

## **Press Release**

**For immediate release – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

### **Heart of Wessex LAG secures additional funding for rural businesses – but be quick, time is short.**

Rural businesses and organisations across south and east Somerset and south Wiltshire are being encouraged to apply for EU grants designed to support the local economy before it's too late. The Heart of Wessex Local Action Group (LAG) has recently been awarded an additional programme allocation of c. £200,000 to invest in projects that directly support the rural economy in the LAG area and is now open to new Expressions of Interest from eligible businesses and organisations.

So far the LAG has invested £1.7 million to successful projects, and applicants are encouraged to apply quickly if they wish to be considered for grant support. Sarah Dyke, the Heart of Wessex Programme Manager said, "We are delighted that we now have more funding available to support rural businesses in our area and would like to encourage more great project ideas to come forward as soon as possible as all grants must be awarded to successful applicants by the end of June". She added, "Funding is not guaranteed and will only be awarded to projects that make the greatest contribution to the local economy and offer best value for money by creating new jobs and increasing productivity".

Eligible applicants are businesses, farmers, foresters and community groups across the Heart of Wessex LAG with grants starting from £5,000 up to £100,000 with the LEADER programme designed to promote business growth and job creation in rural communities. Projects should support the LAG's Local Development Strategy and the six National priorities which are: support for increasing farm productivity; support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification; support for rural tourism; provision for rural services; support for cultural and heritage activity and support for increasing forestry productivity.

The window of opportunity to apply is short however. All Expressions of Interest must be submitted by 15<sup>th</sup> May and subsequently, Full Applications by 15<sup>th</sup> June. All projects must be approved and contracted by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June. All grant payments must have been made by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

Further details about the projects which have been awarded a grant funding can be found on the Heart of Wessex website ([www.heartofwessex.co.uk/approved-projects](http://www.heartofwessex.co.uk/approved-projects)). For more information on LEADER funding, the Heart of Wessex LAG and how to apply, please visit [www.heartofwessex.co.uk](http://www.heartofwessex.co.uk) .

Alternatively call Sarah on 07826 907361 for an initial chat, she would be happy to hear from you and can quickly advise if your project meets the funding criteria.

**ENDS**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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## NOTES TO EDITOR:

1. For more information on the Heart of Wessex Local Action Group please visit [www.heartofwessex.co.uk](http://www.heartofwessex.co.uk)
2. **LEADER funding** is delivered via Local Action Groups and is available to local businesses, communities, farmers, foresters and land managers in rural areas. A total of £138 million is available in the current Rural Development Programme England (RDPE). LEADER is a French acronym (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale) which roughly translates as 'Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'. It is a local development method which has been used since 1991 to engage local people in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas.
3. **A Local Action Group (LAG)** is made up of representatives from the local community in addition to the local public, civil and private sector constituted to manage their local LEADER group. Each LAG, which will cover a rural area of up to 150,000 people, decides which projects they will fund in their area through devising their own Local Development Strategy but they must support 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
4. **Eligible Area**  
The Heart of Wessex LAG area is shown below:

