



MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

9.30am Thursday 18th March 2010
Coplow Centre, 13 Uppingham Road Billesdon, LE7 9FL

AGENDA

Paper Marked

1. Introductions and Apologies
2. Minutes and Matters Arising of the meeting held on 7th December **A**
3. Declarations of Interest
4. **Influencing future agricultural policy – and NFU and CLA perspective** (discussion)
5. **Vibrant Villages Mid-Programme Evaluation – Recommendations** **B**
6. **Sub-Regional Food and Drink Co-ordinator** **C**
7. **Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth, 2010-20**
8. **Leicestershire Together Update** **D**
9. **East Midlands Rural Framework (EMRAF)** **E**
10. **Sub Regional Arrangements / MAA** (verbal update)
11. **Communications Update** (verbal update)
12. **Items referred from the LRP Strategy and Performance Group** **F**
13. Any Other Business.

Dates of future LRP Management Board Meetings (2009-10)

17th June, 16th September, 9th December

All Board Meetings start at 9.30am unless otherwise stated

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership
Management Board held at Asfordby Parish Hall on Monday, 7
December 2009.**

PRESENT

Mrs L A S Pendleton CC	Leicestershire County Council (in the Chair)
Mr J T Orson JP CC	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr D Wright	Melton Borough Council
Cllr W Crooks	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Dr P Bremner	Harborough District Council
Mr M Traynor	Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce
Mr A Granger	Rural Business Representative
Mr J Prescott	Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland)
Ms G Smitherman	Leicester City Council (Sub-Regional Support Unit)
Mr R Scott	Leicestershire Constabulary
Mr C Gordon	Natural England
Mr R Tulloch	East Midlands Development Agency
Mr C Keble	National Forest Company

District Council Officers in Attendance

Ms E Grant	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Mr J Leach	Blaby District Council
Mr R Harrinder	Melton Borough Council

County Council Officers in Attendance

Ms N Rickard	Team Leader - Policy and Partnerships
Mr M Kempson	Rural Partnerships Manager
Mr P Bailey	Policy Officer
Mr J Clarkson	Communications Officer
Mr S Weston	Committee Officer

In Attendance:

Fiona Walker, Rural Services Officer, Leicestershire County Council
(For Minute 226)

222. Apologies

Apologies for absence were reported on behalf of the following:

Ms L Aisbett (Melton Borough Council)
Cllr A Dames (Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local
Councils)
Cllr P S Harley (Charnwood Borough Council)
Mr I D Ould CC (Leicestershire County Council)
Mr T J Pendleton (North West Leicestershire District Council)

Ms H Woolley (Country Land and Business Association)

223. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

224. Matters arising from the Minutes

Minute 210: Matters arising from the minutes

Mr Kempson reported that he had written to Dr Peter Marks, Director of Public Health, inviting him or a colleague to represent the PCT's interests at future meetings of the Board.

225. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman asked members of the Board to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

There were no declarations.

226. Vibrant Villages

The Board considered a presentation by Ms Walker regarding the 'Vibrant Villages' grant scheme. A copy of the slides forming the presentation is filed with these minutes.

The Vibrant Villages grant scheme offered capital grants of up to £5,000 for rural post offices, village retailers and community facilities. Grants of up to £10,000 were available for larger community buildings.

Arising from discussion of the presentation, the following points were noted:

- The Fenney Drayton Church scheme had been particularly successful. A community area had been added to the Church in order that it could hold group activities to increase revenue. The extension had been built by local builders, using local materials and it was felt that this was a benchmark of good practise for such schemes;
- Considerable effort had been made to publicise the scheme in the local media, such as 'Village Voice' publications. It would be equally important to ensure that the scheme's mid-term review received similar attention in this regard.

RESOLVED:

That Ms. Walker be thanked for her informative presentation.

227. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council: Essex Rural Commission

Cllr Crooks and Ms Grant reported that the Essex Rural Commission's 2009 report had recently been published. The document looked in detail at some of the challenges in delivering services to rural areas and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council would be using the document as a template to assess its own rural priorities.

It was acknowledged that it would be important to take into consideration the district and borough council's views on the document, and this process would inform the LRP's Mid-Strategy Review next year.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the views of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council on the Essex Rural Commission 2009 report be welcomed;
- (b) That Mr Kempson circulate a copy of the summary headlines from the report to all Board members;
- (c) That the views of other district and borough councils on the document be welcomed, subject to (b) above.

228. INSPIRE Leicestershire: Delivery Arrangements

The Board considered a report by Mr Kempson regarding the future delivery arrangements for INSPIRE Leicestershire, following approval for the programme by EMDA. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

Funding was now in place for the three main strands of work for the programme as follows:

- Town Centre Business Partnerships;
- Growth and Sustainable Communities;
- Infrastructure and Investment Grants.

The programme would be officially launched in the New Year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

229. East Midlands Rural Framework and RDPE Rural Implementation Plan

The Board considered a report of Mr Kempson regarding the development of two regional rural consultation documents – the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum's final draft of the Rural Framework and

the RDPE's Regional Implementation Plan. A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted the improvements made to the LRP's draft response to the refreshed RDPE Regional Implementation Plan (as attached at Appendix 1 to the report). The draft response outlined the desire for further and more accurate rural mapping work; however some members felt that this should not be given such a high priority at this stage. Defra was currently engaged in doing some national mapping work and the LRP could build on this work when it was complete.

Concern was expressed about the poor broadband signal that was received in many isolated rural areas. This was a national issue and increased pressure would need to be placed on BT to improve the service they provided to these areas.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the draft LRP response to the RDPE Regional Implementation Plan be endorsed, subject to the suggestions made above and increased emphasis being placed on allocating funds to the highest priority issues;

230. Sub-Regional Food and Drink Sector Coordinator

The Board considered a report by Mr Bailey concerning the work undertaken to finalise the funding application for a Sub-Regional Food and Drink Coordinator. A copy of the report, marked 'D', is filed with these minutes.

It was felt that the job description for the role was currently too long and would need to be rationalised into fewer and higher priority issues. The successful candidate would be required to carry out in-depth coordination work over a period of around six months in order to develop the role.

It was suggested that a consultancy approach would be more suitable for the role than that of being an employee based in the Sub-Regional Support Unit at Leicester City Council. However, further advice would need to be sought from HRMC about employing a consultant for a contracted period of three years.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Rural Strategy and Performance Group's view that the role of Sub-Regional Food and Drink Sector Coordinator be one of a consultant rather than an employee be supported, subject to further advice from HRMC;

- (b) That the post holder would report to the Rural Strategy and Performance Group;
- (c) That the job description be re-drafted with an increased focus on priority issues;

231. Leicestershire Together Update

The Board considered a brief oral report by Ms Rickard regarding an update on Leicestershire Together.

Ms Rickard's update covered the following points:

Leicestershire Together Week (7-11 December)

- As part of Leicestershire Together Week, a Rural Project Tour would be taking place after the LRP Board meeting;
- Further events would be taking place throughout the week and details were available at the following link:

http://www.leicestershiretogether.org/leics_together_week_09.pdf

Leicestershire Together Board Meeting (Monday 14 December)

- Items to be discussed at this meeting were as follows:
 - Quarterly Performance Report;
 - Presentation on Total Place;
 - LAA2 Performance;
 - Strategic Commissioning;
 - Local Transport Plan 3;
 - Corporate Area Assessment

New 'Communities Together' Grant Scheme

- A scheme would be piloted this year to allocate small grants of up to £500 for schemes or events that improved social cohesion.

RESOLVED:

That the oral report be noted.

232. Sub-Regional Arrangements/MAA

The Board considered an oral report by Ms Smitherman concerning the new Sub-regional Arrangements and the Multi Area Agreement.

The Economic Assessment would likely be available in April 2010. Delivery plans would be developed from this emerging document and

would be launched in March 2010. A Business and Enterprise Group had been established to lead on all issues relating to tourism. One of the group's key priorities would be to ensure that tourism was given adequate priority by planners.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

233. Communications Update – Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Delegation/Future Arrangements for the Circulation of Management Board Papers.

The Board considered a report by Mr Kempson regarding feedback on the Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Delegation held on 12 and 13 October 2009. A copy of the report, marked 'E', is filed with these minutes.

The Board was particularly pleased with the success of the Delegation in October.

Since improvements had been made to the Oakleaves.org partner website, it was now possible for Board members to access Management Board papers online prior to meetings. It was felt that, in view of the Council's target to achieve over £70 million efficiency savings, and given the LRP's commitment to the green agenda, it would be a worthwhile exercise to seek members' views on reducing the paper circulation of Management Board and Rural Strategy and Performance Group papers in future, with an emphasis placed on members accessing their papers on the Oakleaves website and printing those reports that they felt necessary. An email alert would be sent to Board members when the papers had been published online.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the feedback on the Delegation visit to Leicestershire be noted;
- (b) That the hosting of an additional visit to Leicestershire to include representatives from Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, the Management Board partners and the East Midlands local authorities be approved;
- (c) That the use of the Oakleaves.org partner website for the publication of Management Board and Rural Strategy and Performance Group papers in advance of future meetings be approved;
- (d) That those members of the Management Board that wished to continue to receive a hard copy of papers in future be requested

to notify Mr Kempson by email.

234. Items referred from the LRP Strategy and Performance Group

The Board considered a report on items referred by the LRP Strategy and Performance Group. A copy of the report, marked 'F', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the publication of the Heart of the Forest Vision and Action Plan be noted;
- (b) That the update on the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment be noted;
- (c) That the Second Quarter report be noted.

235. Any other business

Climate Change Initiative

Mr Prescott reported that the Rural Community Council had committed to being part of a 'Knowledge Transfer Partnership' in relation to climate change. The Partnership involved the expertise of De Montfort University, who were committed to assisting in the project for two years.

Natural England – Walking for Health Officers

Mr Gordon reported that natural England had recently appointed two 'Walking for Health' officers, who would be responsible for liaising with the PCT on walking and health issues.

09:30am – 11.15am

CHAIRMAN

07/12/09



Leicestershire Rural Partnership Management Board Meeting 18th March 2010

Influencing Future Agricultural Policy

Andrew Shirley

East Midlands Regional Surveyor
& National Arable Adviser



Common Agricultural Policy Reform 2013

EU Level

- CAP will reduce
- There is demand to redistribute CAP

UK Level

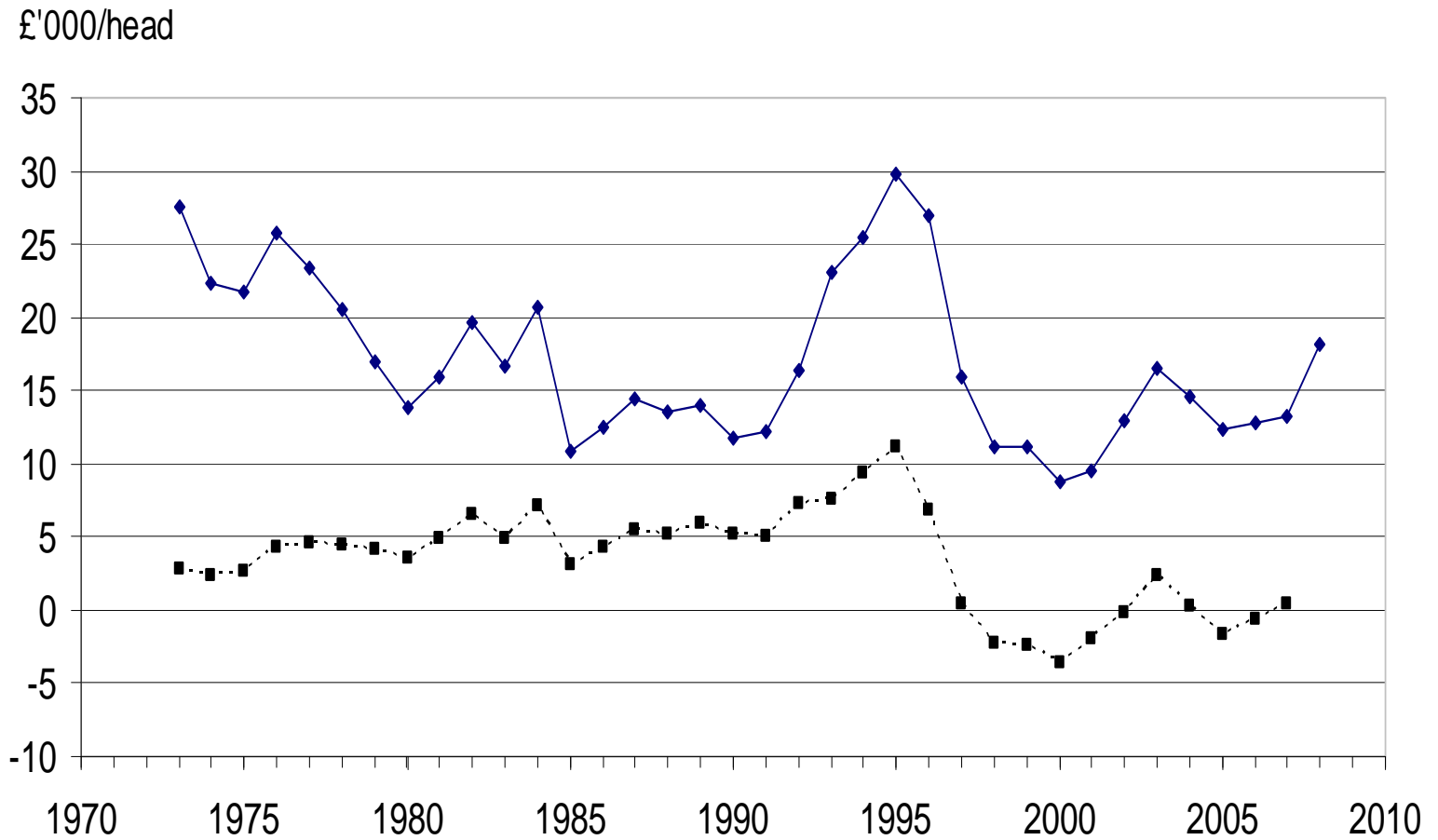
- Food 2030 - *“...Profitable farming to thrive in a liberalised global market, without the need for subsidies across the EU”.*
- A New Age of Agriculture - *“We will press for a shift of existing resources across the EU to the rural development programme”*



Dependence of farming on SPS, UK aggregate level data



Total Income from Farming per FTE with and without support payments, (in real £2008)



Source: Defra Statistics —◆— TIFF/head with supports —■— (TIFF/head without supports)

What will the public pay for?

- Food security?
- Social/community support?
- **Additional public benefits?**
- **Who will support our cause?**



Food and Environmental Security

A forward looking holistic approach



- Agricultural Productivity, Competitiveness and Stability
- Decoupled Payment
- Tiered agri-environment scheme
- Measures for areas of High Environmental Value
- Wider Rural Economic Development



Why the ELO/BLI Paper?

1. Appropriate land management is crucial for the conservation of a range of ecosystem services, a critical one of which is food production for the human population and underpinning this, the long-term capacity of land for food production.
2. Sustainable management of Europe's land requires continued active intervention by farmers and landowners.



ELO/BLI Paper

4. Europe plays an important role in global food security and in driving higher global environmental standards of production.
5. Policies and budgets at the European level are justified to enable us to rise to these food and environmental challenges.





Contact details

Andrew Shirley

Tel: 01858 468949

andrew.shirley@cla.org.uk

www.cla.org.uk

Sutton Lodge

Sutton Bassett

Market Harborough

LE16 8HL



LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD**18th March 2009****VIBRANT VILLAGES MID-PROGRAMME EVALUATION:
RECOMMENDATIONS****Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Management Board on the recommendations contained within the mid-programme evaluation of Vibrant Villages and to outline how these are being responded to.

Background

2. The Vibrant Villages programme was established in 1st April 2009 to deliver access to services improvements within rural Leicestershire. Funded by the emda and Leicestershire County Council a total of £240,000 of capital grants was allocated to support post offices, villages shops and community spaces to bring forward additional services which support local need. The Programme also provides support through a Rural Retail Advisor who is contracted to meet with retail businesses and make recommendations for improvements. Vibrant Villages is delivered through the County Council's Better Places team and is due to end on 31st March 2011.
3. In December 2009 the Management Board received a presentation updating them on the delivery of the project. This primarily demonstrated the variety of grants awarded and encouraged Members to promote the programme to ensure effective delivery during its final year.
4. To ensure the effective delivery of the programme Focus Consulting was commissioned through a competitive tendering process to undertake the mid-programme evaluation. The evaluation considered the delivery of the programme up to 30th September 2009.

Evaluation

5. Focus Consulting implemented a range of research techniques to undertake the evaluation. This included a survey of businesses supported through the Programme, follow-up telephone interviews with some beneficiaries, and interviews with stakeholders who are involved in the delivery or management of the Programme. The final report was received in March 2010. The executive summary, including distribution of grants is included within Appendix 1. The full Final Report is available on the Oakleaves website at <http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/uploads/354b99f609d0843247206169.pdf>.
6. In total 15 recommendations have been made to ensure the effective delivery for the remainder of the Programme. The full list of recommendations and LRP officer responses is included within Appendix 2. Further input will be requested from the Vibrant Villages and INSPIRE Leicestershire Steering Group. Recommendations are identified below.
 - 1) Review the current management structure and consider combining the Implementation Group and Grants Panel as a Steering Group with responsibility for grant approval.
 - 2) Review the terms of reference for the group and consider implementing more frequent meetings, for example on a quarterly basis in line with reporting to funders.

- 3) Establish improved reporting structures – providing progress on performance and breakdown of grant enquiries and approvals etc on a more frequent basis.
- 4) Consider improved methods of engaging the Rural Retail Advisor more effectively with the Programme and to make better use of his knowledge and expertise on the ground.
- 5) Maximise opportunities for linking with Vibrant Villages with the Plunkett Foundation's Community Shops scheme – through links with the Rural Retail Advisor.
- 6) Consider the appropriateness of introducing deadlines for grant applications or alternatively set regular meetings for grant appraisal meetings.
- 7) Review the level of match funding available for both community spaces and retailers and consider whether it is appropriate to revise these in the light of the current economic climate.
- 8) Review the grant application criteria to ensure that applications being approved are contributing towards the outcomes of the Programme – with specific reference to the Community Spaces.
- 9) Continue with the development work with potential service providers (such as adult services and children's services) to identify opportunities for community spaces projects and delivering new services in rural villages.
- 10) Undertake a more proactive approach to promoting the Programme on the ground directly to retailers/communities in areas that partners know would benefit. For example, those identified in the Access to Services mapping or those areas that have not been supported by Vibrant Villages to date.
- 11) Review the appraisal checklist to ensure appropriate quality applications are being submitted to the panel.
- 12) Undertake action to deliver outputs which are currently below target – including businesses assisted to improve performance, skills development, use of business support services, and new community facilities/services.
- 13) Undertake increased promotion of good practise case studies of successful applicants – both internally and externally.
- 14) Ensure appropriate monitoring procedures for tracking long term outputs are established and adhered to as it is likely that many impacts will not be evident until the long term.
- 15) Review the forward strategy for the Programme and consider alternative sources of delivery and revenue funding opportunities such as the Local Area Agreement and Total Place.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the LRP Management Board:

- i) Note the completion of the mid-programme evaluation of Vibrant Villages.
- ii) Comments on officer responses to the evaluation's recommendations as contained within Appendix B.

Officers to contact:

Matthew Kempson
Fiona Walker

0116 305 6179
0116 305 5673

matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk
fiona.walker@leics.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the midterm evaluation of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership's (LRP) Vibrant Villages Programme covering the period of 1st April 2008 and 30th September 2009. The evaluation has been informed by a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and has been undertaken by Focus Consultants in partnership with Leicestershire County Council.

Impacts to date

At the midterm stage, Vibrant Villages has approved a total of 41 applications and a total of 27 grants have been claimed - 18 for shops and post offices and nine grants for eight community spaces. Around 30 businesses have also been referred to the Rural Retail Advisor.

In terms of progress towards outputs at the midterm stage, overall the Programme is not achieving as anticipated. Although *number of jobs created/safeguarded* has already been significantly over achieved and *private sector leverage* is on target with 70% achieved, the progress towards all other outputs is significantly below target. The amount of grant funding paid out at the midterm stage is £81,831, with a further £51,819 having been awarded but not yet claimed which means the Programme has yet to award grant funding of £106,350.

At this midterm stage Vibrant Villages does demonstrate evidence of contributing towards the viability of rural services in the sub region such as business survival rates and sustainability, increased trade, provision of new facilities and access to some new services. It also demonstrates more social and environmental impacts such as community cohesion and participation, reduced road travel and improved energy efficiency.

The relatively low demand for grants has not been as anticipated but the Programme has been delivered during a very difficult economic climate. This has undoubtedly impacted on the performance of the Programme in terms of grant applications. Whilst the demand for the Programme does appear to be less than previous Programmes it does not mean that Vibrant Villages is not needed. In fact, it could be said that during this current economic climate the need for the Programme is high.

Marketing and Promotion

The approach to marketing and promoting the Programme has not been wholly effective to date. There has been good engagement with the local media and substantial press articles have been published. However, the events in particular have generated poor attendance. It is felt by stakeholders that more could be done to promote the Programme on the ground and targeting potential applicants in identified areas of need (in terms of access to services).

Governance

The current management structure of the Programme has also been criticised by most stakeholders. At this midterm stage, the LRP should review the current structure to ensure that it is achieving the best from the partners and is being steered to achieve the agreed Programme targets and outcomes.

Forward Strategy

Vibrant Villages is due to finish in March 2011. All stakeholders agree that this type of scheme is essential for supporting the rural economy of Leicestershire. Consultation with beneficiaries also suggests a continuing demand for support for rural services.

The LRP has recently launched the INSPIRE Leicestershire (Investment Support for the Rural Economy) Programme which is a comprehensive Programme to support Leicestershire's rural economy which will run until the end of September 2012. Whilst INSPIRE is recognised as a separate programme with differing aims there is some overlap, especially around support for shop front improvements and increasing workspace and retail floorspace. Following the end of Vibrant Villages in 2011 opportunities will need to be explored to ensure that retail businesses are aware of the continued financial support available.

Experience of the LRP and case study examples of similar programmes nationally demonstrate the importance of such small scale grant schemes in having an impact on rural services. However, future public funding pressures may mean that it is difficult to access funding to run a successor programme to Vibrant Villages. Access to services does though remain a key priority within the Leicestershire Rural Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy and, therefore, it is considered essential that careful consideration is given to ensuring appropriate support is available to rural retailers and community spaces.

It is recommended that the County Council's membership to the Rural Shops Alliance (RSA) provides a good way to ensure some continued support. The RSA's Rural Retailer publication, distributed to retailers by the County Council, provides key advice and support on common issues faced by retailers.

It is important that a more comprehensive understanding of access to services issues in rural areas is developed to ensure that the service provision is effective and efficient. Detailed consideration should be given to exploring how the Local Area Agreement and Total Place, both of which are exploring access to service issues, can support the needs of rural communities most effectively.

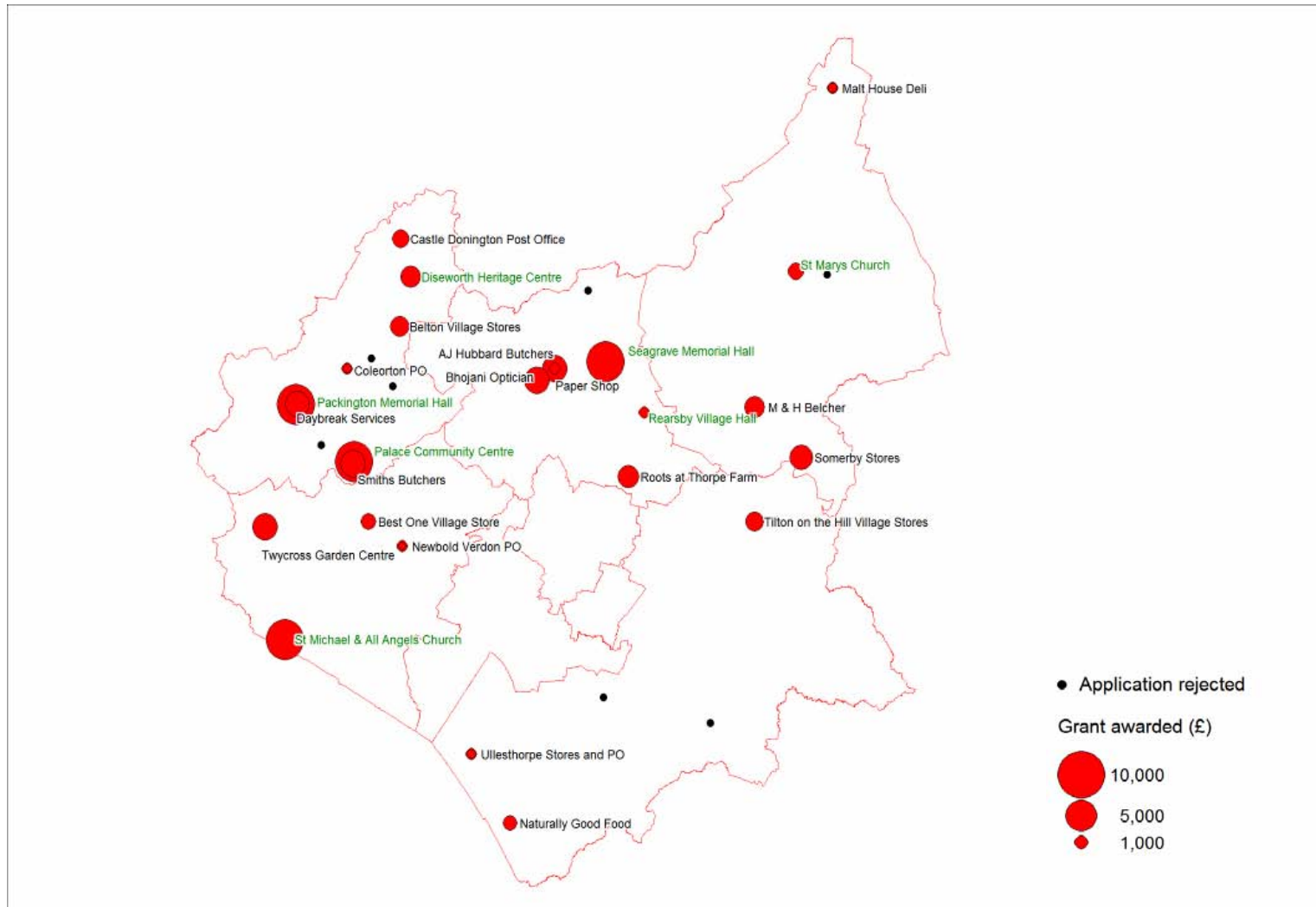
It will be important that partners remain alert to new opportunities and ensure that businesses are made aware of these. This could include mainstream business support through Business Link, the portfolio of business grants within Solutions of Business or information about discretionary business rate reductions. To ensure this it is essential that strong links between partners are maintained following the end of the Vibrant Villages programme.

Recommendations

The evaluation has highlighted a number of recommendations for consideration by the LRP and these are summarised below.

1. Review the current management structure and consider combining the Implementation Group and Grants Panel as a Steering Group with responsibility for grant approval.
2. Review the terms of reference for the Implementation Group and consider holding more frequent meetings, for example on a quarterly basis in line with reporting to funders.
3. Establish improved reporting structures – providing progress on performance and breakdown of grant enquiries and approvals etc on a more frequent basis.
4. Consider improved methods of engaging the Rural Retail Advisor more effectively with the Programme and to make better use of his knowledge and expertise on the ground.
5. Maximise opportunities for linking with Vibrant Villages with the Plunkett Foundation's Community Shops scheme – through links with the Rural Retail Advisor.
6. Consider the appropriateness of introducing deadlines for grant applications or alternatively set regular meetings for grant appraisal meetings.
7. Review the level of match funding available for both community spaces and retailers and consider whether it is appropriate to revise these in the light of the current economic climate.
8. Review the grant application criteria to ensure that applications being approved are contributing towards the outcomes of the Programme – with specific reference to the Community Spaces.
9. Continue with the development work with potential service providers (such as adult services and children's services) to identify opportunities for community spaces projects and delivering new services in rural villages.
10. Undertake a more proactive approach to promoting the Programme on the ground directly to retailers/communities in areas that partners know would benefit. For example, those identified in the Access to Services mapping or those areas that have not been supported by Vibrant Villages to date.
11. Review the appraisal checklist to ensure appropriate quality applications are being submitted to the panel.
12. Undertake action to deliver outputs which are currently below target – including businesses assisted to improve performance, skills development, use of business support services, and now community facilities/services.
13. Undertake increased promotion of good practice case studies of successful applicants – both internally and externally.
14. Ensure appropriate monitoring procedures for tracking long term outputs are established and adhered to as it is likely that many impacts will not be evident until the long term.
15. Review the forward strategy for the Programme and consider alternative sources of delivery and revenue funding opportunities such as the Local Area Agreement and Total Place

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Grant Applications and Approvals



Source: LCC

Key: Black text: Post office and village shop grant; Green text: Community Spaces

APPENDIX 2

Focus recommendation	Consulting LRP Response
1. Review the current management structure and consider combining the Implementation Group and Grants Panel as a Steering Group with responsibility for grant approval.	<p>Generally Agree</p> <p>It is agreed that there is a need to better co-ordinate the activities of the Implementation Group and the Grants Appraisal Panel. There is a need for the Grants Appraisal Panel to meet more frequently than the Implementation Group so combining the two is not wholly possible. Both groups will be scheduled better and the quarterly Implementation Group will coincide with the Grants Appraisal Panel. The Implementation Group will be renamed the Steering Group.</p>
2. Review the terms of reference for the group and consider implementing more frequent meetings, for example on a quarterly basis in line with reporting to funders.	<p>Generally Agree</p> <p>The Implementation Group's Terms of References have been considered as appropriate to ensure the effective delivery of the project. These will be presented to the next meeting of the Steering Group for approval. There may be a need to make amendment to ensure that the Terms of References reflect the responsibilities of the group to steer the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme as well. Quarterly meetings will be established for the remainder of the Programme. The quarterly Steering Group meeting will coincide with the Grant Appraisal Panel. It will align to existing reporting arrangements. Efforts will be made to ensure that time is allocated to consider both the Vibrant Villages and INSPIRE Leicestershire programmes.</p>
3. Establish improved reporting structures – providing progress on performance and breakdown of grant enquiries and approvals etc on a more frequent basis.	<p>Agree</p> <p>More formal reporting structures will be established to ensure that members of the Steering Group and Grants Appraisal Panel have access to the information they require. This will include an LRP News Alert following each Grants Appraisal Panel which will announce the grant funding awarded once businesses have been contacted direct. Improvements to information management systems will be considered to ensure the effective delivery of INSPIRE.</p>
4. Consider improved methods of engaging the Rural Retail Advisor more effectively with the Programme and to make better use of his knowledge and expertise on the ground.	<p>Generally Agree</p> <p>All Rural Retail Advisor reports and action plans will be shared with Grants Appraisal Panel members for their consideration and advice. The sharing of this information will be especially important when a business has gone on to apply for grant funding. Where businesses have received support from the Rural Retail Advisor the Rural Services Officer will undertake monitoring of the advice provided in order to ensure that actions are implemented. There will be effective monitoring of all support provided by the Rural Retail Advisor. There is a need</p>
5. Maximise opportunities for linking with Vibrant Villages with the Plunkett Foundation's Community Shops scheme – through links with the Rural Retail Advisor.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Plunkett Foundation's Community Shops scheme is currently promoted within rural communities through the Programme and Better Places Team. Special attention is given where it is considered there is increased risk of losing essential local retail services or where opportunities exist to establish a new community shop. Intelligence from the Rural Community Council, Community Engagement Team and Better Places Team is essential in this. It is accepted that there are not many community shops within rural Leicestershire. This is in part due to the LRP's support which has helped to ensure the viability and sustainability of retail services in rural areas. Following the end of the Vibrant Villages programme the LRP will seek opportunities to ensure support access to services within rural communities. This will include promotion of all available support.</p>
6. Consider the appropriateness of introducing deadlines for grant applications or alternatively set regular meetings for grant appraisal meetings.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The meeting dates for the Grants Appraisal Panel have now been set for the remainder of the Programme. The Panel will meet on the last Monday of every month. The deadline for receipt of applications will be exactly 1 week prior to the meeting. These dates will be published on the Oakleaves website.</p>
7. Review the level of match funding available for both community spaces and retailers	<p>Partially agree</p> <p>Within the evaluation some stakeholders felt that opportunities had been missed through the Community Spaces element of the Programme. It</p>

<p>and consider whether it is appropriate to revise these in the light of the current economic climate.</p>	<p>was through the Community Space grant that new services could be supported. Consideration will be given to identify, through the Steering Group, whether there is a need to reduce the intervention rate in order to bring forward projects. The intervention rate for the post office and village shop elements of the programme is considered correct.</p>
<p>8. Review the grant application criteria to ensure that applications being approved are contributing towards the outcomes of the Programme – with specific reference to the Community Spaces.</p>	<p>Agree A review of the grant application criteria will be undertaken. This will be considered alongside the match funding arrangements for the Community Spaces element.</p>
<p>9. Continue with the development work with potential service providers (such as adult services and children’s services) to identify opportunities for community spaces projects and delivering new services in rural villages.</p>	<p>Agree Opportunities to fund businesses and service providers will be considered to maximise the opportunity for the Community Spaces element of the Programme to support the provision of new services within rural areas.</p>
<p>10. Undertake a more proactive approach to promoting the Programme on the ground directly to retailers/communities in areas that partners know would benefit. For example, those identified in the Access to Services mapping or those areas that have not been supported by Vibrant Villages to date.</p>	<p>Partially agree A range of activities have been undertaken to promote Vibrant Villages. Whilst the County Council has access to a comprehensive database of eligible businesses we have never solely relied on this. Following a review of the funding criteria opportunities to target and work with businesses within priority areas will be explored. This will include Melton and Harborough districts where uptake has been low</p>
<p>11. Review the appraisal checklist to ensure appropriate quality applications are being submitted to the panel.</p>	<p>Agree This will be undertaken for both Vibrant Villages and INSPIRE Leicestershire.</p>
<p>12. Undertake action to deliver outputs which are currently below target – including businesses assisted to improve performance, skills development, use of business support services, and new community facilities/services.</p>	<p>Agree The LRP is committed to achieving all agreed outputs. Below target outputs are those that will be monitored later in the programme or relate to engagement activities delivered through the Programme. This includes the retail advice fairs which were poorly attended. Priority will be given to ensure that all agreed outputs are achieved.</p>
<p>13. Undertake increased promotion of good practise case studies of successful applicants – both internally and externally.</p>	<p>Agree Case studies of successful applications will be recorded as part of the LRP News Alerts which will be circulated following Grants Appraisal Panels. This will announce new projects supported on a monthly basis through Vibrant Villages and INSPIRE Leicestershire.</p>
<p>14. Ensure appropriate monitoring procedures for tracking long term outputs are established and adhered to as it is likely that many impacts will not be evident until the long term.</p>	<p>Agree Ahead to the end of end of Vibrant Villages monitoring procedures will be established to ensure the effective collection of additional output information, to ensure the on-going sustainability of projects supported, and to identify further opportunities to support business needs.</p>
<p>15. Review the forward strategy for the Programme and consider alternative sources of delivery and revenue funding opportunities such as the Local Area Agreement and Total Place.</p>	<p>Agree Forward strategy for future access to service support in rural areas will be developed through the Steering Group. Additional information and support will be obtained through the LAA Access to Services Working Group.</p>

LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD

18th March 2010

FOOD AND DRINK CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

Purpose

1. To update the Management Board on governance arrangements for the Food and Drink Co-ordinator following approval of funding by emda.

Background

2. The bid to appoint a consultancy to deliver food and drink co-ordination activities was submitted to emda at the end of January 2010. Funding of £147,000 was approved by emda at the start of March 2010 following a technical appraisal. This sum covers the cost of the project running for two years, comprising of: the consultancy contract, advertising of the tender, budgets for marketing/PR and events/research, and evaluation costs. It is important to note that the second year of funding is subject to emda being in a position to make funds available for 2011/2 given that they are currently unable to commit funds beyond 2010/11.
3. The consultancy contract for the Co-ordinator role will initially be for one year with an option to extend the contract for a further year. The first six months of the contract will focus on the development of the sub-regional food and drink strategy and action plan. The second six months will concentrate on delivery of the action plan.
4. Following significant discussions with the Co-ordination Group it was concluded that the Food and Drink Co-ordinator would be contracted on a consultancy basis by Leicester City Council through the Sub-Regional Support Unit. Gill Smitherman will be the lead for the management of the consultancy contract.
5. The emda funding is subject to terms and conditions included within the final appraisal. These can be broadly summarised as:
 - The E4 outputs 'Business Support – number of businesses assisted to improve their performance' must be eligible and align with the Business Support Simplification agenda and the Business Link agenda.
 - It is recommended there is a meeting between Business Link representatives and the project to confirm and agree operational requirements where there is potential to align with the Business simplification agenda.

Tendering Process

6. A tender bid is being developed for year 1 of the project. This is being developed using Leicester City Council templates for tender documentation.
7. The tender will be advertised in a major food and drink publication – most likely to be The Grocer. The tender will also be advertised on the Leicester City Council website, in the regional/local press as finances allow, and on partner websites.

Governance Structure and Project Management

8. A draft governance structure has been developed – please see Appendix A. This identifies how the project will link into the MAA reporting structure. The progression of the project will be reported to the Rural Strategy and Performance Group. Effective communication links will need to be established with both the Business and Enterprise and Employment and Skills Strategy and Performance Group.
9. Andrew Granger will be Chair of the Food and Drink Co-ordinator Steering Group which will be established to provide strategic steer and oversight of the project. This will principally be constituted of representatives from food, drink, tourism and hospitality businesses operating within Leicester and Leicestershire. Matthew Kempson will provide administrative support to the Steering Group.
10. It is expected that the existing Food Steering Group will disband given that there is significant duplication in membership with the proposed Food and Drink Co-ordinator Steering Group. The Food Steering Group does not have a dedicated programme of work at the current time and contract for administrative support from Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership (LLCLP) has come to an end.
11. It is proposed that a Food and Drink Delivery Sub-Group/s will be set up to support the development of the strategy and action plan as well as the ensuing delivery phase. The group/s will seek to involve delivery bodies such as Leicester Shire Promotions, Prospect Leicestershire and Business Link.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the LRP Management Board:

- i) Notes the update report on the governance arrangements for the Food and Drink Co-ordinator project.

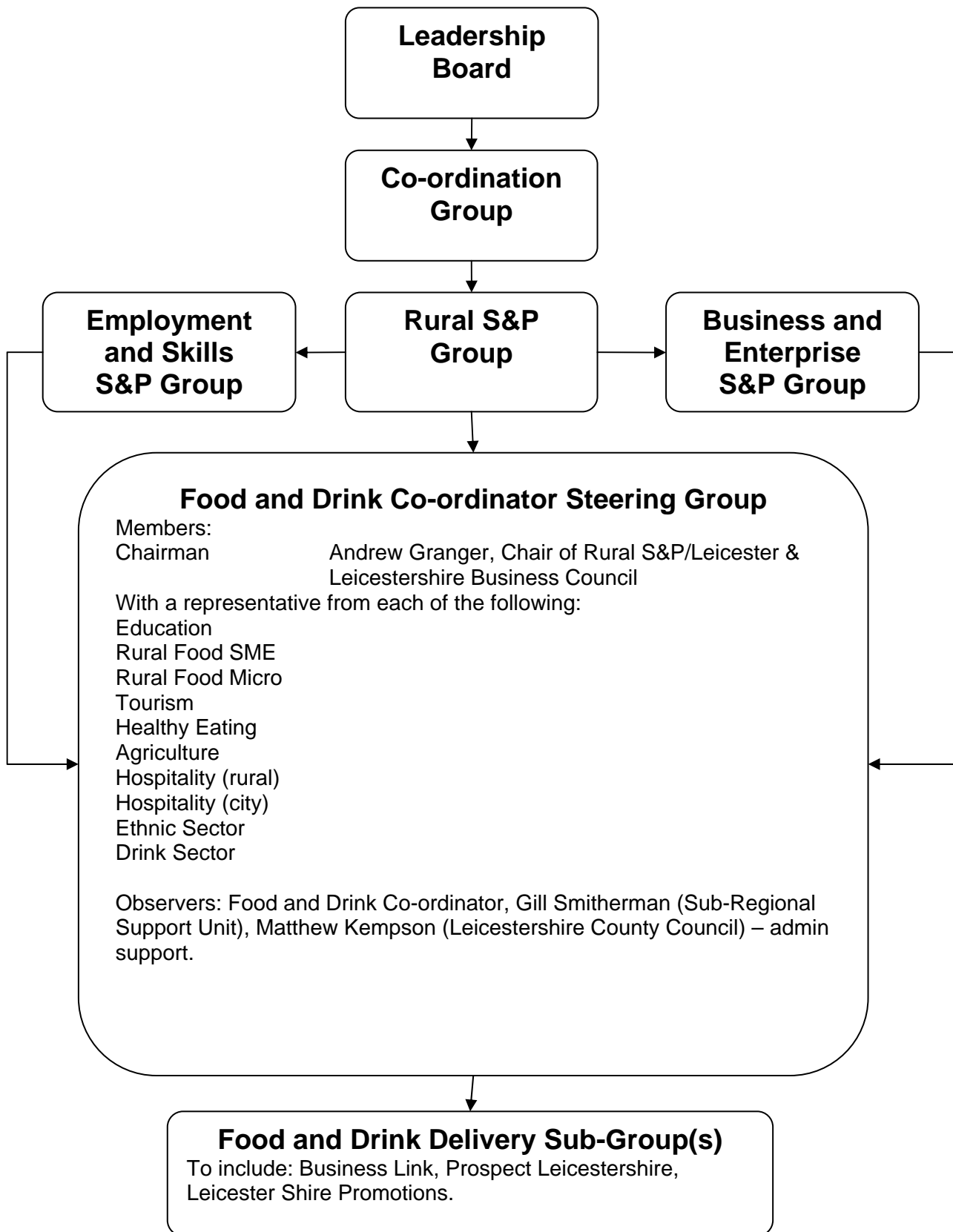
Officer to contact:

Philip Bailey

0116 305 5403

philip.bailey@leics.gov.uk

Appendix A: DRAFT Food and Drink Governance Structure (v3)



Where appropriate other partners will be co-opted following the selection process for the Food and Drink Co-ordinator.

LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD

18th March 2010

LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Management Board on recent Leicestershire Together activity, including the Board meeting held on March 8th and progress with Total Place/Total Capital and the Joint Change Programme.

Leicestershire Together Strategic Board

2. The most recent meeting of the Strategic Board was held on Monday 8th March. The Agenda covered a number of areas identified as issues of concern within the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment report, including Housing (the targets around which have been significantly impacted by the recession) and Vulnerable People, particularly the response to the Pilkington case in Barwell. The Board also considered the Health and Well Being Strategy 2010-2013 and Economic Strategic and Assessment.
3. The Agenda for the meeting is attached to this report as Appendix A for information. All Board papers are available on the Leicestershire Together website www.leicestershiretogether.org.uk.

Total Place and Total Capital

4. A report was also considered by the Board on progress with the Total Place pilot. Total Place was launched as a national initiative in June 2009 to look at how a whole area i.e. 'place' approach to public services, can lead to 'better services at less cost'. Leicester and Leicestershire were invited by Government to be one of 13 pilot areas.
5. The programme seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiency. It also enables a conversation with Government on any national or regional barriers to achievement of Total Place aims.
6. Each pilot was asked to:
 - Examine the total public spend in its area - 'the Count'.
 - Chose one or more themes to examine how outcomes could be achieved more effectively at lower cost.
 - Consider the needs of citizens through 'customer insight' work in developing their proposals.
7. Two themes were chosen for Leicester and Leicestershire:
 - Drugs and alcohol because of the wide impact of misuse on the lives of citizens and the demand for a range of public services.
 - Access to services - for the County only - because of concerns expressed in the Comprehensive Area Assessment that Leicestershire was less advanced than other areas in providing good access across a range of public services.

8. Total Capital was added to the Total Place initiative only in December 2009. Leicester and Leicestershire were chosen as one of 4 pilot areas. In the time available it was decided to concentrate work on economic development and related capital funding.
9. The Government's 'Smarter Government' White Paper, published with the Pre Budget Report, has been influenced by the Total Place work undertaken so far and proposes to:
 - Re-caste the relationship between the centre and the frontline by:
 - Allowing local areas to set priorities/allocate resources
 - A streamlined Performance framework
 - A reduced number of revenue streams
 - Reducing reporting, inspection and assessment burdens.
 - Strengthen the role of the citizen and civic society – people do more for themselves and each other.
 - Substantially reduce the number of Government 'quango's'.
10. The Total Place report was submitted to Government by its deadline of 19th February 2010. The main findings and proposals are:
 - That Government should simplify funding streams and reduce the number of national and regional agencies handling that funding to reduce costs and maximise the funding available for the frontline.
 - The need for the number of local agencies should also be considered to reduce costs and maximise the spending available for the frontline.
 - That the costs of treating alcohol misuse has a major impact on public spending nationally and locally and these costs will increase unless there is more emphasis on prevention both nationally and locally.
 - The need for a range of national measures including a minimum unit price for alcohol, restrictions on marketing to young people on alcohol sold as a 'loss leader' and stronger penalties for illegal sales, to reduce the rising costs and harm of alcohol misuse.
 - The need for more flexibility to enable funding for drugs and alcohol to be applied to local priorities and needs.
 - A range of local measures designed to reduce misuse especially by young people, through preventative measures covering social marketing, brief interventions, inclusion of specific alcohol harm messages in schools, and the sale of alcohol.
 - Reinvestment of savings in the short term to move from acute treatment to prevention.
 - Single service approaches to access to services with fewer but joint face to face provision, fewer and more joined up call centres and more marketing of internet access with a consistent approach across agencies and web sites.
 - Savings of up to £5m per annum in access costs.
 - Savings of at least £4.5m per annum on current misuse costs.
11. The proposed principles for capital funding are that capital funding streams should:
 - Be combined at national level to make joining up locally as easy as possible.
 - Have a consistent minimum of rules and processes.
 - Have maximum flexibility for virement to ensure they can be applied to greatest effect.
 - Be capable of being applied to sub-regional priorities that are agreed between national, regional and local agencies and meet local, regional and national priorities.

- Be allocated through a sub-regional 'single pot' approach where funding of projects is agreed in one place.

Partnership Change Programme and Inter-Agency Working

12. Leicestershire Together, working where appropriate with the Leicester Partnership under the Public Service Board, has agreed to an ambitious improvement and efficiency programme. This programme will help meet the efficiency saving target of £200m under the LAA and MAA (this target is currently under review). It is made up of back office services where single services could be provided by one agency on behalf of others and frontline services where a Total Place approach will be taken to theme areas to examine how better outcomes can be achieved at lower cost.

13. The following principles have been agreed for the programme by the Public Service Board:

- Work together to achieve the £200m + savings over 3 years - 25% of the back office and 25% of front line services, after reorganisation and reinvestment costs have been taken out.
- The programme will maintain or improve services, whilst making substantial financial savings through:
 - Joint financial planning.
 - Joining up the back office locally (single services on our doorstep).
 - Joining delivery of key services more effectively.
- The seven biggest organisations in PSL will drive this programme. Others are welcomed and encouraged to participate, but the programme will not move at the pace of the slowest.
- The vision of the programme is joined up delivery with the citizen at the heart of the change.
- Delivering this programme is the day job for directors, managers and staff. There will not be a massive central change team running this programme.

14. The projects in the programme are outlined in Appendix A and recent work has identified the agencies wishing to take part in each opportunity assessment for single service arrangements for back office services.

15. In addition to the efficiencies to be delivered through the above programme, efficiencies need to be achieved within the day to day processes of inter agency/partnership working. The Public Service Board has therefore prepared a paper for discussion with the intention of reducing the transactional costs of inter agency working and increase clarity about what activities are carried out at different geographic levels.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the LRP Management Board notes this progress report

Officers to contact:

Nicole Rickard

0116 305 6977

nicole.rickard@leics.gov.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD

18th March 2009

EAST MIDLANDS RURAL FRAMEWORK, 2010-13

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Management Board on the publication of the East Midlands Rural Framework, 2010-13 (formerly East Midlands Rural Action Plan).

Background

2. Since June 2009 EMRAF has been leading a revision of the East Midlands Rural Framework (previously East Midlands Rural Action Plan) to ensure that it reflects the changing priorities of the region's rural communities and businesses. An initial consultation on the revision was launched at EMRAF's Annual Conference in the summer. Following this significant work has been undertaken to reflect the priorities of the rural East Midlands and to identify activities for EMRAF to lead on with partner support.
3. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership has contributed significantly to the development of the Rural Framework. Both the Management Board and Rural Strategy Performance Group both informed the LRP consultation response within previous meetings. The LRP's response is available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/consultationresponses.html.

East Midlands Rural Framework and delivery

4. The new Rural Framework has been developed around four strategic themes. The final Rural Framework is available on EMRAF's website at <http://www.ruralaffairs.org.uk/rap.php>. The 4 strategic themes are identified below.
 - Sustainable and Inclusive Communities (including Housing)
 - A Thriving Rural Economy
 - Quality Services Accessible to All
 - High Quality Rural Environment
5. Delivery against these strategic themes will be led by aligned EMRAF sub-groups. Each sub-group is currently developing an Implementation Plan to identify priority actions. Consideration is being given to allocate funding to EMRAF sub-groups to enable them to deliver effectively against identified actions.

EMRAF: general

6. EMRAF has committed to hosting their annual conference again. This will be held on 2nd July 2010 at Eastwood Hall, Nottinghamshire. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership will be represented at this event and will assist with the development of the programme as required.
7. Leicestershire County Council, through the rural programme, provide funding support of £2,600, for the management of EMRAF. The County Council remains committed to continuing this support for future years.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the LRP Management Board:

- i) Note publication of the East Midlands Rural Framework, 2010-12.

Officers to contact:

Matthew Kempson

0116 305 6179

matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD

18th March 2010

ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE RURAL STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE GROUP

Purpose of Report

1. The following items have been referred up to the LRP Management Board from the LRP Strategy and Performance Group, following their meeting on 24th February 2010. The minutes of this meeting are attached as **Appendix 1**.

Contents of the Report

2. Most of the items referred have been discussed under the main agenda however the following items for information are listed below:

- A. **Foxton Locks Masterplan (British Waterways)**
- B. **Sub-Regional Economy Performance Framework – delivery plan**
- C. **Rural Economic Development – Update**
- D. **Rural Broadband in Leicestershire**
- E. **LRP Quarterly Monitoring Report Q3 2009/10 (Oct-Dec)**

A. Foxton Locks Masterplan (British Waterways)

Purpose

3. To update the Management Board on the publication and delivery of the Foxton Locks Masterplan

Foxton Locks Masterplan

4. In September 2009 the Foxton Locks Partnership published the Foxton Locks Masterplan. This identified a number of options for improvements to the visitor offer on the site totally £22.44m. Projects identified within the Masterplan include:
 - Improved entrance and car parking facilities
 - The reinstated Inclined Plane Boat Lift [IPBL]
 - A new visitor centre including an enlarged museum, café and retail facilities
 - A children's play area
 - Living history interpretation of the Lock Keepers Cottage and a Museum Narrowboat plus mobile audio visual on-site interpretation
 - Ecology area
 - Mooring basin and cycle hire
 - A campsite, hostel lodge and ecolodge development
 - An events field
5. The Executive Summary of the Foxton Locks Masterplan, together with slides from the presentation given to the Rural Strategy and Performance Group, are available within the papers of the LRP Rural Strategy and Performance Group at <http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/uploads/354b852142baffb036276224.pdf>

6. With partner support British Waterways is currently leading activities to ensure delivery of the Masterplan. The LRP is keen to identify how funding through the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme or the Rural Development Programme for England can deliver these projects.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that the Management Board
- a) Note the publication of the Foxton Locks Masterplan
 - b) Comment on how the LRP can further support the delivery of the priority actions

Officer to contact:

Matthew Kempson

0116 305 6179

matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk

B. Sub-Regional Economy Performance Framework – delivery plan

Purpose

8. To update the Management Board on strategic commissioning which is being developed to deliver the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth, 2010-20.

Background

9. To support the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth, 2010-20 work is being progressed to develop and implement strategic commissioning as an approach to delivery for future years. As part of this a Performance Framework has been developed which identifies key priorities for the sub-region.
10. Through a questionnaire the Leadership Board has requested that partners delivering within the sub-region provide details of current and future priorities to inform the delivery planning process. With the support of the Rural Strategy and Performance Group LRP has responded in full. The LRP's submission can be accessed within the Rural Strategy and Performance Group papers for their meeting on 24th February 2010 at <http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/uploads/354b852142baffb036276224.pdf>
11. The following priorities, contained within the Performance Framework, were identified as especially important to the LRP.
- Increased number of business surviving beyond 3 years
 - High number of business start-ups in knowledge based sectors
 - Growth in financial and professional services including the creative sector
 - The area is regarded as the centre of excellence for food and drink
 - High numbers of leisure and business tourists visit and spend in the subregion
 - Increased vocational training and higher number of apprenticeships
 - Workplace earnings are amongst the highest in the country
 - Reduced economic and financial exclusion in deprived neighbourhoods
 - Increased range of social enterprises and volunteering opportunities
 - Increased provision of affordable housing with mixed and sustainable communities
 - Availability of high quality designed housing of all types and tenures
 - Housing developments are supported by excellent infrastructure

- Integrated transport networks with accessible, viable and affordable public transport
- Well-designed and attractive City, market towns and urban and rural centres
- Excellent broadband connectivity across the sub-region

12. The Leicester and Leicestershire Sub-Regional Support Unit are currently considering all responses made as part of the delivery planning process and the LRP will be keen to assist further.

Recommendation:

13. It is recommended that the Management Board

- a. Notes the LRP's submission as part of the delivery planning process to support the Sub-Regional Economic Performance Framework

Officer to contact:

Matthew Kempson,
Rural Partnerships Manager

matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk
0116 305 6179

C. Rural Economic Development – Update

Purpose

14. To update the Management Board on current activities delivered through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership to support our rural economy.

Sub-Regional Investment Plan update

15. The Sub Regional Support Unit (SRSU) has now received communication from emda (9th Feb 2010) containing a revised and reduced allocation for 2011/11. The letter refers to a reduction of £2.1m for the region based on the December pre budget report. This reduction has been applied pro-rata to the various sub regions and effectively reduces our capital allocation for 2010/11 by £223,467 to £5,426,533. Clearly this will put further strain on the programme. The revenue allocation has also changed from original programme allocation of £3,104,663 to £3,016,000; clarification is being sought as the rationale for the reduced allocation.

16. The sub regional programme in Leicester and Leicestershire is characterised by a number of large scale capital projects, several of which have either just been approved (NBQ2 and Science Park) or are set to be approved (Harborough Innovation Centre) and therefore are due to be placed under contract. These projects and several others are intended to spend across the financial years 2010/11 and 2011/12.

17. Emda have been requested to confirm if they are prepared to underwrite spend that we have forecasted in 2011/12. A letter received from emda appears to confirm both the planning guidance i.e. that for prudence there should be no commitments made beyond the 50% planning level (£4.36m). It also clearly infers though that if emda were not to exist or didn't receive a sufficient allocation, that we would then need to have recourse to a successor body or central government to honour commitments.

18. Therefore projects that we had intended to commit expenditure in 2011/12 have now been reduced to complete by March 2011. Should the budget commitment for 2011/12 change in

the next 12 months then we will be able to re visit this commitment and extend them if possible.

19. The programme from March 2011 onwards therefore is largely based on those projects that are already committed. For the Rural programme this is just the Inspire programme at £114,000 Current, £120,000 Capital and a total of £234,000 and the National Forest Cycling Centre at £10,000 capital.

INSPIRE Leicestershire

20. Following agreement from emda work is progressing to deliver the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme which is providing capital and revenue support to Leicestershire market town and rural economies.
21. The current priority is to ensure that the funding allocated for 2009/10 is spent and/or committed. This includes;
- £50k capital (£20k emda; £30k Leicestershire County Council)
 - £20k is emda funding allocated through with the SRIP which needs to be spent
 - £30k is Leicestershire County Council which need to be committed in order to secure the funding as a carry over to 2010/11
 - Currently £10,750 is spent and c£50,000 committed.
 - £39k revenue – Currently working with business and tourism partnerships to spend this funding against priority rural sectors including equestrian, food and drink and tourism.
22. A formal press launch of INSPIRE Leicestershire has been scheduled for the 17th March in Market Bosworth. This will be attended by Mrs Lesley Pendleton and Andrew Granger to coincide with the town centre market. The LRP's Rural Business Advice Trailer will be on site and a brief tour of previously supported projects will be conducted.
23. A project officer to deliver the capital grants element of the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme has been appointed. Tom Fisher will start his new role on 26th April 2010. Ahead of this he will attend the press launch event.
24. Future reporting on delivery of the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme will now be included within the Quarterly Monitoring report.

Recommendation:

25. It is recommended that the Management Board
- a. Notes the update on the Sub-Regional Investment Place
 - b. Notes activities being undertaken to deliver the INSPIRE Leicestershire programme

Officer to contact:

Matthew Kempson,
Rural Partnerships Manager

matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk
0116 305 6179

D. Rural Broadband in Leicestershire

Purpose

26. To update the Management Board on work being undertaken to both identify broadband connectivity issues within areas of rural Leicestershire and ways to develop opportunities for intervention which could include supporting an application for funding through the Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-13

Background

27. Through the EU's European Economic Recovery Plan £400,000 has been allocated to the East Midlands. Emda will act as the lead for broadband funding. Regional partners have proposed that the £400k fund be supplemented to establish a regional fund of £4.5m through a revision of the Regional Implementation Plan (RIP). Defra is currently considering whether the proposed scale of broadband expenditure by RDAs across the whole country is acceptable.
28. On 12th February 2010, emda hosted a rural broadband summit which brought together stakeholders from across the region to explore the potential for improved broadband connectivity in areas that are least likely to be reached by mainstream market providers. Emda has identified the
29. Broadband connectivity has been identified as a key priority within the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth, 2010-20. Prospect Leicestershire, as a delivery partner with the new sub-regional governance arrangements, is currently leading interventions within the County. In January 2010, Prospect Leicestershire's Board agreed to seek funding through the sub-regional economic governance process to commission an updated study on broadband in Leicestershire.
30. Defra and CLG have commissioned research to look at the risk to rural and deprived urban communities of being left out of the market led rollout of next generation broadband over the next few years. It takes a forward look at the level of provision likely to be in place in 2012, 2015 and 2017 under several different scenarios. It also provides guidance on how the risks identified can be mitigated and roll-out accelerated. This report is expected to be published in early March, together with the data to allow RDAs, local authorities and others to produce their own detailed maps to help inform decision making on possible interventions.

Broadband in rural Leicestershire: the issues

31. Currently there is insufficient technical data to identify specific locations in Leicestershire where broadband connectivity is an issue. The CRC's *Mind the Gap* report included national mapping which showed areas that have broadband connectivity of up to 2Mbps and only one internet service provider. Within Leicestershire these areas include Vale of Belvoir, south of Melton Mowbray, Osgathorpe/Whitwick, Desford/Market Bosworth, and north west of Market Harborough.¹
32. This is supported by anecdotal local evidence. The Belvoir Community Forum has identified connectivity as a key concern and it is known that one estate in the Melton West Community Forum area recently lost a potential tenant for rural workspace due to the low speed of broadband. Broadband was identified as a key issue by many rural landowners within emda's *Working positively with rural estates* report.² The report also identified a cluster of 23 rural estates in the Vale of Belvoir.

¹ <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/CRC104%20Digital%20Inclusion%20Report1.pdf>

² http://www.emda.org.uk/uploaddocuments/emda_Rural_Estates.pdf

Supporting broadband in the rural East Midlands

33. Following the emda summit on broadband further consideration is being given to identify a suitable approach to ensure improved connectivity with the aid of the reallocated £4.5m through the Rural Development Programme for England. Central to this will be the development of a manifesto for rural broadband within the East Midlands
34. Two delivery options are currently being considered. These include,
- Supporting direct improvements within priority areas where broadband has been identified as a particular concern. The LRP will work with communities to develop bids to access this funding
 - Funding an improved “backhaul” broadband network. This will provide an improved broadband infrastructure across the East Midlands. From this private sector providers will then deliver improvements within rural communities.
35. To identify target areas emda are encouraging use of BLIMP (Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project). This is speed checker which enabled up-to-date mapping of broadband connectivity. BLIMP is being used by all RDAs to measure broadband speeds across the regions.³ Emda is encouraging as many individuals, organisations and networks as possible to assist with spreading use of the BLIMP tool throughout the rural East Midlands. The LRP is promoting the use of this through our partners who work with rural communities and businesses.
36. The LRP will continue to work with emda to ensure effective improvements to the broadband infrastructure within our rural communities.

Recommendation

37. It is recommended that the Management Board
- a) Notes work on-going to ensure improvements to the broadband infrastructure within rural areas.
 - b) Promote the use of BLIMP as a tool to measure broadband performance within rural Leicestershire.

Officer to contact:

Philip Bailey
Rural Policy Officer

0116 305 5403
Philip.bailey@leics.gov.uk

³ <http://www.blimpchecker.co.uk/index.html>

E. LRP Quarterly Monitoring Report Q3 (October 2009 – December 2009)

Purpose

38. To update the Management Board on progress of projects supported by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership during Quarter 3 2009/10 – October-December. The Project Monitoring Return is contained within **Appendix 2**.
39. The Project Monitoring Returns for Quarter 3 are attached as **Appendix A**. The following items are highlighted;

Positives:

- a) Community Capacity Building – Identified a large number of volunteers who run events and facilities in their community thus leading to greater community cohesion and people from different backgrounds getting on well together
- b) Rural Housing Enabler – Continued liaison with the lead officer for the REIP project to influence the rural element of the project to be of benefit to the LRRHE project and its partners.
- c) Vibrant Villages – Several village shops and post offices are more viable and provide more of a range of essential goods.
- d) Community ICT – Melton district have indicated that they intend to retire the ‘Melton On Line’ portal from March 2010. There will then only be one public authority funded portal in Leicestershire.
- e) Climate Friendly Communities – Interest in the SHIRE Community Climate Change Grants has improved.
- f) Access to Work and Local Services (Community Transport) – Improving access and partnership working.

Negatives:

- a) Community Capacity Building – Additional funding that is provided for this project through Stronger Communities has been threatened and there is concern about future funding for the continuation of the work
- b) Rural Housing Enabler – Many rural housing stakeholders fear that, with increasing pressures on public funding, rural housing will be overlooked in favour of “better value” urban schemes that offer more units in return for HCA, LA and RSL investment.
- c) Vibrant Villages - While funds committed are in line with forecast progress, spend is not.
- d) Community ICT – Whilst some of the targets have already been exceeded, the project is significantly behind on others. This is due to a large amount of effort being spent on training 2 new members of staff and setting up the volunteer agreement earlier on in the year. Now that this work is complete there will be a full focus on catching up during the final quarter.
- e) Climate Friendly Communities – The Knowledge Transfer Partnership steering group is due to have it’s first meeting in February. It has taken so long to get the Knowledge Transfer Partnership established that it has impacted on the whole of the programme originally proposed for 09/10. As a result, this programme will not be requiring any LRP funding this financial year.
- f) Access to Work and Local Services (Community Transport) – Staff resources have had a delaying effect.

Recommendation

40. It is recommended that the Management Board:

- a. Notes the Third quarter report, and
- b. Considers the document attached to this report (**Appendix 2**) for details concerning specific projects.

Officer to contact:

Philip Bailey
Rural Policy Officer

philip.bailey@leics.gov.uk
0116 305 5403

APPENDIX 1

Rural Strategy and Performance Group

9:00 – 11:00 Wednesday 24th February 2010

Voluntary Action Leicestershire

Active Community Centre, 9 Newarke Street, Leicester, LE1 5SN

MINUTES

Item		Action
1	<p>Chairman's Introduction Jeremy Prescott welcomed everyone to the meeting</p>	
	<p>Introductions and apologies</p> <p>Apologies Charlene Arnold (East Midlands Business) Richard Mugglestone (Midlands Rural Housing) Peter Williams (Leicestershire County Council)</p> <p>Attendees Jeremy Prescott (RCC) – Chair Kevan Liles (Voluntary Action Leicestershire) Ray Smith (Leicestershire County Council) Sue Grogan (LLCLP) Philip Bailey (Leicestershire County Council) Martin Peters (Leicester Shire Promotions) Caroline Mackay (Leicestershire County Council) Ian Vears (Leicestershire County Council) Lynn Aisbett (Melton Borough Council) Nicole Rickard (Leicestershire County Council) Andrew Granger (Andrew Granger and Co) Gill Smitherman (L & L Support Unit) Matthew Kempson (Leicestershire County Council) Richard Tulloch (emda)</p> <p>By Invitation James Clifton (British Waterways)</p>	
2	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising of last meeting Minutes of the meeting of 25th November 2009 were agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been some problems with uploading of papers from the Oakleaves website. MK apologised for the difficulties that individuals had experienced. • There remained a desire to host the EU delegation. MK was finalising arrangements with the NFU and CLA. • The EMRAF Framework had been published. JP informed the group 	<p>MK</p>

	<p>that a new EMRAF Co-ordinator [Julie Bowers] had been appointed and would be starting in April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MK would produce a paper to update on EMRAF activities. This would include a summary of the implementation plans for the EMRAF sub-groups. 	MK
3	<p>Foxton Locks Masterplan (British Waterways) – Presentation</p> <p>James Clifton, Regeneration Manager of British Waterways, gave a presentation which reviewed progress over the last decade and set out the projects proposed within the Foxton Locks Masterplan. Some of the key statistics quoted in relation to the impact of the Grand Union Canal in Harborough District were as follows:</p> <p>40km of waterways + Foxton, 2.8m visitors per annum, 361 FTE jobs supported, spend of 12.8m per annum.</p> <p>Foxton itself was estimated to attract 300,000 visitors per year, with a catchment of 14.9m people living within two hours travelling time.</p> <p>In the last five years £5m had been spent on opening up the site, restoring and improving visitor facilities. The Foxton Locks Masterplan produced in 2009 set out a package of improvements to improve the visitor experience and increase visitor numbers to 400,000. The proposed package of improvements comprised of: the reinstatement of the inclined plane boat lift; a new visitor centre including an enlarged museum, café and retail facilities; a children’s play area; living history interpretation of the Lock Keepers Cottage and a Museum Narrowboat plus mobile audio visual on-site interpretation; ecology area; mooring basin and cycle hire; on site accommodation – campsite, hostel lodge and ecolodge developments; and an events field.</p> <p>A key element of the Masterplan was the associated Business Plan which was produced by Britton McGrath Associates. The Business Plan considered the most viable means of implementing each of the improvements, and identified seven delivery options and the outputs associated with each of these options.</p> <p>There followed a discussion about the issues relating to the presentation. CM enquired about the expansion of the car park and the challenge of encouraging visitors to access the site by means other than private car. James Clifton hoped that the County Council would be willing to review the existing bus service which currently runs only as far as Foxton village. He also mentioned the success of the open-top bus that had previously been run by Leicester Shire Promotions. IV mentioned that Foxton was extremely well-placed with regards to the National Cycle Route 6. One option suggested was the development of a park and cycle facility located a distance away from Foxton. AG enquired about a boat link with the canal basin in Market Harborough. James Clifton replied that this had been considered but with a 4mph</p>	

	<p>speed limit on the canal this would take about half a day. It was only likely to be a feasible option if a bus was laid on for one of the legs of the journey.</p> <p>GS suggested that there was scope for joint marketing with the National Forest to promote cycling routes in Leicestershire. MP referred to the lack of out-of-season caravanning facilities in Leicestershire and the potential business case for providing such facilities. It was recommended that contact should be made with the Camping and Caravanning Club. Reference was also made to the success of the log cabins at Eye Kettleby Lakes.</p> <p>MK was keen to promote the potential for INSPIRE funding to be utilised by private operators connected with Foxton Locks. For example, up to £10,000 could be accessed through the Rural Visitor Grant.</p> <p>RT referred to the potential to explore the opportunity to work to access RDPE funding (which has been accessed by Thrupp Wharf Marina in Northamptonshire), and possibly INTERREG funding by working jointly with other canal projects in the UK (such as the Anderton Boat Lift which had previously been subject of a bid to access INTERREG funding).</p>	
4	<p>Sub-Regional Tourism Strategy – Update</p> <p>MP informed the group that the Sub-Regional Tourism Strategy was not ready to be put forward for consideration due to issues relating to the development of a wider economic strategy for the city and county and the need to ensure a ‘good fit’ with this.</p>	
5	<p>SCS/LAA Update</p> <p>NR referred to the mid-term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy that would be taking place later in the year. A supplementary document is being considered which would incorporate newer sources of evidence such as the Economic Assessment, Local Transport Plan 3 and the Places Survey.</p> <p>There is also a need to check whether the outcomes contained in the SCS are still correct. There are 49 broad outcomes in place. Not many changes need to be made to the broad outcomes; most of the changes need to be made at the sub-outcome level.</p> <p>There was a packed agenda for the meeting of the Leicestershire Together Board on 8 March. This included a housing session that was being led by Sue Smith and John Bloxham, a discussion about the failure to meet reduction targets for teenage pregnancy, a focus on vulnerable people – taking account of the Pilkington case, and consideration of a draft report about Total Place.</p> <p>NR offered to produce a written report for the next meeting that would</p>	

	<p>summarise the latest on the SCS and LAA. This was welcomed and AG suggested that there should also be an item for the next meeting specifically on Total Place.</p> <p>JP expressed his concerns about the target culture and the emphasis upon the achievement of quick wins. With regards to certain issues it may not be realistic or appropriate to seek quick wins.</p> <p>NR agreed to the extent that there are perhaps too many targets and some of the national indicators are not especially well suited to measuring the desired outcome.</p> <p>MK stated that he would report on how rural issues would be incorporated within the revised SCS at the next meeting.</p>	<p>NR</p> <p>MK</p>
6	<p>Sub-Regional Economy Performance Framework – delivery plan</p> <p>The LRP response to the delivery planning questionnaire was circulated for information.</p> <p>GS summarised the next stages of the process. The delivery plan would go back to the Leadership Board for a decision. In the meantime, responses were being compiled and contact was being made with the commissioning partners to gain further information. A further draft would be produced. It was proving difficult to finalise the content of the delivery plan given that responses had not been received from key partners such as Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, emda and HEFCE.</p>	
7	<p>Draft Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth</p> <p>MK provided an update report on the draft Strategy for Economic Growth which is currently out for consultation. The deadline for comments is 15th March.</p> <p>MK would draft a response and a rural SWOT analysis for inclusion within the Local Economic Assessment (LEA). This would be circulated for comment and approval.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed regarding the great speed of the process being undertaken to develop the LEA and the Strategy for Economic Growth 2010-2020 considering that the LEA duty has just come in. It was agreed that this concern should be presented to the Co-ordination Group on behalf of the Rural S&P Group.</p>	<p>MK</p> <p>AG</p>
8	<p>Rural Economic Development Update</p> <p>Feedback from Co-ordination Group</p>	

AG stated that he wanted to make perfectly clear that he is the agent and not the part-owner of the Innovation Centre site as had been recorded in recent Co-ordination Group minutes.

Sub-Regional Investment Plan

GS provided a financial update on the SRIP and rural SRIP.

Projects can now only be approved for up to 12 months duration. This affects large scale capital projects. Now the only rural projects that will continue beyond March 2011 will be the National Forest Cycling Centre and INSPIRE Leicestershire. The rural programme has lost Conkers Aerial Walkway. RT commented that it was a frustrating time for emda given that they can only commit funds on a short-term basis. KL highlighted how the uncertainty over the provision of funding could result in underspend if new processes consume a large part of a financial year. GS referred to the £22m programme of funding for the I-nets which may present some opportunities.

JP enquired about the availability of the minutes of the other groups within the MAA structure. GS would check if there are plans for the minutes to be made available on the Sub-regional Economic Partnership webpages.

Issues about capital and revenue spend were reported and efforts are being made to ensure that the project spends 2009/10 funding that has been allocated through the SRIP.

INSPIRE Leicestershire

MK explained that the immediate priority was to deliver the required expenditure by the end of the financial year. Approximately £50,000 of capital funding had been committed by the INSPIRE Grants Panel at a recent meeting. Another key issue to address was the expenditure of £39,000 of revenue funding across 3 areas – equestrian, food and drink, and tourism. The availability of this funding would be publicised as a matter of priority.

Eight candidates had been shortlisted for the Rural Economy Officer post. Interviews would be on 5th and 8th March.

The formal launch of INSPIRE Leicestershire had been arranged to take place in Melton on 17th March. The LRP trailer would be on site.

Food and Drink Co-ordinator

It had been determined that the Coordinator role would be undertaken by a consultancy who would be contracted through the City Council. GS would be the lead for the management of the consultancy contract through the Sub-Regional Support Unit. Progress on the project would be reported through the Rural S&P Group, with links being made to the Business and Enterprise and Employment and Skills S&P Groups. A Food and Drink Steering Group would be formed and this would act the reference group for the Co-ordinator.

The funding application had been submitted in January and was being

GS

MK/JC

	<p>considered by emda. A decision was expected on 2nd March. Responses had been supplied to emda in response to queries about possible overlaps with Business Link.</p> <p>The tender arrangements and governance structures were in the process of being developed.</p> <p>Strategy and Performance Group Update No comments made.</p>	
9	<p>Rural Broadband in Leicestershire</p> <p>PB summarised work being undertaken to both identify broadband connectivity issues within areas of rural Leicestershire and ways of developing opportunities for intervention. Emda was seeking to establish a regional fund of £4.5m for rural broadband improvements by supplementing £400,000 that had been made available through the EU's European Economic Recovery Plan with approximately £4.1m from the Rural Development Programme for England. RT mentioned that this proposal had yet to receive approval from DEFRA.</p> <p>PB identified some of the key points from the emda rural broadband summit which had brought together stakeholders to explore the potential for improved broadband connectivity in the areas least likely to be reached by mainstream market providers. The summit also represented the commencement of the development of a rural broadband manifesto for the region. A variety of technical approaches to were considered by delegates including an improved 'backhaul' network similar to that developed by NYnet (North Yorkshire), whilst other delegates had put forward approaches that would effectively deliver solutions 'closer' to end users within more tightly defined areas. The presentations from the rural broadband summit have been made available on the EMRAF website.</p> <p>PB explained that emda's forthcoming rural broadband manifesto and the method by which funding is distributed would be likely to have a strong influence on the LRP's approach to addressing rural broadband issues. With this mind two contrasting options were presented. One option was to target support in a specific rural locations (within Belvoir and Melton West Community Forum areas) and the other was to seek to develop of an improved 'backhaul' network across a wider area with private operators delivering the final service to residents and businesses. It would not make sense to for either option to be selected until it was known how emda planned to distribute any funding made available. In a sub-regional context, it also had to be borne in mind that Prospect Leicestershire had been allocated the responsibility for leading on broadband interventions and were considering commissioning a broadband study, subject to funding.</p> <p>Reference was made to the BLIMP (Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project). This is an online tool that is being used by emda and other RDAs to measure and store broadband speeds that are being achieved in the real world. The broadband speeds will be stored on the BLIMP database which will enable the nature of broadband</p>	

	<p>connectivity issues to be compared across different areas. In order to ensure a full coverage across county the BLIMP checker would need to be promoted as widely as possible e.g. Parish Councils/Leicestershire Villages/Oakleaves websites, Rural Community Council newsletter.</p> <p>PB referred to BIS's 'Consultation on proposals for a Next Generation Fund'. A response will be submitted by 1 April 2010.</p> <p>RT reflected on some interesting aspects to come out of the rural broadband summit. In respect of the financial cost of installing broadband, it had been estimated that the cost of providing fibre to the hub for Rutland alone was £16m. The NYnet approach had parallels with Total Place as it involved pooling of public sector broadband expenditure on a common infrastructure which costs £4m per annum rather than £8m per annum that it would cost on separate networks.</p> <p>LA referred to the increasing importance of the internet for accessing services, poor 3G coverage, and enquired about the merits of wireless technology. PB commented that the general opinion at the emda event was that wireless could help to address broadband connectivity in the short-term but would become all but obsolete as the need for higher broadband speeds increased. Fibre was regarded as the most suitable technology for improving broadband connectivity in the longer-term as it possesses almost limitless capacity. Nonetheless, different cases could be made for various technologies depending on available resources and immediacy of need.</p>	<p>PB/JP</p> <p>PB</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Communications Update</p> <p>JC provided the following updates:</p> <p>Archdeacon tour – the recently appointed Archdeacon of Loughborough, the Venerable David Newman was introduced to the work of the LRP when he visited the County Council. This incorporated a tour of some LRP supported projects – the new tearoom in Twycross garden centre, the affordable housing scheme at Sheepy Magna, and the new community room at St Michael and All Angels Church in Fenny Drayton.</p> <p>Support Unit project tour – arrangements would be made.</p> <p>County Show – it had been reported that the show had been cancelled due to problems with the lease of the site in Melton. It had been suggested that the show would move to Market Harborough, but may not take place until 2012.</p> <p>INSPIRE launch – the details of the event were being finalised. More generally, work was ongoing to promote the INSPIRE grant schemes as widely as possible and it was positive that considerable numbers of enquiries were being received.</p>	

11	<p>Draft LRP Management Board Agenda</p> <p>MK stated that he would make arrangements for the NFU and CLA to attend.</p>	MK
12	<p>Quarterly Monitoring Report 2009/10 – Quarter 3 (October-December)</p> <p>PB summarised his written report, highlighting particular issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant Villages – although almost all of the LRP funding had been committed, expenditure was not in line with forecast progress. As a result, LRP funding would be required to be carried forward to 2010/11. • Climate Friendly Communities – the £2,000 of funding that had been allocated to this project was no longer required due to the delays in establishing the Knowledge Transfer Partnership. JP suggested that these funds could be allocated to the work of the RCC hosted Climate Community Change Officer. 	
13	<p>AOB</p> <p>RT – provided an update on RDPE. The last quarter had been the second best quarter since programme had been launched. The level of interest from businesses in Leicestershire had picked up which was represented by an increase in the number of expressions of interest received. Long Clawson Dairy had recently received the single biggest grant of the regional RDPE programme to date.</p> <p>The regional RDPE conference hosted at Newark Showground had been a useful opportunity to showcase the funding opportunities available for land based businesses through the programme.</p> <p>SG – the access centres were going ahead but the programme was now going to be of a smaller scale. Funding had been made available for only year 1 and 2 of the programme.</p> <p>LA – enquired about the process for the development of the Tourism Strategy. LA pointed out that the date of the next meeting clashed with the Leicestershire Together meeting on 26th May.</p>	MK
	<p>Future Meeting Dates:</p> <p>All meetings will commence at 9am - volunteers for venues would be greatly appreciated.</p> <p>Wednesday 14th April 2010 – Gartree Committee Room, County Hall</p> <p>Wednesday 26th May 2010 (to be rescheduled)</p> <p>Wednesday 14th July 2010</p> <p>Wednesday 25th August 2010</p> <p>Wednesday 6th October 2010</p> <p>Wednesday 17th November 2010</p>	MK

APPENDIX 2: 2009/10 LRP Project Monitoring – Third Quarter (Oct – Dec 2009)

Project title Brief project description (Lead partner)	Positives (areas going well) / Negatives (areas for concern)
<p>Community Capacity Building</p> <p>The RCC Rural Action Team will offer support to communities who wish to carry out consultation exercises that will identify community needs and will address issues of social inclusion, access to services and encouraging volunteers. The project will build the capacity within the communities to make them stronger and more cohesive and to increase Social Capital. Consultations may include Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and other consultations including one off consultations and events e.g. roadshows. Throughout the project the Community Development team will work with partners and the community to enable them to address current issues together. It is anticipated that action plans resulting from consultations will be presented to District and County LSP's and Community Forums using the LRP protocol to enable actions to be progressed. Groups undertaking plans will be encouraged to progress outcomes and other RCC officers may assist with progressing actions e.g. Village Halls Officer, funding officer.</p>	<p>Positives:</p> <p><u>1:</u> Includes more people in the decision making process at a local level and enables them to feel included in their community.</p> <p><u>2:</u> Has a variety of methods of engagement available to suit a broad range of age groups and applications.</p> <p><u>3:</u> Identifies a large number of volunteers who run events and facilities in their community thus leading to greater community cohesion and people from different backgrounds getting on well together.</p> <p>Negatives:</p> <p><u>1:</u> Additional funding that is provided for this project through Stronger Communities has been threatened and there is concern about future funding for the continuation of the work.</p> <p><u>2:</u> Larger target communities where Parish Council do not want to undertake the project are more difficult to engage.</p> <p><u>3:</u> Loss of the RCC funding officer at the end of the lottery funded project has left a gap in available funding advice that has to be filled by existing staff.</p>
<p>Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Housing Enabler (LRRHE)</p> <p>The Leicestershire & Rutland Rural Housing Enabler (LRRHE) role exists to promote the development of affordable homes in rural villages for local people who cannot afford to rent or buy a home at existing market levels.</p>	<p>Positives:</p> <p><u>1:</u> The number of HNS carried out is now well ahead of schedule and the number of suitable exception sites with a willing vendor has already exceeded the target.</p> <p><u>2:</u> Continued liaison with the lead officer for the REIP project to influence the rural element of the project to be of benefit to the LRRHE project and its partners.</p>

<p>Project title Brief project description (Lead partner)</p>	<p>Positives (areas going well) / Negatives (areas for concern)</p>
<p>By working closely with Parish Councils and Local Authority partners, the LRRHE is able to identify villages where there is a lack of suitable homes and undertake research to find the true extent of the problem. The LRRHE acts as an independent 'broker' to seek solutions to these problems.</p> <p>Each project begins with guidance from the District/Borough Council as to which villages to target. The support of the Parish Council is then sought for an independent Housing Need Survey to be undertaken by the LRRHE (which involves a questionnaire being delivered to each household in that Parish to assess the local affordable housing need). From the results the LRRHE writes a report detailing the number and mix of affordable homes that are required to meet the need. The report requires approval from both Parish and District/Borough councils before possible sites can be looked for. When suitable land has been identified the projects are passed to Housing Associations for further development, funding and delivery with the LRRHE assisting at all stages.</p> <p>Major outputs and outcomes that can be expected from the project include Housing Needs Surveys completed; sites identified; communities engaged, educated and consulted; and affordable homes for local people delivered in Leicestershire Parishes.</p> <p>The LRRHE aims to independently facilitate affordable homes for local people in rural Leicestershire & Rutland. The work outlined above positively impacts local communities whilst also working towards the affordable housing targets of the Regional Housing Investment Strategy, The Regional Plan, The Regional Housing Strategy, EMRAF's Rural Action Plan, LRP's Rural Strategy, The Sustainable Community Strategy, The LAA and the individual strategies of each Local Authority. The LRRHE project is monitored by a Steering Group and is assessed on targets such as</p>	<p><u>3:</u> Refined ways of tackling the problem of affordable rural housing have been investigated. This quarter has seen review meetings with all Steering Group partners to redefine the process of progressing schemes.</p> <p>Negatives:</p> <p><u>1:</u> The uncertainty of public funding in 2010/11 and post 2011 CSR is already causing concern for rural housing providers. It is felt that rural housing often misses out on grant funding due to the expensive cost of its delivery. Concerns are being raised that the HCA will not be setting a national target for rural housing delivery from 2011 and funding decisions will be left to the 'single conversation' model. This has caused many rural housing stakeholders to fear that, with increasing pressures on public funding, rural housing will be overlooked in favour of "better value" urban schemes that offer more units in return for HCA, LA and RSL investment.</p> <p><u>2:</u> In order that the 'pre development' work carried out by the LRRHE results in affordable homes being built, further development work and bids for HCA grant is reliant on schemes being taken forward by the partner RSLs. Delays, obstacles and financial considerations often occur that cannot be influenced by the LRRHE, therefore control of delivering the projects is taken away from the LRRHE the same 'rural focus' is not always evident from RSLs. This quarter has again seen the recession impacting on the delivery capabilities of partner RSLs. Schemes may not be able to be built unless the HCA grant levels are suitable (see below) and the loan facilities offered by banks to enable schemes to be undertaken are offered at fair rates and without the stipulation that other borrowing be refinanced (which makes a new loan not worth taking on).</p> <p><u>3:</u> As always, the long term uncertainty of RHE funding means that posts survive on a year-on-year basis. Midlands Rural Housing continue to secure the necessary funding levels to host the LRRHE post, but longer term funding commitments from existing and selected new project partners would provide longer term security for the post.</p>

<p>Project title Brief project description (Lead partner)</p>	<p>Positives (areas going well) / Negatives (areas for concern)</p>
<p>number of Housing Needs Surveys completed, number of Parishes worked in, number of sites found etc.</p>	
<p>Vibrant Villages</p> <p>Vibrant Villages aims to sustain vital services within the counties rural villages.</p> <p>The programme has three key aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimise the impact of post office closures by providing small capital grants to improve the sustainability of Post Offices that remain, and to support alternative and mobile provision where there is evidenced need. 2. Support village shops to ensure that where they are the only local conveniences providing essential goods they are retained and enhanced – this will include supporting shops affected by the Post Office Closure scheme and where possible ensuring access to fresh local produce. 3. Enhance local facilities (including community halls or rooms within public houses, schools and churches) by enabling local economic activity and promoting multi-purpose use. 	<p>Positives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1:</u> One small rural community now has a meeting space. <u>2:</u> 1 rural hub now has ICT training facilities. <u>3:</u> Several village shops and post offices are more viable and provide more of a range of essential goods. <p>Negatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1:</u> Enquiries have slowed in the period before Christmas. <u>2:</u> Requests for retail advice have decreased. <u>3:</u> While funds committed are in line with forecast progress, spend is not. <p>General Note: LRP funding is now starting to be drawn down. Most of the LRP funding has been committed for 2009/10. However, due to the current weather and economic situation some of the projects may not finish in this financial year hence the need for funds to be carried forward to 2010/11. In 2010/11 it is planned that priority will be given to expenditure of LRP 'brought forward' funds first and then emda funds. This is to ensure that agreed intervention rates are met.</p>
<p>Programme of Community ICT Projects</p> <p>Build on the Community ICT Infrastructure and further engage with and develop communities, businesses, parish councils and voluntary organisations to assist them to exploit the technology that we have put in place.</p>	<p>Positives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1:</u> <u>Melton District</u> The Melton district have indicated that they intend to retire the 'Melton On Line' portal from March 2010. There will then only be one public authority funded portal in Leicestershire. <u>2:</u> <u>Police</u>

<p>Project title Brief project description (Lead partner)</p>	<p>Positives (areas going well) / Negatives (areas for concern)</p>
<p>The work will contribute to the following LRP Strategic Objectives :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger Rural Communities • Improving Accessibility & Information <p>By focusing the effort into three main areas of work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Parish Council and Voluntary sector ICT support programme. 2) Empower communities and businesses and improve access to services in rural areas. 3) Further development of the infrastructure to make services more available, accessible and easy to use. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishes and Voluntary organisations confidently using technology to improve business efficiency, communications and provide high quality information and on-line services to their customers. • Make use of internet technologies to empower individuals, communities, parishes, voluntary organisations and businesses providing them with, a sense of community, interactive tools to enable effective two-way communication and easy access to electronic information and services. • Customers able to find services easily (without needing to know who provides them) through an integrated electronic a-z of services. • People able to find public and voluntary information including transport information quickly and easily. • People being able to use technology to ‘transact’ with service providers at a time to suit them (any time of night or day). <p>This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Social Capital • Build Safer Communities 	<p>We are currently working with the police to implement the automatically posted news and events from their website to lv / lp and to provide them with a method to post urgent police messages into the LV ticker.</p> <p>Negative:</p> <p><u>1: KPI's</u> Whilst we have already exceeded some of the KPI's we are significantly behind on others. This is due to a large amount of effort being spent on training 2 new members of staff and setting up the volunteer agreement earlier on in the year. Now that this work is complete we will fully focus on catching up during the final quarter.</p>

Project title Brief project description (Lead partner)	Positives (areas going well) / Negatives (areas for concern)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Access to Services • Increase efficiency of service delivery • Support Rural Businesses • Increase Parish Council capacity • Create geographic, Digital and Social inclusion • Foster Volunteering • Promote Community Transport 	
<p>Climate Friendly Community Programme</p> <p>The aim of this project is to facilitate communities in Leicestershire to work through a framework of actions to become Climate friendly Communities via partnership working. The process includes raising community awareness about the climate change issues and reducing their impact by developing and implementing a Carbon Reduction Programme.</p>	<p>Positive:</p> <p><u>1:</u> Interest in the SHIRE Community Climate Change Grants has improved.</p> <p>Negative:</p> <p><u>1:</u> The Knowledge Transfer Partnership steering group is due to have it's first meeting in February.</p> <p>General Note: It has taken so long to get the Knowledge Transfer Partnership established that it has impacted on the whole of the programme originally proposed for 09/10.</p> <p>As a result of the delays linked to the Knowledge Transfer Partnership this programme won't be requiring any LRP funding this financial year. This means that the £2,000 granted towards this project will need to be reallocated.</p>
<p>Access to work and local services (Community Transport)</p> <p>To provide increased transport provision for rural residents to access work, and training opportunities and to access local centres.</p>	<p>Positive:</p> <p><u>1:</u> Improving access and partnership working.</p> <p>Negative:</p> <p><u>1:</u> Staff resources have had a delaying effect.</p>

MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

9.30am Thursday 18th March 2010

Coplow Centre, 13 Uppingham Road Billesdon, LE7 9FL

LOCATION MAP

(Marked A on maps below)

