

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director (Business) (Introduced by the Executive Member for Business)	Executive Cabinet	1 October 2009

RURAL ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND DIVERSIFICATION – LANCASHIRE WEST LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Members on the opportunities, provided by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007-2013, for further activity to support and diversify rural economies in Chorley Borough.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Council supports the Lancashire West Local Action Group (LAG) in the implementation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) by the nomination of representation of the Corporate Director (Business), or her representative, to serve on the officer based LAG Executive providing regular feedback to the Executive Member for Business.
3. That the funding opportunities to support rural development are maximised for Chorley and that any future bids direct to this programme will be reported to Executive Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

4. Following the successful delivery of the pilot Rural Economic Diversification Project, financial resources from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) are now being channelled through an approved Development Strategy for Lancashire West. This covers the Boroughs of Chorley, West Lancashire, South Ribble and Preston. The total funds available for the programme is £2,391,636.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

5. 75% of Chorley Borough is rural, the need to support and diversify rural economies and the inclusion of rural communities is crucial to creating a vibrant economy for the whole of Chorley. These recommendations will ensure that Chorley Council and partners are best placed to maximise opportunities provided by the Lancashire West LDS for sustainable economic diversification in rural areas.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6. None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region	✓	Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances	✓	Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	

BACKGROUND

8. The successful “Supporting Rural Economic Diversification” project was a response to a gap identified by our equality and diversity audit to pilot targeted outreach support to clients in rural areas. The project received an award of £10,000 from the Local Strategic Partnership and achieved:

- 5 new rural business start ups
- 5 rural businesses supported with grant assistance
- 3 2yr+ rural businesses supported

Activity supported the diversification of the rural economy, increased the contribution from rural areas to the local economy and improved the Chorley offer particularly around the tourism and leisure based industry.

9. Three Local Action Groups have been established in Lancashire within which the RDPE will be channelled. The Lancashire West LAG Forum comprises partners from public, private, community and voluntary sector, and includes the Boroughs of West Lancashire, Chorley, South Ribble and Preston. West Lancashire, in consultation with the LAG Forum, has been the lead authority for the preparation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS). The LDS was approved by the North West Development Agency’s Rural Board in December 2008.

RURAL ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION – LANCASHIRE WEST LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

10. The programme will run from the beginning of April 2009 to the end of March 2014, a total of 5 years. The total funds available for programme in Lancashire West is £2,391,636. The borough of Chorley has the second largest eligible population. Chorley’s eligible wards are contained in Appendix 1 for information. There are 7 areas of activity:

- supporting targeted vocational training and information actions within the agricultural and forestry sectors of Lancashire West;
- supporting innovative and effective projects that add value to agricultural and forestry products throughout the LAG area;
- supporting the co-operation and collaboration between primary producers and partners for the development of new products;
- supporting projects that assist the farming sector of the LAG area to diversify into non-agricultural activities;
- supporting the creation and expansion of micro enterprises throughout the rural areas of Lancashire West;
- the development and marketing of tourism services related to rural tourism, and
- the development and provision of basic services.

11. Members of the LAG Forum have been asked to appoint an officer to the Executive Group which will make decisions on funding applications etc. The LAG Executive Board will make decisions on whether grant applications are approved or rejected. A knowledge of funding processes, appraisal processes and an understanding of programme outcomes and outputs is necessary to ensure sound decisions are made. A proposed list of member organisations is attached at Appendix 2 for information. It is anticipated that the LAG Executive will meet on a monthly basis for the first three or four months to develop and agree systems and processes. This commitment will then possibly reduce to six-weekly.
12. It is recommended that the Corporate Director (Business) or her representative sits on the LAG Executive, providing regular feedback to the Executive Member for Business.
13. Chorley Council and partners will now be able to develop projects or support other organisations that wish to apply for funding. It is also likely that there will be some sub-regional projects that go over district boundaries. In most cases it will be necessary to identify match funding. However, community projects should be eligible for funding from the programme up to 100%.

CONCLUSION

14. This programme provides a significant opportunity for Chorley and its Business Community to drive forward key rural economic projects.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

15. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance	x	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION)

16. There are no identifiable financial implications associated with this report. However, there will be a significant amount of officer time to support the LAG Executive and the development and delivery of projects.

JANE MEEK
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (BUSINESS)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Cath Burns	5305	14.07.2009	***

Chorley's Eligible Wards

Chorley – Fully Eligible	Parish	Eligible Population
Adlington and Anderton	Adlington Anderton	6,476
Brindle and Hoghton	Brindle Hoghton	2,218
Chisnall	N/A	3,946
Coppull	Coppull	6,459
Eccleston and Mawdesley	Eccleston Mawdesley	6,140
Heath Charnock and Rivington	Heath Charnock Rivington	2,209
Wheelton and Withnell	Wheelton Withnell	4,253
Chorley – Partially Eligible		
Astley Village and Buckshaw	Astley Village Buckshaw	254
Chorley North East	N/A	1,092
Chorley South East	N/A	369
Clayton-le-Woods and Whittle-le-Woods	Clayton-le-Woods Whittle-le-Woods	605
Clayton-le-Woods West and Cuerden	Clayton-le-Woods Cuerden	389
Euxton North	Euxton	163
Euxton South	Euxton	209
Lostock	Bretherton Ulnes Walton	3,836
Pennine	Heapey Anglezarke	1,533
Total		40,151

Lancashire West Local Action Group (LAG) Executive Membership

Membership of the Executive Group was agreed on the 11th June 2009 at a LAG event. These are:

Public Sector:

- Chorley Borough Council
- South Ribble Borough Council
- Preston City Council
- West Lancashire Borough Council
- Lancashire County Council/Lancashire County Dev. Ltd
- Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board

Community/Voluntary Sector:

- Chorley Local Strategic Partnership
- South Ribble Local Strategic Partnership
- Preston Local Strategic Partnership
- West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership
- Groundwork

Private Sector:

- National Farmers Union
- The Stanley Estate & Stud Company
- Millhouse Training – training consultants
- Goose Meadow Farming Company
- J Jackson Farm owner
- G Morgan – agricultural training provider

LAG Executive Group therefore represents:-

Private & Community/Voluntary Sectors = 65%

Public Sector = 35%

Observers

To be clarified, but likely to be:

Business Link

Lancashire Economic Partnership

North West Regional Development Agency

Natural England

Forestry Commission