



Rural Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Rural Forum held on Thursday 26 October 2023 in Via Video Conference, commencing at 5.00 pm and concluding at 6.45 pm.

Members present

G Williams, J Jordan, S Adoh, M Ayub, P Birchley, D Blamires, T Broom, R Carington, D Carroll, Q Chaudhry, S Chhokar, A Collingwood, C Cornell, D Dhillon, T Egleton, T Green, P Griffin, M Harker OBE, A Hussain, I Hussain, C Jackson, D Johncock, S Lewin, N Marshall, R Matthews, Dr W Matthews, H Mordue, S Raja, G Sandy, R Stuchbury, A Turner, P Turner, D Town, J Towns and J Ward

Others in attendance

L Hornby, G Hudson and C Schmidt-Reid

Agenda Item

1 Welcome and Introductions

2 Tribute to Gill Kent

The Chairman invited Charles Kent, Gill Kent's son, to say a few words in tribute.

Charles Kent thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to say a few words and explained that Gill Kent enjoyed being part of a small group of farmers who were prompted by the NFU to contact Wycombe District Council to arrange information sharing meetings. Two meetings a year, one in Spring and one in the Autumn along with a summer farm walk were arranged where discussions would take place about the issues and challenges that the rural community faced in the countryside.

Gill was also involved in the rejuvenation of Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) and attended regular meetings with the Principal and other farmers. It was good to note that the BCA were now regular attendees at the Rural Forum.

Gill enjoyed the bonhomie of the Forum and took great pleasure in being able to invite some of her contacts to speak and lead debates. The Forum functioned for many years at Wycombe and the Chiltern Hills and she hoped that the move to a unitary authority would not diminish its worth to the hills and pointed out that Vale and Hill farmers were different.

Gill believed that both sides of any story should be aired, even if it was difficult to hear or challenge popular beliefs. She was, truly, a champion of the countryside.

The Chairman thanked Charles for his words and noted that the Forum was, in fact, going from strength to strength and that Councillors had benefitted from the knowledge the farmers brought to the Forum.

Chris Schmidt-Reid made his own personal tribute explaining that he had been involved with the Forum for a long time and that Gill was a very highly valued member as well as being a member the Rural Forum Steering Group. Along with her husband Jim, Chris really appreciated the insights they brought and their invaluable contributions. She was a very important member of the steering group and would be very much missed.

The Chairman thanked Chris and Charles for their tributes and sent condolences on behalf of the members of the Forum to Gill's family.

3 Apologies for Absence

Emma Burroughs (Thames Valley Police)
Rob Butler MP
James Copas
Will Dallimore (Bucks Business First & Ngage)
Katie Higginson
Joy Morrissey MP

4 Rural Interests Present

Helen Archer (Community Impact Bucks)
Alexander Ash (Thames Valley Police)
Steve Baker MP
Philippa Batting
Vicky Beckwith (BCA)
Tom Beeston
Tim Bingham
Jackie Binning
Peter Brazier
Fraser Brooks
John Chilver
Peter Cooper
Geoffrey Copas (Copas Farms)
Colin Courtney (Chilterns AONB)
Bryan Edgley (Kensham Farms)
Philip Emmett
Mark Gardiner
Steph Horn (Chilterns AONB)
Ted Howard-Jones (Cholsey Grange Farm)
Hugh McCarthy
Charles Hussey
Neil Jackson (Chilterns AONB)
Liz Johncock (Chepping Wycombe PC)
Charles Kent
Will Lacey (Lacey's Farm)

Hayden Langford (NFU)
Alex Nelms (Kensham Farms & NFU)
Mike Seaton
John Sherlock
Greg Smith MP
Vicky Smith (Wet Wycombe PC)
Sue Wagner
John Whitby (Farmer & Chair Colne Valley Regional Park)

Presenters:

David Terrace (Waddesdon Estate)
Clare Phillips (Head of Strategy & Partnerships: Economic Growth and Regeneration)

5 Minutes

6 Information Items

National Farmers Union (NFU)

Alex Nelms thanked both Charles Kent and Chris Schmidt-Reid for their tributes to Gill as it summed up really well her contribution to the Rural Forum particularly helping to set it up which was a real testament to her and that her legacy lived on with the Rural Forum.

Alex explained that he was the Chair of the Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire NFU. He also explained that farmers were feeling the pinch currently as the output prices on farmers' commodities whether it be milk or cereals etc. had fallen from the relatively recent record highs which were held prior to the war in Ukraine. In particular, milk prices had fallen some 30p from 50p per litre to the mid-20's. However, input prices remained high affecting fuel, energy and fertiliser prices.

Alex went on to explain that the rollout of the new SFI, the Sustainable Farming Incentive, had been limited although the reason for this was not known.

Currently farmers were experiencing challenges with the weather which impacted on getting the autumn crops planted.

Alex then asked if anyone at the meeting had heard of the Red Tractor Scheme; about half the members indicated that they had. Alex explained that there was friction within Red Tractor and its board members. The NFU represented around 50,000 farmers nationwide who all had to fulfil a Red Tractor inspection annually in order to access the market and sell their goods. Red Tractor tried to manage the relationship between the farmers and the Big Four supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons) providing assurance and foods of a certain standard. However, with the ever increasing standards being required by the retailers which came at a cost, these costs were being met by the farmers but without an increase in payments.

Without going into too much detail, Alex explained that the NFU were carrying out two reviews, the first was on the governance of Red Tractor and the second on the

wider place of assurance in the UK. When it came to producing food, the UK had very high standards but with new trade deals coming into force, there was concern that standards would be undermined by foreign imports, such as Australian beef.

Alex went on to explain that Buckinghamshire Council could support farmers and the rural community more when it came to planning issues. Alex cited Kenton Farms where 75% of their turnover was from agricultural production. Agriculture sales selling wheat for bread making 10% of our turnover is bps or SFI. This sort of subsidy or farm support for services that are not catered for by the market and the final 15% were diversifications. These other enterprises, using old chicken sheds that no longer house chickens, now housed joiners and paint sprayers and precision engineers. These are sort of craft, the one or two man bands, that did not want to work in their garage or do not want to work in an industrial unit, say, at Cressex or Sands. They wanted to have space to carry out their trade and farm buildings were a useful intermediary for that because a farm is where commercial activity takes place. At one time it was food production, and now it's moving on. Some research had been carried out by Ted Howard-Smith and Will Dallimore who worked out that there was up to £5 million worth of grants that had been issued for projects which were supported by the Council but that not come to fruition or been delivered as a result of hold ups in the planning system. It was hoped that these could be overcome so that schemes such as the one mentioned, could be delivered in a timely manner. **Post meeting note – Further investigation has identified that the amount is approx.. £2 million of grant funding that was not applied for because of concerns that projects would not receive planning permission or that the process would take too long and funding would be lost.**

Hayden Langford, the local NFU group secretary updated the Forum on rural crime numbers following an event recently held at the Grove Riding School where farmers, local residents and local businesses attended which was run by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the NFU. It seemed that thefts of property from farms had sometimes been sent to Ukraine and sold there as it was easy to get goods out of the UK which therefore meant that thefts of equipment etc. was on the increase. At the event, the focus was on how to prevent these thefts, such as closing gates, removing keys from vehicles, parking machinery out of sight etc. Writing down chassis and serial numbers was helpful too. Doing this would help the police in returning equipment to the rightful owner, should the stolen equipment be recovered.

As well as equipment theft, there was a small rise in livestock thefts, around 8.7%. Having said this, thefts were down slightly in Buckinghamshire as focus by TVP had been on rural crime meaning the success rate of recovery had increased.

Hayden mentioned a WhatsApp group which has helped people identify local issues and can act as a warning to other members of the group. It was noted that this was not a replacement for dialling 999 in an emergency, but more of an informative for neighbours and the rural community.

Alexander Ash of Thames Valley Police stated that overall the trend was of an increase in rural crime rates. Neighbourhood teams were being populated as a visible force. In relation to the WhatsApp group, it was noted this was a very useful

form of communication for the rural community and the police and as police officers now have the group on their work phones, engagement with the rural community would get better all the time. Alexander also encouraged farmers etc. with equipment on site, to make a note of chassis and serial numbers as this would help should items be recovered.

The Chairman thanked Alex, Hayden and Alexander for their input.

Concern was raised by Geoffrey Copas in relation to planning issues, citing an application he had submitted around 20 months ago, which still had not received permission due to various issues with staffing at the council. This meant that time was running out as planning applications were time limited. He hoped that the council and Councillors would address this situation to make submitting planning applications easier and decisions made quicker than currently.

Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)**

This DEFRA funding programme has been widely seen as a successful means of providing extra support to farmers and rural interests within protected landscapes including the Chilterns. Here is a link to a national report issued earlier in the year - https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/475080/0345-NPE-FiPL-report-2023-A4-WEB.pdf

The programme has been extended to March 2025 so my colleague, Gareth Clay (gclay@chilternsaonb.org), would welcome applications for suitable proposals.

[Farming in Protected Landscapes | Chilterns AONB](#)

- **Boundary Extension**

Natural England led project still progressing though recommendations for any areas to be included are unlikely to go out for public consultation before summer 2024 at the earliest. Besides offering opportunities for further protection of landscape areas, any extra areas included will be eligible for extra support and funding such as FiPL.

- **Access for All**

Another DEFRA fund that has been extended and is looking to support public enjoyment, health and wellbeing within the AONB - [DEFRA Access for All funding | Chilterns AONB](#)

Our web page describes successful projects and how to submit expressions of interest.

- **Farm Clusters**

We've previously mentioned our support for farm clusters in the past. Clusters gather farmers together, help them identify their own priorities, offer support through training and funding applications.

We have 2 established and 3 evolving clusters within the Chilterns, 2 of which are in Buckinghamshire:

Central Chilterns – still going strong and has now set up their own CIC. CCB has offered support for whole farm plans, CS applications, soil carbon audits (with

help from the Rothschild Foundation) and this spring completed the second phase of a large hedgerow restoration project. My colleague, Nick Marriner, has also recently submitted an ambitious Landscape Recovery bid (the highest tier of ELM funding) on behalf of the group. **River Chess Farmers** – the Thames Water funded Smarter Water Catchment project, looking to address water quality, sediment run off and other issues within the catchment, is also supporting a new developing farm cluster.

- **Beacons of the Past**

Glad to report that Dr Wendy Morrison will continue to offer her expertise through the [Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership \(CHAP\) | Chilterns AONB](#).

- **Chilterns Walking Festival**

Latest festival currently running until the 29th of October – full details available - [Chilterns Walking Festival | Chilterns AONB](#)

- **HS2**

Although the second leg has been cancelled Bucks and the Chilterns still have to suffer the impacts and disruption of the route between London and Birmingham. We are still looking to positively influence design and mitigation and wait to see the implications of a switch of projects between EKFB and Align.

- **Undergrounding of Electricity Infrastructure**

A project to replace 8km of overhead line and 100 wooden poles in the Chess Valley near Latimer and Chenies is almost complete. We are looking for other suitable projects within the OFGEM allowance for protected landscapes.

Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA)

Overall enrolment across the college is up to 1700 at BCA and up across the group.

Agriculture is increasing again in numbers.

BCA introduced a Level 1 this year and enrolled 88 learners in agriculture, 17 in horticulture and 8 general farm worker apprentices.

BCA continued to attend the local county shows and ploughing matches.

From September 2023 T- level in agriculture would be offered which included a minimum of 45 days industry placement, had core business knowledge and occupational specialist practicals. There were exams and an employer set project.

A curriculum plan was being set up around the farming seasons so it was taught more holistically and would look to start the forums again where asking for advice and support from employers to make sure the curriculum had been planned right.

If you would be interested in getting involved please do email Vicky at:

Victoria.beckwith@windsor-forest.ac.uk

BCA continued to plan towards a variety of enterprises:

- Apple juice, turkeys, calf rearing, breeding our suckler herd and sheep flock.
- A tractor simulator was helping to increase driving skills safely and sustainably.

- Working towards red tractor and leaf marque accreditation just to show that the college was meeting industry standards and were utilising integrated management plans to link farming and the environment.

Vicky explained that she had also taken over the management of the engineering department at Langley college which would enable a greater availability of resources and skills to share with the agricultural learners, so welding skills would be offered to these learners.

Additional funds to be able to offer certificates of competency to our leaving learners was a struggle, as this was an additional cost of approximately £400 per learner and was legally needed for anyone to use a tele-handler on farm.

Councillor Robin Stuchbury, a previous rural apprentice himself, asked whether the apprentices at the college get a chance to work on farms. Vicky responded that yes, they did.

Bucks Council Update

Chris Schmidt-Reid updated the Forum on programmes taking place. First Chris reported that from the 1 November the Buckinghamshire History Festival was starting, which was a celebration of history and cultural heritage across the county. The windmill at Quainton would be open a few times during the month and people can go and see grain being milled in the old fashioned way.

Earlier in October, the Council adopted a regeneration strategy for Buckinghamshire called Regenerating Bucks which was a blueprint for the future growth of Bucks towns and a framework setting out how people can invest in existing assets, make changes where needed and try to attract new investment to the county. Alongside this were three further strategies for the larger towns of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham where the focus would be to maximise the towns' potential and enhance the strengths of the network of towns and villages. Chris also reported there was a Community Safety Survey for 2023 (link below). This had been commissioned by the Safer Buckinghamshire Board which was the local community safety partnership that brought together experts from the police, fire service, probation, health and social care services. The survey aimed to help the board understand the community safety concerns of people living and working in Bucks to help reduce crime.

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/communities/safety-2023/>

Chris also reported that there were a number of Neighbourhood Plans at various different stages with two currently out to consultation, Beaconsfield and Drayton Parslow. The Beaconsfield consultation closes on 9 November and Drayton Parslow closes on the 30 November. Any further consultations could be found on the Bucks website.

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Presentations

David Terrace, Rothschild Foundations Buckinghamshire Grants.

David Terrace, Grants Manager at the Rothschild Foundation explained that the foundation had given away around £8 million, £3 million of which was within Bucks. The focus of the foundation had largely been on arts and heritage, but increasingly in the last five years, they had focused a lot more on the environment, both in books and on the national level. The foundation currently had two strategic themes: access to the arts and culture and sustainable food systems.

The Foundation had funded the Bucks Food Partnership, which had ceased to be in operation, but work was taking place to get a collaborative partnership across the food system within Bucks. Much had been done around healthy food for all access to food and there were a number of projects such as community kitchens or growing projects.

The foundation was also interested in funding projects, increasing sustainability of food and were keen to fund in that area but due to the fact that if it was a foundation, funding directly to farmers was not possible. However, work with the Farm Cluster and the Chiltern AONB had proved successful. The foundation was also keen to support the kind of good food movement around, helping people to understand where food came from.

David showed the Forum examples of some organisations they had funded. A large amount of land had been allocated in Chesham, where they had started growing and giving out produce to local families, this was a community venture.

David also explained that he would be happy to speak to anyone about whether they would be eligible for these grants. Organisations such as charities or community interest companies.

Following a query in relation to Bucks Council selling off some agricultural land, David Terrace agreed to take this information back to the Rothschild's should they be interested in buying this land.

In response to a query about farmers, who were a part of the Rural Forum, being notified of sale of Bucks Council land. The Chairman agreed to take this subject to the Resources team.

Chris Schmidt-Reid asked about the timeframes and criteria for grant applications. David explained that grants below £30,000 have a 6 to 8 week process, while grants above £30,000 have a 6 month process and the application forms were online. Additional information from the applicants may also be sought. Chris asked David if he preferred projects that had other sources of funding or not. David responded that it depended on the project, but that generally, the foundation tried to fund organisations in a flexible way, without being the main funder.

Slides attached.

The Chairman thanked David for his informative presentation.

Claire Phillips, Head of Strategy & Partnerships, Bucks Council; Bucks Rural Business Grant.

Claire Phillips explained that the Bucks Rural Business Grant was about a scheme

funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund, which aimed to support rural businesses in Buckinghamshire with capital grants. The scheme had £1.8 million available for this and the next financial year with offers of grants between £2,500 and £300,000 at 40% of the total project cost. The scheme was looking for projects that could create new businesses, jobs and growth in rural areas, especially in tourism, forestry, and farm diversification. The scheme operated as a rolling call for projects with an 8-weekly funding panel. The applicants needed to check their eligibility, other sources of funding and subsidy control rules before applying. The process involved submitting an expression of interest, followed by a full application and guidance.

Potential applicants would be invited to a workshop that the scheme offered to help them with the application form and the grant scheme. The workshop was run regularly and aimed to put people in the best position to make successful applications. The scheme also had Bucks Business First as a partner to provide support on eligibility and business cases. The scheme had already received 61 expressions of interest, 49 of which have been invited to apply. Three grants have been awarded and £1.6 million was still available. The scheme urged applicants to apply as soon as possible and to have planning permission in place before applying.

In response to a query about whether there was a contact who farmers could contact before filling in forms so they could get an idea of whether they would be eligible and successful, Claire stated that anyone could speak to one of her colleagues as well as Will Dallimore who was very knowledgeable due to being a part of the scheme.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- That there was a limit if grants had been provided in the previous 3 years.
- That people should be encouraged to apply because if the funds were not all allocated then chances of obtaining more funding in the future were doubtful. There were more chances of obtaining funding from other authorities, if they had not allocated their portion, assuming that Bucks had allocated all theirs.
- The scheme compared to the Leader projects which was a EU project that required the applicants to pay 100% of the project cost upfront and then claim 40% back. Did this scheme work in the same way or could applicants access the grant money before spending their own money on the project. An upfront payment might be a barrier for some rural businesses that needed the grants. It was noted that the grant would be paid in arrears.
- There had been some hold-ups in relation to planning applications/permissions which had held up the grants process. It was noted that it was better to submit an expression of interest form to start the process.
- There was concern that while this scheme was very positive, there was always the fear that planning applications would be refused leading to the grant funding not being released.
- It was noted that sometimes a planning application may be deferred for Planning Obligations which would lead to a delay in spending the funding which had a time limit of 2 years. The understanding was that the money had to be spent within the 2-year timeframe.

The Chairman thanked Claire for her informative presentation and answers to questions.

8 Rural Farm Tour Feedback

The Chairman stated that the last tour at the Hard to Find Farm in Flackwell Heath, which was part of the Carington Estate, was a wonderful opportunity for councillors to see and learn more about the rural community. It was also an opportunity to meet, face to face, with farmers to understand the challenges they faced and not just from the farming point of view, but anything from planning to the weather.

The Chairman thanked those who had organised the tour as well as those who provided refreshments afterwards.

It was agreed that the farm tours were very important as it meant the farming community could engage with the councillors so they could understand the challenges faced by all farmers. It was agreed it was a good way to keep communication channels open. It was hoped that in future there would be one farm tour in the north of the county and one in the south. A visit had already been arranged for 2024 to the Rothschild Estate in the north of the county. The call was then put out to the farmers in the south of the county for any invitations to tour their farm and it would be good for a smaller farm owner to come forward with an offer. Geoffrey Copas commented that, with the agreement of his sons, he would be willing to host a farm tour.

9 Any Other Business (by prior notification to the Chairman)

Councillor Alex Collingwood proposed to work with the Rural Forum and some volunteers to improve the planning process for rural businesses. He wanted to create a framework that could help the rural community understand the rules and the opportunities for funding and diversification. Councillor Collingwood also wanted to speed up the process and make it more efficient and transparent and suggested that a meeting with the planners and a group of volunteers to discuss the details and the challenges of the applications. Councillor Collingwood hoped that by doing this, it would make the process better and support the rural businesses.

The Chairman reminded Forum members about the local member surgeries, which were a way for local councillors to discuss planning issues and applications with the planning officers. He also suggested that the rural businesses should be considered from a rural perspective, rather than a local ward perspective, especially if there is a risk of losing £5 million of funding.

Ted Howard-Jones expressed his frustration with the planning system and the lack of support for farm diversification. He claimed that many farmers had lost faith in the planning system and did not believe that the local planning authorities were positive and creative as stated in section 38 of the NPPF. He asked for examples of successful farm diversification projects that had been approved by the Bucks County Council and for more PR and communication with the rural community and warned that if the situation did not improve, many farmers would simply go ahead with their projects without planning permission and face enforcement actions. Ted Howard-Jones hoped to find a way forward with the working party and the PR.

The Chairman acknowledged the difficulty of working with planning applications and

the accusations of colluding with developers. However, role of the planners and the local plans in bringing sites forward and delivering them was a difficult one and which was why Local Plans were in place to help with the planning process.

The Chairman asked that if anyone was interested in volunteering for Councillor Collingwood's working group, to contact Liz Hornby so she can pass on your name accordingly.

Chris Schmidt-Reid informed the Forum of the topic of discussion at the next Forum meeting in March 2024, which was solar farms and renewables in relation to farming and farm lands. Chris stated that he lived near a proposed solar farm site and wanted to hear different perspectives on the issue. Chris invited forum members to share their ideas or contacts who could speak on the topic and acknowledged that the topic was controversial and therefore wanted to have a balanced view.

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Buckinghamshire Council update

- Buckinghamshire History Festival
- <http://www.histfestbucks.co.uk/whats-on>
- Regenerating Bucks – regeneration strategy
- Community safety survey 2023: How can we make Buckinghamshire safer? - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space
- Neighbourhood Plan consultations – Beaconsfield and Drayton Parslow
- Your Voice Bucks

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Rothschild Foundation

“The Rothschild Foundation is a charity supporting arts and heritage, the environment and social welfare by awarding grants, fostering dialogue and debate, and through our support of Waddesdon Manor.”

- Privately endowed Foundation.
- Family are involved in decision making.
- Give away around £8m a year in all grant making.

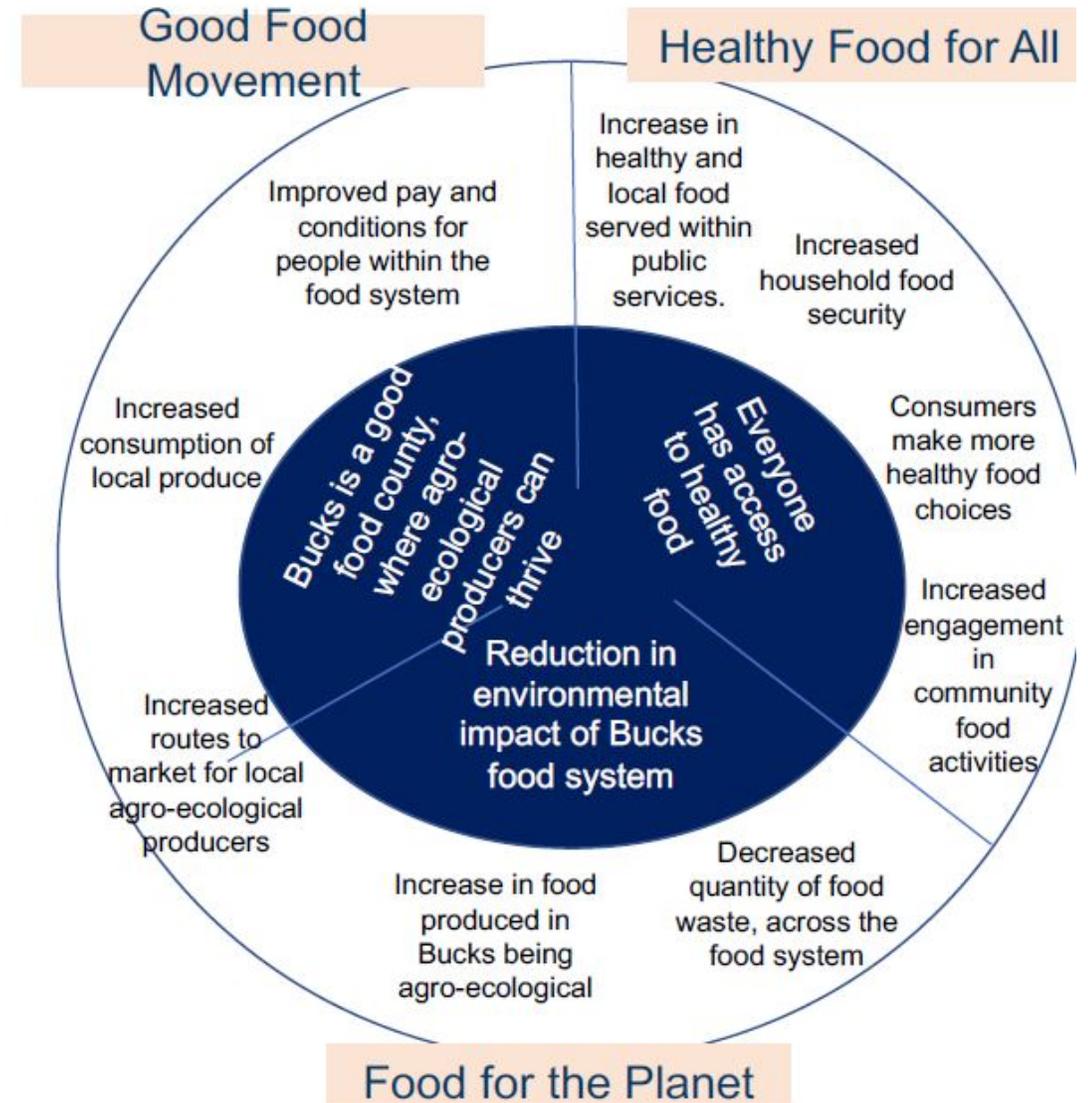


- Around £3m of funding provided annually in Bucks, split into three themes
- Grants are provided for up to three years and can be for project, core or capital costs
- Grants limited to Bucks; Milton Keynes is out of scope.



Sustainable Food Systems– A strategic grant-making priority

- Through our strategic funding we hope to contribute to a Bucks food system that is sustainable for people and the environment.
- We have funded the Bucks Food Partnership and worked closely with stakeholders to think about what the RF can offer.
- We have developed a Theory of Change for the RF’s contribution this area.
- Our focus has been linked to the pandemic response and the impact of the cost of living crisis, however we are keen to fund in all three areas as well as encouraging system-wide partnerships.





Core funding to support growing, cookery and veg boxes for local families

Funding to increase the capacity of the organisation to deliver education programmes, food production and wellbeing opportunities.

Funding for the school engagement programme, where students visit farms, grow vegetables and learn about sustainable food production.

- Local grants programme for Bucks-based organisations addressing societal needs.
- Grants available up to £10k per year for three years.
- Particular focus on under-represented groups, such as minoritised communities, LGTBQ and disabled people.
- Can support predominantly environmental/conservation charities where there is a link to community engagement or wellbeing.



<https://rothschildfoundation.org.uk/buckinghamshire-grants/>

1. Read the overview of our [Community](#) and [Strategic Fund](#) and decide which one is relevant to your organisation.
2. Review the application guidance for your chosen programme.
3. Create an account on the Rothschild Foundation's [grant application portal](#) or log in to your existing account.
4. Take our quiz and confirm you're able to apply.
5. If you would like to talk to us about your application you can set up a meeting or share pre-application questions by emailing: grants@rothschildfoundation.org.uk
6. Prepare and submit your application through the online portal.
7. We may wish to discuss your plans further and ask you to share more information or answer particular questions about your proposal.
8. Hear the outcome of your application. Applications of under £30,000 will hear the outcome of funding within 2-3 months. Applications over £30,000 will be discussed at Trustees meetings in July and November each year and announced afterwards. Applications for each Trustee Meeting will need to be received by the Grants Team approximately 4 months prior to the Trustee Meeting.

Get in touch:

David Terrace

David.terrace@rothschildfoundation.org.uk

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**LEVELLING
UP**



Bucks Rural Business Grant

Buckinghamshire Council

Rural Forum update

Buckinghamshire Rural Business Grants- Background

The Bucks Rural Business Grant (BRBG) is a capital grants programme for rural businesses funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) by DEFRA.

Buckinghamshire Council has been allocated £1.8million of this funding which is set to be delivered over two years (2023/24 and 2024/25)

2023-24 : £457,174

2024-25 : £1,371,521

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The capital grants funding is for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.

The required outcomes of this grant are:

- Number of new business created
- Numbers of new business experiencing growth
- Number of jobs created

Parameters of programme

- The Council will run the process as a rolling call for projects, specific dates will be published when applications are considered by a funding panel
- Anticipated grant amounts offered will range from £2,500-£300,000
- Grants will initially be offered at a 40% rate with businesses needing to match fund the remaining 60%.
- Projects being supported through REPF cannot have received funding through another DEFRA scheme and the Council will need to ensure that projects are not being double funded.
- Applicants will need to inform the Council whether they are in receipt of any state aid within the last 3 rolling years, to ensure they are not over the limit.

Types of projects that can be funded

The fund is for rural businesses with typical projects including



Tourism projects



Foresters



Farm diversification



Our funding process

Applicants will need to complete an Expression of Interest outlining details of their business, what they want the grant for and how much they are applying for.



This EOI will then be assessed and if eligible, applicants will be sent a Full Application.



Page 27 Eligible applicants will be invited to complete a full application.



Applicants will be supported through the process and guidance notes will be provided



Applications will be assessed on impact of outputs and outcomes and value for money



Programme Update



61 Applications have submitted an expression of interest



49 Applicants have been invited to complete a full application. We recently carried out our first panel meeting



3 grants have been awarded totalling **£219,540**

7 full time jobs and 6 part time jobs will be created in Buckinghamshire as a result of these grants being awarded

£1,609,155 remains available.

Currently assessing wave 2 applications