



LEADER+ APPOINTMENT OF FOREST FRIENDLY FARMING (FFF) LOCAL PRODUCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Council support for a bid to the New Forest LEADER + programme for funding of a part- time (0.6) FFF Local Produce Development officer to help commoners and other small scale local producers to meet the requirements of suppliers, promotional events and marketing opportunities.
- 1.2 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, now in its second year, is community led through a Local Action Group (LAG) and Decision Making Group (DMG) representing a wide range of local interests. The Council is represented on this group by Cllrs Tom Russell and Ann Drake. The programme is administered by NFDC as the accountable body through a full time manager who is externally funded.
- 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.
- 2.3 In April of this year Cabinet approved a bid to the New Forest LEADER + programme for funding of an FFF Local Produce Coordinator to develop the marketing and availability of local produce from the New Forest Heritage Area. Funding was subsequently approved by the LAG/DMG in June.

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. Further development of the project and recruitment to the post of Local Produce Coordinator have together highlighted the appropriateness of seeking to focus on two separate aspects of this work. On the one hand the development of the FFF marque together with the professional marketing of local produce to established outlets, and on the other the development of smaller producers' ability to successfully market their produce and participate in local promotional activity.

4. TIMESCALE AND FUNDING

- 4.1 A decision as to whether the LAG / DMG will fund this project is expected on 30 September. As this is a new initiative, this part-time (0.6) 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 is central to the key objectives of the New Forest 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+ programme for a FFF Local Produce Development Officer and agrees to act as employer for this post.

Further information

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Background papers

LEADER+ report to Advisory Cabinet
11 June 2001
LEADER + Local Produce Coordinator
report to Cabinet 2 April 2003