented that the project pipeline was changing daily and the programme team were constantly receiving new project enquiries. LR confirmed that out of the four Wiltshire LAG's the HoW had so far invested the highest financial allocation. HR asked what would happen if all allocated funding was spent. SD said that the RPA were looking at allocating further funding on a monthly basis to overachieving LAG's removing the funding from underperforming LAG's but formal confirmation about this is pending.
- 6. Items requested by members:** None
- 7. Any Other Business:** None
- 8. Date of the next meeting:** Confirmed as Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017.

LR thanked SSDC for the use of the Churchfields meeting room, members for their attendance and SD and EC for their continued hard work. There being no further business LR closed the meeting at 7.50pm

Approved as a correct record:

Signed:

Date:

LAG Executive Chairman



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DRAFT