

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**REGENERATION
CABINET MEMBER**

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND
LEADER PROGRAMME – TRANSITION FUNDING**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update on the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Northern Lincolnshire LEADER Programme.
- 1.2 To seek approval to bid for transition funding to continue to support the Local Action Group until the new programme is determined post 2014.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council currently acts as the accountable body for the Northern Lincolnshire RDPE LEADER Programme. The programme secured £2.4m for rural communities across the North and North East Lincolnshire areas.
- 2.2 The programme has operated exceptionally well. It is on schedule to spend its full allocation of funding before the end of the programme by March 2014.
- 2.3 The programme up to December 2012 has supported 86 projects. It has successfully delivered a range of schemes including construction/upgrading village halls, reordering churches, development of various heritage trails and creating play areas.
- 2.4 The council currently employs two individuals to co-ordinate and administer the programme. These posts are 100% funded through the programme.
- 2.5 The new round of EU funding for the RDPE has not yet been determined. Discussions and consultations are currently ongoing. However, it has been confirmed that there will be a gap between the current programme finishing and the new programme commencing. Concern had been raised that the expertise gained over the current programme both through employed staff and the volunteers on the Local Action Groups would be lost during this period.
- 2.6 The Minister of State for Agriculture and Food has recently announced an allocation of transition funding for 2014 to maintain or create capacity during this period. It is anticipated that between £30,000 - £40,000 may be

available for each Local Action Group subject to a set allocation process and level of demand.

- 2.7 The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) will manage the arrangements to progress the transition funds.
- 2.8 The Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group have indicated their desire to continue to operate as a LAG and to bid for future RDPE monies in the new programme.

3 OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option One – For the Council to continue to act as the accountable body for the Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group and to bid for transitional monies from DEFRA to continue the work and develop a revised Rural Local Development Strategy.
- 3.2 Option Two – To not bid for transitional funds and the current RDPE LEADER Programme to close at the end of the current programme.

4 ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option One would allow the work of the Local Action Group and its officers to continue during the period of transition between funding programmes. Also for local groups to be supported to access funds to improve and develop rural services and infrastructure, and to encourage visitors to the rural areas of North and North East Lincolnshire. The transition funds will also provide for the retention of existing staff to work up and bid for the future programme funds. In particular to review and update the Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Development Strategy required as part of the process.
- 4.2 Option Two will result in the loss of skilled and experienced staff whose contract will terminate in March 2014. There will be no resource to continue the work of the Local Action Group. The momentum of support will be lost from the community. Additional resource will be required to bid for future funds once the programme is determined.
- 4.3 Given the above, Option One is the preferred option.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Financial – There are no financial implications to apply for the transition funds.
- 5.2 Staffing – There are no additional staffing implications. Existing arrangements would continue as present through the existing line management arrangements.

5.3 Property & IT – None anticipated.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 Officers have completed an Integrated Impact Assessment. This has not identified any negative impacts. The transition work with rural communities will have a positive impact on securing funding and ensuring that they are in a position to deliver local projects.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 Discussion with the Local Action Group has indicated their desire for North Lincolnshire Council to continue to act as accountable body and to proceed with a request for transition funding.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Council continues to act as accountable body for the Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group.

8.2 That the Council, along with the Local Action Group, applies for transition funding post March 2014.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None.