

Application for the LEADER Programme

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: Applications for the LEADER programme, funded by the Rural Development Plan for England and the EU are being sought to support rural development measures. It is proposed to support bids being developed which cover any part of the Chilterns.

Purpose of Report: To advise members of the opportunity to bid for LEADER funds

Background

1. The LEADER programme will be supported by funding from the Rural Development Programme for England using government and EU funding. The LEADER programme supports rural development measures which support economic, social and environmental activity. It is thought that there may be between 6-8 programmes in the south east of England and similar numbers in other regions. The amount of funding is approx £400,000 per successful area for a period cover 2008 -2011.
2. Discussions have been held with SEEDA which is co-ordinating the programme in the south east. AONBs have been encouraged to submit bids, but in the Board's case this is not advised as it would create significant cash flow problems. Those AONBs which are part of the local authority would not face this difficulty.
3. The Board has been invited by Bucks CC to form part of a steering group, the outcome of which is that there are likely to be two bids from Buckinghamshire one covering the north of the county and the other the south, but both serviced by a secretariat within Bucks CC.
4. SEEDA requires expressions of interest to be submitted by early June, and a full application by mid October. If successful, funds will be available from spring 2008.
5. A LEADER fund could provide support to many projects which help deliver the AONB Management Plan, all the more valuable in light of the declining support from Natural England. It is therefore advised that the Board should actively participate in the development of any bids which would help the Chilterns.

Recommendation

1. **To support any bids to the LEADER programme which may benefit the Chilterns and help deliver the AONB Management Plan.**