

Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER
Local Action Group

Terms of Reference- Local Action Group

1. Background

Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER will create a strong sense of place within the rural villages of Central Warwickshire. It aims to create sustainable and inclusive communities, bringing together those who have always lived in the area and incomers or migrants; young and old, to create, celebrate and redefine their rural culture and heritage.

The programme will support projects under three main strands:

- Community Growing Projects
- Community Arts Projects and Events
- Activities that bring together villagers and the land based rural industries that surround them and that create and shape the environment in which people live.

The **Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER programme** area comprises the parished villages and rural areas in Central Warwickshire, encompassing the rural wards of Rugby Borough and Warwick District. It covers 55 parishes over an area of 211 square miles, with a total population of 52,000. The project area excludes the urban settlements of Rugby, Kenilworth, Warwick, Whitnash and Leamington Spa.

2. Structure

The **Local Action Group (LAG)** is the steering group for the programme with representation from the target rural communities and a range of other stakeholders active in the area. It will serve to ensure that the Central Warwickshire LEADER programme delivers the local development strategy (LDS) and its themes, which arose from the community consultation process, in the programme area. The LAG will develop the annual work plan for the programme for the year.

The LAG will also be the body responsible for making grant awards for the programme.

Membership of the LAG will be approved or elected by the **Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER Forum**, an open broad-based and inclusive group of interested parties from across the programme area. The LAG will report to the Forum at open public meetings twice annually. The Forum will hold the LAG to account for the delivery of the programme and has the power to elect up to five individual representatives onto the LAG at the AGM of the Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER programme where necessary and if appropriate.

The LAG will be serviced by a **programme team** and **support services** will be provided by Warwickshire County Council acting as the accountable body and taking responsibility for project assurance, auditing and monitoring project processes. The LAG will be further supported by independent (**Technical**) **Appraisal Groups** responsible for establishing the technical viability of applications for funding and evaluating them against the published Local Development Strategy (LDS).

3. Governance of the Local Action Group (LAG)

The Central Warwickshire Villages LEADER Project will be governed by the Local Action

Group (LAG). The LAG will meet not less than four times a year.

The LAG shall draw at least 51% of its membership from the non-statutory sector. The Membership will include representatives from

Advantage West Midlands
 Warwickshire County Council (the accountable body)
 Garden Organic (the financial and administrative lead agency)
 Rugby Local Strategic Partnership
 Warwick Local Strategic Partnership
 Arts Community representative(s)
 Horticulture/Agriculture community representative
 1 Representative from Rugby Rural Forums
 1 Representative from Warwick Rural Localities
 1 Representative from Warwickshire Rural Community Council

Membership of the LAG will also include 5 Individuals (community representatives) bearing in mind LEADER target groups such as young people and women.

The LAG will elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from within its membership at its initial meeting and review these arrangements annually.

4. Roles for the LAG

The key roles of the LAG are outlined below:

- Agreeing and approving policies and procedures for the operation of the programme, ensuring a clear and open process for project selection
- Agreeing annual budget allocations
- Agreeing recommendations for funding and commissioning projects and ensure that they are within the annual plan and remit of the LDS
- Monitoring the implementation of the terms of reference and challenging proposed activities outside of this
- Monitoring and refreshing the project Business Plan as submitted to Advantage West Midlands as necessary by reviewing action plans and local priorities
- Ensuring the programme is promoted within the area and championed in the local area.
- Ensuring links between the programme and the organisations or communities of interest or geography covered by the programme, both inside and outside the rural area.
- Ensuring through monitoring that equality and diversity and environmental sustainability are fully reflected at all levels of the programme and that hard to reach sectors, e.g. young people, small businesses and the land based sector, are adequately represented on the LAG.
- Developing relationships with other LEADER groups in the region, nationally and internationally to learn from their experience, good practice and innovation.
- Arranging the twice-yearly meetings of the LEADER Forum

5. LAG Working Arrangements

1. LAG meetings will be held at least four times per annum unless cancelled by the chair with 7 days notice.
2. A calendar of meetings will be agreed each year for the next twelve months.

3. A quorum of 50% of the registered LAG membership plus 1 shall be observed. Meetings attended by fewer than this number shall be deemed inquorate and decisions made deemed not valid unless ratified by a subsequent quorate meeting.
4. Decisions will be by a majority of those present. The Chairperson (or Vice-Chairperson in their absence) has a casting vote.
5. All project approval decisions with expenditure implications require the agreement of the AWM representative who has the right of veto.
6. The programme staff team will undertake the administrative and financial arrangements for the LAG meetings with support from the Accountable Body, (WCC) and the funder Advantage West Midlands (where necessary).
7. The programme staff will circulate the agenda and papers seven days before each meeting, and will record decisions and issue minutes for approval at the next meeting. Papers and minutes will be made available on the programme website.
8. The programme staff team will attend LAG meetings to provide information and assist with secretarial matters. Information for meetings should be sufficiently detailed to ensure the LAG is kept fully informed about programme activities and outcomes and, depending on circumstances, may include:
 - a. Details of projects to be commissioned /approved
 - b. Quarterly financial statement on overall spend on all projects and core costs
 - c. Quarterly statement on achievement of outputs, outcomes, targets, milestones
 - d. Notification of significant gaps in achievement of objectives, spend or outputs
 - e. Notification of significant problems on funded projects
 - f. The full LAG will delegate sub groups to undertake specific tasks as required (e.g. project appraisal, financial management) and these groups will report to the full LAG at quarterly meetings.
9. Views and decisions of the LAG will be recorded by the staff team and signed by the Chair at the beginning of the following meeting.
10. LAG members who are directly involved or have a direct interest in any application for funding submitted, and which is discussed, will declare an interest and take no part in the consideration of the application unless invited by the Chairperson to respond to questions pertaining to the application. If LAG members represent an organisation, which has an involvement in an application, but that organisation will not receive any financial benefit, representatives should declare an interest but can participate fully in the consideration (see also the Code of Conduct).
11. In exceptional circumstances, the Accountable Body may make a decision between meetings (but not about project approval /rejection) after consulting the staff team, Advantage West Midlands, one of the core public Members and at least two non-public members, including the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson. Such decisions will be reported to the next meeting.

6. Appeals Procedures

Any applicant for funding who has a concern about the way in which their application has been handled should write in the first instance to the Chair of the LAG Forum who will notify the complainant of any action that he proposes to take in relation to the appeal within 10 working days.

7. Variance to Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the LAG will be reviewed annually by the LAG, and they may vary or add to these Terms of Reference if necessary.