

Heart of Wessex Local Action Group

Terms of Reference – LOCAL ACTION GROUP FORUM

1. Introduction

1.1 The Local Action Group Forum is one of two groups that operate in the Heart of Wessex Programme, its main role is to challenge and scrutinise Outline Application stage applications and applicants and provide a view as to whether an eligible application is a priority for support under the programme. The LAG Forum is not a formally constituted group and its members are volunteers. As such it operates under a set of Terms of Reference but has no legal responsibility or liability.

1.2 The aim of the LAG Forum is to further sustainable rural development within the Heart of Wessex LAG Partnership area through the Local Action for Rural Development Programme for England, and to that end members will:

- Receive all Outline Application forms and read them
- Attend the LAG Forum meetings to meet the applicants submitting projects for funding
- Clarify any points raised within the Outline Application with the applicant
- Raise any other points of clarification felt relevant to the application
- Take a view as a LAG Forum member as to whether the application is viewed as a priority for the programme within the context of the current programmes focus
- Pass that view onto the Executive Committee so that they can make any approval decisions in the full knowledge of the LAG Forum view
- Receive information back from the Executive Committee on applications, priorities and strategic direction
- Elect representatives from amongst the LAG Forum to sit on the Executive Committee
- Promote the Programme

2. Membership

2.1 The Membership of the LAG Forum is open to anybody who has attended at least 1 LAG meeting. This is monitored upon entry to the meeting as attendees are required to sign in and provide their contact details.

2.2 Membership of the LAG Forum entitles the member to access the Outline Application forms and to speak and ask questions at the LAG Forum meetings, to write comments upon the appropriate forms so that their comments can be considered by the LAG Executive Committee when the projects are being considered for recommendation for approval. LAG Forum members will also elect eight LAG representatives plus the LAG Forum Chairman from within the LAG to sit in the Executive Committee, this will be conducted at the Annual Meeting.

3. Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman

3.1 The appointment of the Chairman and Vice Chairman will be conducted at the Annual Meeting of the LAG Forum. The Programme Management Team will issue an agenda and call for candidates at least 15 days before the meeting to registered members of the LAG Forum and the LAG Executive Committee. Candidates will be invited to submit their names for consideration 5 days before the meeting to the Programme Management Team. At the Annual Meeting they will then be invited to stand and outline their experience, aptitude and

rationale for wanting to take the post. Candidates will then be asked to leave the room while votes are cast.

3.2 The Chairman of the LAG Forum will be appointed by a majority vote of the members present. The appointment will be for one calendar year renewable for a further year by a majority vote of the members present.

3.2 The Vice Chairman of the LAG Forum will be appointed by a majority vote of the members present. The appointment will be for one calendar year renewable for a further year by a majority vote of the members present.

4. Election of the LAG Representatives to the Executive Committee

4.1 There are eight spaces on the Executive Committee for LAG Forum members and the Chairman of the LAG Forum to fill. The election process to fill these spaces mirrors the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman. At least 5 days before the Annual Meeting the Programme Management Team will issue the agenda for the Annual Meeting and an invitation for registered LAG members to put themselves forward as candidates. Candidates put forward their names 5 days before the Annual Meeting to the Programme Management Team.

4.2 At the Annual Meeting candidates will then be invited to stand and outline their experience, aptitude and rationale for wanting to take the post. Candidates will then be asked to leave the room while votes are cast.

5. Conduct

5.1 The LAG members are expected to act within the spirit of the Code of Conduct policy for the Programme.

6. Conduct of Meetings

6.1 Administration: The administration of the LAG is carried out by the Programme Management Team. They should be the first point of contact on any issue for registered members.

6.2 Agenda: The agenda is drawn up by the Programme Management Team in consultation with the Chairman of the LAG Forum.

6.3 The order of business is:

- Programme overview and performance
- Consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting
- Notes of the preceding Executive Committee meeting and decisions on investments made
- Declarations of Interest
- Project presentations
- Any other business
- Date of next meeting

6.4 Agendas are issued electronically 7 working days in advance of the meeting (with exception of the Annual Meeting), accompanying papers are issued electronically 5 working days beforehand, and minutes issued within 10 working days after the meeting.

6.6 Declaration of Interests: Each agenda contains an item whereby the Chairman asks those present to declare if they have any prejudicial interests in any of the projects presenting.

6.7 Anyone making a declaration of interest is not entitled to ask a question or complete a comment form.

6.8 Declarations of interest must be recorded in writing on the Conflicts of Interest Register.

6.9 Frequency: Meetings will be every 6 to 10 weeks. Additional meetings can be called in agreement with the Chairman in emergencies or through volume of business.

6.10 Quorum: There is no quorum.

6.11 Record of Attendances: A record of attendance is to be kept for each meeting.

6.12 Speaking: Registered members are entitled to speak at meetings. Observers are not entitled to speak unless they are providing a point of objective information.

6.13 Speakers should be as brief as is consistent with making their point.

6.14 The Programme Management Team provide information and introduce reports where applicable and should be as brief as possible in doing this. They are entitled to provide information where this is needed and respond to questions but not to take part otherwise in discussions.

6.15 Voting: There is no formal voting in the meetings other than for election of representative roles.

7. Conduct of Members outside the Meetings

7.1 Outside of formal meetings Members of the LAG Forum will be expected to act as ambassadors for the Heart of Wessex Local Action Group. This will entail promoting, as and when appropriate, the objectives and ethos of the LEADER approach, and how it is being applied throughout the LAG area.

8. Expenses

8.1 LAG representative act as volunteers or representative of other organisations when attending meetings. When attending a meeting elsewhere as a representative of the LAG then expenses are reasonable. However, expenses should be agreed in advance of representing the LAG at a meeting with the Programme Manager.

9. Variance to the Terms of Reference

9.1 The Terms of Reference for the LAG Forum will be reviewed annually by the LAG Executive Committee and the LAG Forum, and they may vary or add to these Terms of Reference by agreement with the RPA.