



**Minutes of Local Action Group Forum Meeting
held at Stourton Memorial Hall, nr Mere
Wednesday 16th March 2016**

1. **Chairman's Welcome** – Lizzy Ralph (LR), LAG Forum Chairman, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the second meeting of the programme. LR explained that there were four projects presenting during the evening, double the amount of the first meeting, and that the meeting would adhere to a rigid timescale aiming to finish at around 8.30pm.
2. **Apologies** – Oliver Dowding, Peter Wheelhouse, Naomi Kimber, Ross Aitken, Jean Boulton, Chris Barker and Mark Heylar.
3. **Election of LAG Executive Committee**

SDB gave a brief presentation detailing information about the LAG Executive Committee and LAG Forum and what their responsibilities involve throughout the project application process. SDB explained that the total number of members is fifteen. Eight members of the LAG Executive Committee would be Core members from the key organisations Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, South Somerset District Council, Frome Town Council, Wincanton Community Venture, Mendip District Council, Wiltshire Council and a Youth LAG Representative. The remaining seven members of the Executive Committee would be made up from those LAG Forum members who had put themselves forward to be nominated for election.

 - **Candidates overview**

SDB explained that currently there were seven applicants for the seven vacancies on the Executive Committee and asked if any other person wished to nominate themselves. No further members nominated themselves to stand for election so SDB invited all candidates to give a two minute speech detailing why they wished to stand as a member on the Executive Committee. The running order of presentations was Simon Cullum, Andy Fussell, Jeremy Gaunt, Susan Jonas, Naomi Kimber, Dan Templar and Andi Witcombe. As Naomi Kimber and Dan Templar were absent from the meeting SDB and LR read their nomination forms on their behalf.
 - **Voting**

LR explained that as no further candidates had come forward to stand for election, that if all were happy, the seven candidates would all be elected as members of the Executive Committee. LR asked for a show of hands in agreement of electing all seven candidates, a show of hands for those against and a show of hands for any abstentions. All present at the LAG Forum voted in favour of electing all seven nominees as members of the Executive Committee so all nominees were duly elected.

4. Projects – Sarah Dyke-Bracher

a) An overview of the project application process

SDB gave a presentation detailing the project application process. Areas covered included the initial eligibility and completeness check, the outline application process including appraisal and endorsement at a LAG Forum and the full application process including independent appraisal and recommendation before a decision is made by the LAG Executive Committee.

b) When do you need to make a Declaration of Interest

SDB reminded all present that a Conflicts of Interest Form must be read and signed before voting on any project. SDB gave information on what was deemed as a Conflict of Interest, and that any conflicts must be added to the Register of Interests form which would be present at every meeting and maintained throughout the programme.

c) Voting – What you need to do

SDB gave information on who can vote on a project, how to vote on a project, eligibility criteria and how projects would be scored. SDB stated clearly that all voting forms needed to be signed in order for them to be valid. SDB confirmed that although new members would not be able to vote, they were welcome to fill in the comments form and any comments on the project would be passed to the applicant.

At this point in the meeting, Roy Sims asked SDB about the two projects which presented at the January LAG Forum and how they scored. SDB confirmed that both projects had scored well and had been invited to submit a Full Application.

5. Declarations of Interest

LR asked if there were any Declarations of Interest to be made, and if so, for the Register of Interests Form to be completed. No Declarations of Interest were made.

6. Project Presentations

a) Baltonsborough Farm Shop: New Baltonsborough Shop; Project Cost: £90,000; Grant Intervention Rate 40%; Grant Requested: £36,000

Max Cotton presented on behalf of Baltonsborough Farm Shop and was accompanied to the meeting by Ali Blackburn, Chairman of Baltonsborough Parish Council. Mr Cotton gave information on Baltonsborough and its current rate of growth with new housing developments along with information on the closure of its shop and post office in 2015 and the opening of the Farm Shop and temporary location of the post office, servicing the village, which is not fit for purpose. The grant request is for the assistance in funding a new shop and will be used for display equipment and refrigeration of frozen and fresh produce.

Q&A

Q: Simon Cullum – Where is the remainder of the finance coming from? A: *The remainder of the funding will come from an Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and personal funds.*

Q: Martin Ritchie – When will the project be complete? A: *Hopefully around this time next year. Work on the shop should commence at the end of summer 2016 with an anticipated finish time of end of spring 2017. The demand on grant funding will be towards the end of the project.*

Q: Andy Fussell – Is the developer who is building the housing development building the shop building? A: *Yes the same developer is building the shop. The site will be retained by the vendor and shop will be owned by the landlord.*

Q: Sue Place – What is the population of Baltonsborough and will there be any jobs created? A: *The population of Baltonsborough is just over 800 and will increase with the new housing development with the school getting bigger also. There is currently 1 FTE post and this will increase to 2 additional FTE posts and a part time worker with the aim of more part time posts being created over the next few years.*

Q: Paul Egginton – What are your projections on annual turnover? A: *We hope to double*

turnover which is currently healthy. We had an industry demographic survey completed which came up with a projected figure of £18,000 - £20,000 per week, which we have halved as projected turnover.

Q: Jill Turner – Where is the nearest equivalent shop in the area? A: We are not sure there is an equivalent shop in the area as the shop encompasses a farm shop, mini market and a post office which makes a loss so it is hard to compare. However, there is a store in Butleigh and a garage with a Spar about 3 miles away.

Q: Ali Morgan – What is the business structure? What will happen if you are not awarded the grant? A: It is an Ltd company. If we do not get the funding then the business will go ahead anyway, it has too. However, the business will be over borrowed straight away which will not be good and wont start on promising footing due to being under capitalised and over borrowed from the start.

Q: Alan Titcombe – There is going to be a lot of refrigeration, will there be a heat recovery system? A: Don't know.

Q: Susan Jonas – Has the Post Office been helpful? A: The Network Transformation team trying to stop post offices from closing have been great in the past. Not yet broached the post office about moving the current branch.

Q: Peter Quintana – Why did the last shop fail? A: It didn't fail, it closed as the owner retired and I couldn't buy it as it was a lot of money. A community buyer failed.

With no further questions, the Chairman thanked Max for his presentation asked all LAG Forum members to cast their votes and non-members to fill in their comments slip.

b) East Knoyle Community Shop Association Ltd: Wren's Shop 10th Anniversary Refit; Project Cost: £64,790; Grant Intervention Rate: 40%; Grant Requested: £25,916

Paul Egginton from Wren's Shop presented with his colleague Laura present at the LAG. Mr Egginton invited all present to try some of the food available at their table which is sold in the shop and all produced locally. Mr Egginton explained that the shop needed to expand to meet demand as the shop had been turning away business due to lack of space and although no new jobs would be created as the shop is manned by volunteers the expansion would sustain other jobs in the local community. The grant requested is to help fund an extension to the shop for additional storage, new refrigeration equipment and an upgrade of fixtures and fittings as well as supporting the local community and local businesses.

Q&A

Q: Peter Quintana – How much is the grant requested? A: £26,000

Q: Gail Cullum – Is the shop profitable? A: Yes the shop is profitable and the money is put back into the shop and used to support and fund local events and schemes. We pay a rent of £2,000 per annum to the Parish Council as the shop is on Parish Council land. We are currently saving for a defibrillator.

Q: Martin Ritchie – How many volunteers do you have? A: We have around 60 available and use around 7-8 per day.

Q: Jake Britten – You say you source 60% of your supplies locally? A – Yes, from within 40 miles. We will add another 5 suppliers in the first year.

Q: Helen Rutter – What is the business legal structure? A – Industrial Providence Society.

With no further questions, the Chairman thanked Paul for his presentation and asked all LAG Forum members to cast their votes and non-members to fill in their comments slip.

c) Royal Bath and West Society of England: Agri-tech & Food Innovation Centre; Project Cost: £538,183; Grant Intervention Rate: 18.1% Grant Requested: £97,378.30

Rupert Cox, Chief Executive of the Royal Bath & West of England Society presented. Mr Cox gave background information on the society. Mr Cox commented that the project aim is to refurbish existing offices and then diversify a new food agenda which would improve quality of the food industry in the area. The centre would provide support to small food businesses helping them to grow by giving them access to a test kitchen, a range of business support services and training support. Mr Cox explained that the project was a big priority for the society, which has not been delegated and the cash is in place for the project to commence. The project would directly support the creation of 2.3 FTE jobs.

Q&A

Q: Adam Nash – How much profit does the Bath and West turnover? A: *In 2015, my first year, turnover was £3,000,000 with a profit of £70,000.*

Q: Tony Deane – Why aren't you funding the project from your core business? A: *We are a charity and support various other things for youths and events.*

Q: Tony Deane – When you state you will provide support, what does that mean? A: *Help with recipe development, IP support, business support, social media and marketing support. This will be included in the day rate of the kitchen which is cost effective for a commercial kitchen.*

Q: Susan Jonas – Will there be someone running the kitchen? A: *Yes, there will be a new job created and 50% of this job will be running the kitchen and managing the centre with added adhoc support.*

Q: Peter Quintana – Why would local businesses use the kitchen? A: *Some businesses won't have their own kitchens, they can share ideas, new businesses can train and chefs can be trained.*

Q: Gail Cullum – Have you completed any testing on who your customers are? A: *Yes, we have completed quantitative research and business support and the outcome is positive.*

Q: Andy Fussell – You referred to units? A – *Yes, in phase C & D of the project we are aiming for stand-alone units on the site.*

Q: Rob Hitchings - £97,000 is coming from the grant, where is the other funding coming from? A: *The society will fund some itself and will seek the remaining funding.*

Q: Richard Pratt – You say you will create 20 indirect jobs, how? A: *If 20 outside businesses grow and do well, then potentially they will employ one extra member of staff.*

With no further questions, the Chairman thanked Rupert for his presentation and asked all LAG Forum members to cast their votes and non-members to fill in their comments slip.

d) WF, ME & JWF & GE Snell: The Trough Farm Shop; Project Cost: £200,000; Grant Intervention: 40%; Grant Requested: £80,000

John Snell presented on behalf of The Trough Farm Shop project. Mr Snell gave background information on the family business detailing how it had diversified over recent years and now wished to create a unique farm shop and coffee shop to serve the growing population of Yeovil. Mr Snell commented the shop would run alongside the other businesses on the site and would allow the sale of locally sourced and reared produce, a venue to hold bespoke parties as well as developing own branded products and moving in to e-commerce. Mr Snell concluded by stating The Trough would be constructed to a very high standard and that the project had been on hold.

Q&A

Q: Paul Egginton – How many jobs will be created? A: *2.5 FTE jobs will be created to start with, with other work being completed by family members.*

Q: Paul Egginton – For such a large shop there are not many staff? A: *We are aiming to start smaller and build up.*

Q: Andy Fussell – What happened to the other funding you were originally awarded? A: *We did not take it up.*

Q: Andy Fussell – Is it just a shop? A: *No, a shop and café. We have planning permission. There are around 2500 houses being built within a 1 mile radius.*

Q: Jake Britten – Are you proposing to build the café and shop on the same site as the bungalows and farm? A: *The bungalows will be built to the south of the café (showed location on map)*

Q: Roy Sims – Your brochure says your accommodation is luxury 5 star accommodation, what are you charging? A: *We have an 85% occupancy rate for our accommodation with prices ranging from around £70 - £110 per night for bed and breakfast.*

Q: Andy Fussell – Are the 29 bungalows you are planning on building on your land? A: *Yes, mine. We are currently waiting for the Section 106 agreement to be signed off. They will be unique warden maintained bungalows.*

Q: Andy Fussell – If you have planning and acres of land, why do you not sell? A: *We have lived there all our lives and if we sold we would lose face of where we lived. We have had no objections from any of our neighbours on any of our projects and we enjoy where we live. We have invested lots of money in our business and do not wish to sell.*

With no further questions, the Chairman John for his presentation and asked all LAG Forum members to cast their votes and non-members to fill in their comments slip.

Please see Appendix 1 for voting results

7. Growth Funding Presentation – Ali Morgan (Wiltshire Council)

Ali Morgan from Wiltshire Council gave a presentation on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The presentation detailed what the EAFRD Growth Programme is and how it fits in with other funding programmes, particularly LEADER, as well as how it will be delivered in the Swindon and Wiltshire area. Ali gave information on funding, priorities and outputs required from grant funding along with the application and appraisal process.

Following this presentation, the Chairman informed all present that SDB and EC would be making their way around the room to collect all voting slips and comment forms.

Please see Appendix 2 for the full presentation

8. Executive Committee Election Results

Due to all nominees being elected to the Executive Committee earlier in the meeting, this agenda item was cancelled.

9. Any Other Business

SDB confirmed that all votes would be collated the following day and applicants informed of their results as soon as possible. SDB stated that results would be available on the Heart of Wessex website as soon as possible.

SDB commented that the programme was currently recruiting volunteer appraisers and asked if anyone would like to put themselves forward as an appraiser as although the Heart of

Wessex had a small pool of volunteers, the programme was looking for more. It was confirmed that appraisers could be a member of the LAG Forum or LAG Executive Committee but that if they were appraising a project they would not be able to vote on that specific project. SDB confirmed that appraiser training would take place on Wednesday 30th March 2016.

Paul Egginton asked if the grant would be “all or nothing”. For example, if a project asked for £26,000 would they be granted only the £26,000 or could they be offered less? SDB answered that the Executive Committee would be looking to support investment that offers the best value for money. They will decide based on the strength of the application and the recommendation of the appraiser and they may come back with a reduced grant offer. SDB reiterated that this is why the Programme Management Team strive to only put robust applications forward so that there should not be any reason not to fund.

10. Date and Venue of the next meeting – Wednesday 18th May 2016, Caryford Hall, Castle Cary, BA7 7JJ

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending. She then closed the meeting at 20:30hrs.

Approved as a correct record:

Signed:

Date:

LAG Forum Chairman



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