

**AREA NORTH COMMITTEE
27th August 2008**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The items for information do not form part of the agenda. Should Members have questions regarding any of the items please contact the officer shown underneath the relevant report. If, after discussing the item with the officer and it is felt appropriate, a Member may request an item to be considered at a future Committee meeting.

- 1. Highway Matters Arising from July 2008**
- 2. Area North Committee Action List – July 2008**
- 3. Somerset Levels & Moors – Local Action for Rural Communities**

1. Highway Matters Arising from Area North Committee on 23rd July 2008

Councillor	Issue	Action
P Palmer	Martock Defaced sign – junction Stoke Road Low sign – Water Street	New sign to be ordered. Sign to be adjusted.
P Robathan	Lopen Road markings – Higgins Grave Lane	Identified for safety repairs.
R Mills	Langport Blocked gullies – Westover Trading Estate	Order raised to clean out.

Kim Sharp
Assistant Highway Service Manager
South Somerset Area

2. Area North Committee Action List from July 2008

Action	By who	Outcome
Letter to be written on behalf of the Committee to SCC expressing concern at their lack of control of Ragwort on Highway verges across the district.	Area Development Manager on behalf of Chairman	Committee Administrator – letter sent 1 st August 2008
Letter to be written on behalf of the Committee to South Petherton PC regarding financial support towards key community facilities, including the David Hall, South Petherton.	Area Development Manager on behalf of Chairman	Community Regeneration Officer – Letter sent 4th August. Reply received and acknowledged.
Parish Workshop to be arranged for October 2008 to provide feedback to the parishes on the Area North Community Forum event.	Area Development Manager / Committee Administrator	Date to be agreed in consultation with Chairman
Affordable Housing report to be arranged asap for Committee	Area Development Manager / Committee Administrator	Contact made with SSDC Housing Development Officer – response awaited

Angela Cox
Committee Administrator
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3. Somerset Levels & Moors – Local Action for Rural Communities

19 August 2008

In May 2008 a bid was submitted to the South West RDA to secure substantial funding through the Local Action for Rural Communities Scheme. The bid was in the form of a Local Development Strategy and was one of 20 submitted by groups across the South West region.

At the end of July, the RDA announced the outcomes of this competitive bidding process, and the Somerset Levels & Moors was awarded £1.8million as a result.

This funding will be available to support 'community-led' initiatives with a positive benefit to the Levels & Moors area between 2008 and 2013.

What is 'Local Action for Rural Communities'?

- This is a programme funded by the European Union to support the positive development of communities and businesses in specific rural areas through Local Action or community-led projects.
- Local Action is the name for this programme in the South West region of England, also known as the Leader Approach, which adopts 7 main principles:
 - Area based approach (the Somerset Levels & Moors)
 - Managed by a Local Action Group
 - Multi sectoral – that is representing all the main sectors contributing to how a community works
 - 'Bottom-up' approach with decision making made at the local level
 - Encouraging innovation and experimentation
 - Co-operation – this may be locally between projects and partners, but also nationally and across Europe in some cases
 - Using networking to encourage all of the above
- In the South West, the funding to the Local Action Group is through the local Regional Development Agency as part of the larger Regional Development Programme for England (RDPE).
- An interim steering group working with an expanded and existing LEADER+ Local Action Group developed the bid in consultation with local communities, businesses and representative agencies.
- The full Levels & Moors Local Action Group seeks to be fully representative of local communities, businesses, environmental agencies, local authorities, and other sectoral groups, working with private, voluntary and public sector organisations.

The Somerset Levels & Moors

A unique geographical landscape with a community bonded and developed as a result of flooding, terrain and location. Home to a huge amount of wildlife and nature, the area is one of the best examples of a man-made lowland wetland expanse in the world. The bid area extends from Burnham on Sea and Cheddar in the north to South Petherton and Martock in the south, from North Petherton in the west to Glastonbury in the east. This includes a population of 130,000 people and 82 parishes across four of the five districts in Somerset.

As a result of detailed local consultation and reviews of a wealth of local strategy and planning documents, the interim Local Action Group established the following vision, aims and objectives. These represent the key focus of activity for Local Action funding in the Levels & Moors throughout the programme.

Our Vision

“Promoting sustainable development in the Levels & Moors to strengthen the economy, vibrancy and environmental quality for all residents, businesses and visitors.”

Our Shared Aims

- Sensitively and sustainably utilise and enhance the natural and cultural heritage resources, characteristics and attractiveness of the Levels & Moors, to promote and boost sustainable tourism, local infrastructure, rural communities and economic opportunities throughout.
- Assist and enable businesses and social enterprises, organisations, community groups and clusters and individuals throughout the Levels & Moors to adapt practices and adopt and integrate greater environmental awareness, especially in the face of climate change.
- Promote and develop respect, awareness and long-term security for the landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity of the Levels & Moors, including positive and sustainable development of these where possible and appropriate.
- Develop greater cohesion and opportunity for the Levels and Moors through the positive interaction of the Market Towns and rural areas for residents, visitors and businesses to make the area vibrant, sustainable and a distinct entity and destination.

Specific Local Objectives

- **Local governance and ownership** – to ensure funding is truly led by the community to best represent the area and support and promote the identity of the Levels & Moors
- **Environment** – promoting sustainability throughout and the unique environmental quality of the area
- **Small business and social enterprise development and support** – assisting existing businesses and recognising new potentials
- **Local produce sectors** – strengthening the link between produce and landscape for residents and tourists and the identity of the Levels & Moors
- **Sustainable tourism** – to better represent the area and ensure tourism is a positive but sustainable asset for the area
- **Minimising impact** – to make the best of what is local and conserve the area for future generations.

What happens next?

The interim Steering Group will prepare and submit a delivery plan for the first year of operation to update the Local Delivery Plan. Once approved by the South West RDA, full work can start.

There will be an open meeting in October to launch the programme, formalise the Local Action Group and elect a 12-14 person decision making group (Executive). This meeting is **open to anyone** and those specifically invited will be all town and parish councils in the area, around 80 agencies that have already expressed an interest and a further 50 or more people who attended various consultation events earlier in the year.

The Local Action Group will be issued with a formal contract from the South West RDA – once this has been received the Local Action Group will be able to issue grants directly for projects. In the meantime, detailed project information cannot be considered but there will be a public launch for the grants when they become available. Still a lot to do in the next couple of months!

For more information about Local Action: www.southwestrda.org.uk/local-action

Local Action bids press release:

www.southwestrda.org.uk/news/release.asp?ReleaseID=2648

Reference documents informing the Levels & Moors Local Development Strategy:

South West Regional Implementation Plan, Somerset Local Area Agreement, Community Plans of the four District Councils, 17 parish plans, Community Strategies of market towns, Biodiversity Action Plan and Responding to Climate Change in Somerset. In addition there were three consultation events and specific other input from conservation agencies, market towns, Somerset Rural Renaissance, Social Enterprise Link and the Somerset Tourism Partnership as well as the existing LEADER+ Local Action Group and interim group.

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