

MINUTES

Greensand Ridge Local Action Group

6 March 2009

10:00-12:00

Mid Beds District Council, Priory House, Chicksands

Present: Jon Balaam, Greensand Trust
Ali Bradbury, Clophill Parish Plan
Joel Carré, BRCC
Jennifer Dancy, Flitton and Greenfield Parish Council
Jilly Hall, Natural England
Pauline Hey, Heath and Reach Parish Council
Sara Hind, EEDA
Richard James, Haynes Parish Council
Bridget Smith, Forward Gamlingay/ Gamlingay Parish Council
Mark Smith, CVS Mid and North Beds
Charles Whitbread, Southill Estate (Chairman)
Jon Boswell, BRCC
Laura Kitson, Beds and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium
David Morgan, Beds and Cambs Rural Support Group
Roy Tebbutt, Ampthill Town Council
Amanda Crack, RSPB
Nick Parrish, F B Parrish and Sons

		Actions
1.	Welcome and introductions	
1.1	Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and asked individuals to introduce themselves.	
1.2	The following conflicts of interest were registered as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nick Parrish – His business (F B Parrish and Sons) has a project ideas phase application under consideration• Charles Whitbread – Two of his estate tenants (Equine Tranquility Ltd and Beds Fat Trax/ Forestry Commission) have project ideas phase applications under consideration• Ali Bradbury – Her community group (Clophill Parish Plan) has a project ideas phase application under consideration	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roy Tebbutt and Mark Smith – As Ampthill Town Councillors, their town council has a project ideas phase application under consideration • Jon Balaam – His organisation (Greensand Trust) has a project ideas phase application under consideration • Bridget Smith – As Gamlingay Parish Councillor, her parish council has a project ideas phase application under consideration 	
2.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Leanne Bacon, Gamlingay Parish Council Mark Egar, Southill Estate Sarah Hughes, Bedfordshire County Council Matthew O'Brien, Beds FWAG/ Bedfordshire County Council Helen Shore, Bedfordshire County Council Gill Welham, Greensand Trust Steve Dowie, Chicksands Bike Park David Hooton, The Deer Initiative Jon Billington, Beds and Luton Economic Development P'ship Anne-Marie Hamilton, Beds County Training Group</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of last meeting</p>	
3.1	Minutes of 1 December 2008 were agreed and signed as a true record. Joel Carré to upload onto website.	Joel Carré
3.2	Sara Hind reported that EEDA was assessing 6 regional RDPE reservoir project applications. She also reported that the regional RDPE skills project had been recently launched, so any future Greensand Ridge training projects should be directed to the project lead – Landskills East – for funding consideration in first instance	
3.3	10.1 - Jon Balaam agreed to follow up action relating to obtaining the County Council produced Beds LAG area map.	Jon Balaam
4.	<p>Update from LAG Steering Group</p>	
4.1	David Morgan highlighted the following activities of the Steering Group since the December 2008 LAG meeting:	

4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarisation with RDPE programme • Establishment of robust conflict of interest management system • Assessment of 14 initial project ideas phase applications and allocation of facilitators to each • Revision of project ideas phase application form • Approval of three year delivery plan for submission to EEDA <p>David also informed members that Steering Group meeting minutes would be posted on the LAG website once approved.</p>	
5.	<p>Update from accountable body</p> <p>5.1 Joel Carré took members through the written update report which had been previously circulated ahead of meeting.</p> <p>5.2 Richard James asked how the conflict of interest issue involving the Greensand Trust, in its role as project facilitator and as project applicant was being addressed. Joel Carré reported that the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) had confirmed that there was no conflict of interest provided the RPA recommended management system was adopted. Joel reported that he had provided both the Greensand Trust and Working Woodlands BRCC project facilitator with the recommended management system for their adoption.</p> <p>5.3 Bridget Smith asked whether the operational team had the capacity to respond to the anticipated flood of interest arising from the forthcoming widespread distribution of the introductory leaflet. Joel Carré confirmed that the team had sufficient capacity, with him being initial point of contact for all enquiries. Members agreed that ‘signposting’ individual queries to the website, in order for people to do their own ‘homework’ on the programme was an effective way to manage workload pressures. Members also agreed that it was difficult to be prescriptive on how long it would take to complete the application process from start to finish, as this varied from project to project. However, to help with managing expectations, members agreed that applicants should be made aware, at an early stage, of the scale of undertaking required, in terms of the eligibility, evidence of need/ demand, private match funding, planning and associated legal conditions, in advance of final project approval.</p>	Joel Carré

<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>LAG communications plan</p> <p>Joel Carré took members through the paper which had been previously circulated ahead of meeting.</p> <p>Joel Carré explained that he would be producing a communications plan for consideration by Steering Group at its meeting on 20 March. Purpose of this plan was to ensure the LAG got the right message to the right people at the right time. Joel observed that LAG members represented many of the target audience groups the LAG was seeking to engage with. In light of this, he invited members to suggest the best methods for reaching the different key target groups. These are summarised below as follows and will be incorporated into the draft plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFU and Tenant Farmers Associations weekly e-newsletters • Agricultural agents, eg. Bidwells, Robinson and Hall, etc • Agronomists • Beds County Training Group newsletter and leaflet inserts • Community led approach with LAG/ town/ parish members handing out leaflets to personal/ professional contacts 	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p>Greensand Ridge thematic workshops</p> <p>Members were given time to read the paper, as it was only sent out the previous day. Joel Carré apologised for the short notice given and then took members through the paper.</p> <p>Sara Hind queried the need to run a workshop for the 'Putting the 'green' into greensand' activity (d), as she felt that this was a cross-cutting issue. Members agreed to not run a specific workshop for this activity.</p> <p>Joel Carré reported on an email received from Sarah Hughes (Beds County Council) querying the need for thematic partnerships in light of the thematic partnerships being established as part of the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Members shared Sarah's concerns and agreed that the workshops should be seen as 'task and finish' groups and, to avoid any risk of confusion, not referred to as 'thematic partnerships'.</p>	

7.4	Jon Boswell reported that the LAG will have a formal link into the Central Beds LSP thematic partnership structure, through Joel Carré's representation on the LSP's Environment and Economy Thematic Partnership.	
7.5	Jilly Hall offered the use of the Natural England GIS natural asset maps to assist with the mapping/ evidence base. Jilly to send e-version to Joel for circulation to LAG.	Jilly Hall
7.6	Jon Boswell emphasised the need to relate the Greensand Ridge Local Development Strategy (LDS) spatial planning work with the Local Development Framework (LDF). Joel Carré to ensure Central Beds planners are engaged in the spatial planning development process.	Joel Carré
7.7	Jilly Hall and Sara Hind respectively offered the services of their respective Natural England/ EEDA teams to assist with workshop facilitation.	
7.8	Pauline Hey highlighted the need to extend the workshop invitations to stakeholders adjoining the LAG area, such as Leighton Linlade Town Council, who had produced their own tourism strategy for the town and surrounding area. Members also highlighted the need to include neighbouring LAGs, such as Bucks and Chilterns.	
7.9	Members agreed that the resulting spatial plans for each priority activity should be used to highlight areas for proactive engagement and not be made 'public' or used as rigid decision making tools.	
7.10	David Morgan re-emphasised the purpose of the workshops was not to 'unpick' or 'rewrite' the LDS, but to give it spatial representation. David also expressed concern that the proposed project development/ prioritisation aim of the workshops could result in stakeholder confusion and lead to conflict/ duplication with the role of the Steering Group/ LAG.	
7.11	In light of these comments, members agreed that the workshop aim should be limited to the development of the strategic spatial frameworks for the 'string of pearls', 'taste the view' and 'swiss army knife centres' priority activities of the LDS. In other words, to retain the proposed aims a) and b) and delete c) and d) as outlined in Joel's paper.	

7.12	Members resolved to support the hosting of the workshops as outlined in Joel's paper, subject to the amendments agreed above.	
7.13	Joel agreed to circulate a draft invitation list for each workshop for LAG members to identify any additional stakeholder representatives.	Joel Carré
7.14	Laura offered to provide an update to the Chilterns LAG which she was attending in the near future.	
8.	State Aid consideration	
8.1	Jon Balaam gave a short presentation as an introduction to State Aid, following an EEDA run training day he and other LAG facilitators recently attended. Joel Carré to circulate copy of Jon's presentation slides to all LAG members.	Joel Carré
8.2	Nick Parrish reported that he was a member of a Producer Group, which had already received some state funding and queried whether this would have implications for his current Greensand Ridge project idea phase application. Sara Hind advised that Nick would need to obtain clarification from EEDA colleagues on this matter.	Nick Parrish
8.3	Jilly Hall reported that the Single Farm Payment and agri-environment programme funding fell outside of the State Aid 'de minimis' threshold test of £200k per undertaking in a rolling 3 year period.	
8.4	Sara Hind confirmed that project facilitators didn't need professional indemnity insurance cover as their role didn't involve 'advising' or making decisions on project applications.	
9.	Strategic developments affecting LAG area	
9.1	Sara Hind reported on the Government's Business Simplification Programme, whereby, if an activity constitutes 'business support', then it will need to follow certain branding guidelines. Sara agreed to provide these guidelines to the LAG once available. Support under Axis 1 and some of Axis 3 (but none of Axis 2) come under this programme and so will need to comply with the guidelines.	Sara Hind

9.2	Laura Kitson reported on the Mid Beds Planning Obligations Strategy and funding available through it for green infrastructure activity in Greensand Ridge area.	
9.3	Amanda Crack reported that she was drafting a strategic plan for the RSPB's Beds and Herts activity and would circulate a copy once adopted.	Amanda Crack
9.4	Bridget Smith reported that South Cambs had launched a Sustainable Energy Programme	
10.	Any other business	
10.1	Joel Carré invited members to advise him on how LAG meetings could be improved/ made more effective. Jilly Hall suggested a 10 mins slot for up to three different members at each meeting to give an outline of what they did of relevance to the LDS. Members endorsed Jon Boswell's suggestion for Joel Carré to invite Sarah Hughes to give an outline of the 'strategic context' for Central Bedfordshire at next LAG meeting.	Joel Carré
10.2	Members endorsed Jilly Hall's suggestion for Joel Carré to develop a shared contacts list for internal LAG use setting out: name, title, organisation, contact details and skills of relevance to the LAG/ LDS.	Joel Carré
11.	Date of next meeting	
	Due to diary clashes, members agreed to cancel Friday, 5 June 2009, meeting and re-schedule it to Tuesday, 16 June 2009 , 10:00-12:00, venue tbc	