

**LEADER+  
APPOINTMENT OF FOREST FRIENDLY FARMING (FFF) PRODUCE  
CO-ORDINATOR****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks Council support for a bid to the New Forest LEADER + programme for funding of a FFF Produce Coordinator to develop the marketing and availability of local produce from the New Forest Heritage Area to local outlets. While NFDC would be the employer, the post is virtually fully funded from external sources.

**2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In 2001 the Council was successful in its application for LEADER + funding for a £2.1m programme over 6 years to implement a series of measures designed to add value to local products within the New Forest Heritage Area. The programme is community led through a Local Action Group (LAG) representing a wide range of local interests, and is now in its second year. The Council is represented on this group by Cllrs Tom Russell and Ann Drake.
- 2.2 Good progress has already been made with the successful funding and delivery of first year projects being achieved on time and within budget. The programme is managed by NFDC as the accountable body through a full time manager who is externally funded.

**3. OUTLINE OF THE BID**

- 3.1 The New Forest LEADER + Action Plan 2002 – 2004 has identified the need for a range of marketing and related initiatives to help develop and promote Forest Friendly Farming products. There are already a number of local opportunities in 2003 for markets and shows within the area, together with the linkages which can be developed with HCC initiatives such as the Hampshire Farmers Markets and Hampshire Fare.
- 3.2 The co-ordination and organisation of events will require a dedicated full time officer. Likewise there is also a need for a person with relevant experience to work with producers to help them raise standards of availability and service to meet the supply requirements of local outlets.

#### **4. TIMESCALE AND FUNDING**

- 4.1 A decision as to whether the LAG will fund the project is expected during April/May. As this is a new initiative, the post will initially be for a fixed term of two years.
- 4.2 Funding of the post will come from EU programme funds together with match funding from other UK sources (principally the South East England Development Agency and the Countryside Agency).

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Some small element of match funding i.e. office space and line-management, will fall to NFDC. This can be met from within existing budgets.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are benefits for sustainability objectives to be gained from the project, not only in terms of environmental measures within the Heritage Area, but also through strong social and economic benefit to individual farmers, businesses and collectively in village communities. The project will complement other LEADER + projects and further work being carried out under the EU funded LIFE project in the area.

#### **7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The LEADER+ programme as a whole addresses a number of social and community measures which enhance individuals' abilities and skills, assist capacity building in local communities, and generally increase social inclusion and cohesiveness in local areas. This post will contribute to those aims.

#### **8. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS**

- 8.1 This project will help to deliver against a number of the LEADER + programme objectives. By supporting local producers it will contribute significantly to the prosperity of the land-based sector and the wider local economy. Acting as employer, the Council will be providing appropriate support.

#### **9. RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 That the Council supports the bid to the LEADER+ LAG for a FFF Local Food Co-ordinator and agrees to act as employer for this post.

#### **Further information**

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#### **Background Papers:**

LEADER+ report to Advisory Cabinet  
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Nm/leader/ffffoodcoordinator