



Action Plan 2009-2013

Introduction

The Rural Development Forum aims to support the rural economy in the rural/urban fringe as pressures on land, agriculture and forestry in the Colne Valley Park and surrounding areas intensify. The Vision of the Rural Development Forum is:

“To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside”.

The area covered by the Rural Development Forum includes the whole of the Colne Valley Park (43 square miles). It also includes the wider rural/urban Fringe from London’s western edge to the Chiltern AONB as well as South Bucks parishes north of Slough. The boundaries are not set in stone, the Forum is more interested in supporting the viability of the rural economy to the west of London rather than defining whether a particular farm or woodland is inside or outside the boundary. Please see the map on page 2.

This document sets out:

- background information on the area including challenges and opportunities that the Rural Development Forum intends to address
- what has been achieved
- objectives that the Rural Development Forum intends to achieve by 2013. This document outlines projects which will be pursued if success seems probable, there is sufficient demand and grant support is available.

Description of the area

Landscape

The northern area is very similar in character to the Chilterns with many hedgerows and small woodlands and gently undulating slopes crossed by valleys. The valley of the Colne in the north east section is very pronounced and offers far reaching views from the valley sides.

South of the M40 the land starts to flatten out with many historic parklands and large expanses of woodland, wood pasture and heathland.

South of Slough the flat Thames floodplain is dominated by several reservoirs rising above the valley floor.

Many visitors to the area are surprised by the high quality of the landscape so close to London.

Economics in the rural urban fringe

Incomes, employment and skills and growth in the area are driven by London. This has led to dormitory villages—transforming character and disconnecting people from local land use, farming and local supply of food.

Mineral Extraction & Damaged land

The Colne Valley on the areas eastern edge is contains over 60 lakes created through aggregate extraction. Mineral extraction has had a huge impact on the landscape over the last 150 years with many areas now lost to agriculture.

In addition there are large areas of damaged/derelict or disused land owned by investment companies for its 'hope value'. In the meantime the land deteriorates and becomes attractive for undesirable activities such as flytipping, dumping of stolen cars, illegal occupation and poaching. (the same activities also impact on farming and woodland).

There is also a trend for farmland to be purchased by investment companies, split into plots and sold on to private individuals under slogans such as 'purchase your own meadow to relax in'. The hope that building will be allowed in the future is being pedalled to potential purchasers.

Transport and Heathrow

The Rural Development Forum area is crossed by a network of transport routes including many tranquil ancient routes such as the Old Shire Lane. However, the 20th century transport infrastructure has had a huge impact on the area particularly the M25 which has cut through many farms and woodlands. Current M25 widening works and construction of a motorway service area adjacent to the M40 at Beaconsfield continue to impact upon the landscape and the viability of the rural economy.

Heathrow Airport, and associated existing and proposed infrastructure, is fundamental to the opportunities and challenges for the area. The impact on employment and skills, housing and development need, air quality, noise, infrastructure and investment is huge.

There are many development proposals in the area where applications are likely to be put forward over the next few years. These include Project Pinewood, Airtrack, Crossrail and the Slough Freight Exchange.

Cross boundary

The Rural Development Forum area is split across administrative boundaries and includes parts of the following regions:

- East
- London.
- South East

And parts of the following local authorities:

- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Chiltern District Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

- Slough Borough Council
- South Bucks District Council
- Spelthorne Borough Council
- Surrey County Council
- Three Rivers District Council

The area is on the periphery, on the edge of administrative areas and on the edge of the town/country. Sometimes the attention of local authorities and other key organisations is diverted away from the Rural Development Forum area towards more central areas. This edge effect is emphasised by the fact that the area is different in character to the main bulk of some of the urban local authorities.

Vision and key issues

The Vision of the Rural Development Forum is:

“To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside”.

Five issues have been identified by the Rural Development Forum, these are:

- Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe
- Local food to local markets (a co-operative approach)
- Woodland management
- Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep
- Tourism & day visits (opportunities for farmers, foresters and growers)

The following section describes the challenges and opportunities that relate to these issues.

A Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe

There has been a decline in the number of working farms in the area over the last 100 years.

Viability of farming is squeezed in the Rural Urban fringe by

- Development pressures and high land prices
- Additional costs incurred because of flytipping, illegal access, theft etc
- Limited local farming infrastructure (e.g. nearest abattoir is 1 ½ hours drive away)
- Area falls between two stools (urban and rural), this is compounded by the administrative boundaries that cut through the area.
- Some local farmers perceive green belt policies as a barrier to modernisation and diversification.
- Some local authorities reviewing the future of their agricultural estates.

Opportunities:

- Market opportunities relating to the high (and relatively affluent) local population.
- Make the most of the local filming industry (including Pinewood and Shepperton) and the demand for services.
- Encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration to face the problems and exploit the opportunities associated with the rural urban fringe location.
- Improve energy efficiency, increase the uptake of renewable energy and utilise waste out of London.
- Adaptation and modernisation. Assist farmers to be more efficient and competitive, to achieve high standards of animal welfare.

- Involve farmers with the Colne Valley Regional Park and help the partnership to understand, and respond to, their unique pressures
- Encourage smallholders and support their efforts to maintain the rural landscape
- React to opportunities to bring damaged, derelict or disused land back into agricultural production or put to community use in line with the key aims of the Colne Valley Park.
- Encourage take up of environmental stewardship schemes and encourage other initiatives to maintain and enhance the landscape and biodiversity.
- Raise awareness of the opportunities to process food and green waste from neighbouring local authorities.
- Raise awareness of the potential for income generating partnerships between farms and the local community through on farm renewable energy generation and supplying local residents.

B Local Food to Local Markets (a co-operative Approach)

To reconnect local producers and local consumers. The challenges lie in

- the diversity of markets that exist
- little marketing infrastructure locally
- the accessibility to the market of smaller farming set ups.
- Local residents, pubs, cafes and restaurants want local food but don't always know where to access it.

Opportunities:

- There are 3 Million people living within 10 miles of the area, Farmers and producers in the Colne Valley Park should seek to maximise their unique location to supply London markets and other adjacent urban areas such as Slough and Staines.
- Support the creation of new markets and new products
- Increase supply chain efficiency by reducing cost and adding value along the chain.
- Collaborative marketing and promotion
- The area and adjacent urban centres contain many pubs, cafes, restaurants and retail outlets that serve residents and visitors.
- Many organisations are engaged on projects to supply local food to schools, hospitals etc and communities in London and other neighbouring urban areas.
- Renewed interest in food security
- Raise awareness of the opportunities to forge direct buying links with the public, with schemes such as community supported agriculture.

C Woodland management

The Rural Development forum area contains approximately 13 square miles of woodland. The challenges are:

- many different landowners with limited knowledge of the benefits of woodland management,
- many of the private woodland owners do not need the income that woodland management could provide
- public woodland owners are managing for access but appear to have stopped management for biodiversity or economic potential
- fragmented or non existent marketing of products and services.
- Lack of local woodland management skills and specialist contractors.

- Lack of woodland management facilities, such as a local sawmill, form a barrier to sustainable woodland management practices.

Opportunities:

- Exploit growing demand for wood fuel and local growing supply chain.
- Make links with adjacent wooded areas with existing woodland management initiatives e.g. Chilterns and Surrey Hills.
- Develop links with large landowners e.g. County Councils and the City of London.
- Exploit demand for recreation (particularly where this can generate income)
- Engage woodland owners through the Rural Development Forum

D Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep

Challenges:

- Many local residents have little connection with the farming community and the countryside on their doorstep.
- Many farmers are willing to participate in education schemes but are unable to because of time pressures and a lack of suitable facilities.

Opportunities:

- Strong desire from local residents for increased connection with the farming community.
- Community activities which develop access to and enhance the environment and countryside.
- Link the rural Development Forum to community work of the Colne Valley Partnership, Groundwork and local authorities.
- Increase public understanding and enjoyment of the rural environment through organising events including walks, festivals and farm open days.
- Hundreds of local schools around the area. Many of which are seeking farm and countryside visits and education opportunities that relate to the national curriculum.
- Increase understanding of the link between farming and the countryside landscape. Use this to increase demand for local produce.
- Build on the success of Open Farm Sunday, use as springboard to reach an increasing number of local residents.
- Local health authorities recognise the importance of green exercise, promote opportunities to forge partnerships with local farms.

E Tourism & day visits (opportunities for farmers, foresters, growers)

Challenges:

- Lack of co-ordinated focus on the area to date as is on the edge of three regions.
- Lack of publicity and awareness means that the area can be bypassed by Londoners and others seeking a countryside experience.

Opportunities:

- Over 3 Million people live within 10 miles of the Rural Development Forum area. Many millions more visit for work or travel through the area.
- The CVP area contains, and is surrounded by, many major tourist attractions.
- London's Tourism Action Plan, highlights the importance of identifying and integrating visitor destinations outside of central London.
- The Rural Development Forum area is easily accessible from road, rail and air.
- Relatively good public transport infrastructure.

- An extensive rights of way network exists in the area.
- High landscape quality so close to London including the Grand Union Canal, country parks, Burnham Beeches and other countryside attractions.
- The Olympics in 2012 (including Dorney Lake).

Actions 2009-2013

The Vision of the Rural Development Forum is:

“To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside”.

We can confirm that the key issues identified in the original application are still those on which we continue to focus. These are listed below together with current projects that will be pursued during 2009 and those we plan to pursue in the future. These projects relate to the opportunities highlighted on pages 5-7.

It should be noted that this is a live document and projects will move from ‘future intentions’ to ‘current projects’ over the period between 2009 -2013. In addition other projects will be added to this action plan as new opportunities arise over the next 4.5 years. This document will be updated on an annual basis by the Rural Development Officer.

A Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe

Current projects

Security on farms. Gather local information on costs & issues, develop solutions. Develop relationship with the police.

Training and skills. Signpost farmers to RBAT and other training courses

Filming on farms. Develop a database of farms. Promote to location managers. Promote to farms with recent examples. Organise a farmers training & awareness day

Disposal of fallen stock. Investigate local opportunities for collaboration.

Support applications for *grants for diversification projects* at ***** Farm. (Restoration & Adaptation of farm buildings, Renewable energy production)

Maintain *database* of farmers, contact all on database as soon as a grant or other opportunity becomes available.

Links with local authorities. Arrange councillors from one local authority to visit a farm. If successful, expand to cover other local authorities.

Encourage the integration of *biodiversity, recreation and landscape* into farming practices. Promote work of FWAG and LEAF. Signpost farmers and landowners / managers to Environmental Stewardship schemes.

Create *fish refuge and habitat enhancements* at ***** Farm using farm business as sub contractors if appropriate.

Conservation grazing. Promote the area to the London conservation grazing ring and try to ensure that viability of farming is a core consideration in the emerging scheme.

Future intentions

Support applications for *grants for diversification projects* at:

- ***** Farm. (Restore water mill to provide electricity for the household and business)
- ***** Farm. (Dairy, butchery and shop)
- ***** Farm. (Restore barn to bring back into productive use)
- ***** Farm. (Expand stables & livery facilities. Angling facilities)
- ***** Farm – (Butchery facilities, smallholder services)
- ***** Farms – (Fishing clubhouse)
- ***** Farm - (Restore barn to make available for public use).
- ***** Farm – (Chicken and/or pig cutting room)
- ***** Farm (anaerobic digestion)
- ***** d Farm – to add value by growing high value medicinal herbs and processing on farm.

Make contact with the National Trust and open discussions to engage them with preserving the English country landscape on the edge of London

Respond to *minerals consultation process* to make the case for restoration back to agriculture when extraction is completed.

Identify opportunities to *improve livery facilities* e.g. provision of bridleways between liveries and riding areas, so that riders can travel safely.

Land use survey. Map current farmland along similar lines of Chilterns AONB surveys.

Lobby to bring *damaged, derelict and abandoned sites* back into agricultural or community use. Use existing documents and local knowledge to map un-used areas. Identify landowners.

Promote the benefits of on farm *anaerobic digestion* to farmers and assist with development where an interest has been shown.

Following the BucksCC review of their agricultural estate, investigate options to establish a *conservation tenancy* on one (or more) of the farms.

B Local Food to Local Markets (a co-operative approach)

Current projects

Increase the *range of local food available* at countryside attractions e.g. Black Park Café and Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre.

Help and support ***** *Farm Shop's* move to adjacent larger and better equipped building.

Cutting room and packaging facility. Secure funding for a feasibility study on options for site(s).

Help & support the ***** *Farm* to obtain grants for their small veg box scheme that supports homeless women.

Advised ***** about the availability of grants to sell produce direct to the public.

Future intentions

New farm shops. Support farmers to develop opportunities where gaps have been identified.

Establish links with *food initiatives in neighbouring urban areas* e.g. Slough food festival, Maidenhead and Ealing transition towns, Hammersmith community gardens, school food matters.

Establish the *Wild Food project*, a wild food hub with demonstration kitchen and wild food garden targeting deprived areas in Hillingdon and Slough.

The Olympics in 2012, develop opportunities for local food procurement.

Support ***** ***** *tea rooms* to obtain planning permission and help them submit grant application.

Make contact with *local pubs/restaurants* to take surplus stock from food distribution scheme for 'specials boards' etc.

Add value. Help develop and submit applications for funding support for projects to include:

- Apple Juice at ***** Farm
- Cheese at ***** Farm
- Dairy processing at ***** Farm.

Expand range. Help develop and submit applications for funding support for projects to include:

- Chickens and speciality eggs at ***** Farm.

Support ***** farms with *improvements at pick your own farm shops*

- Customer facilities
- Polytunnel for table top strawberries

C Woodland management

Current projects

Development of ***** ***** ***** :

- Establish as a centre of woodfuel supply for the locality.
- Promote as an exemplar throughout the South East and surrounding counties. Link with the Chiltern Wood Fuel Forum as a hub and demonstration area.

- Develop as a strategic link in the wood fuel supply chain to promote wood fuel to new developments.
- Link with existing business at Great Missenden and investigate options for Harmondsworth Moor Country Park as a strategic reserve to dry logs then transport chips to ***** .

Build *database* of woodland owners, contact all on database as soon as a grant or other opportunity becomes available.

Promote the services of the *Chiltern Woodland Project* and other advisory services to woodland owners.

Foraging and survival courses. Contact '*****' and similar companies to discuss requirements for bases near London. Put them in touch with owners of suitable woodlands. Identify infrastructure improvements needed to allow activities to take place. Help them obtain planning permission where necessary and advise on health & safety aspects.

***** *Farm* – advise of grants available for the management of ***** Wood and ***** Wood.

Future intentions

***** *Woodland trail.* Develop and submit funding application for improvements and promotion of ***** Woodland trail..

Hedgerow surveys and improvements. Identify potential areas for a pilot project with a view to submitting an application to DEFRA hedgerow survey funding stream.

Build a database of *woodland contractors and equipment.* Make this available to woodland owners.

Following on from the *woodland study* in Denham Parish recruit and train a volunteer to undertake a similar exercise in other parishes.

Create new *woodlands at Harmondsworth Moor.* 2 ha at area 10. Southern half of area 4 (2 ha)

Obtain sustainable forest certification for Black Park Country Park.

Forest machinery co-operative. Feasibility study.

Following options appraisal for BucksCC countryside sites. Assist with development of *county owned woodland* sites.

Springhall Farm- Assist with tree planting grant.

D Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep

Current projects

Growing in schools. Devise an education programme to empower young people to gain skills and knowledge in growing their own food, selling it and making informed

decisions about their food choice by removing barriers to accessing locally produced healthy food.

Research options and undertake a community consultation on the future community use of *field at Richings Park* adjacent to the M25.

Apple day. Assist Iver Heath parish church/Home Cottage Farm in running event in October 2010 and assist with fundraising as required.

Walks & community events. Support farmers to organise, promote and run community events on farms. Examine opportunities to connect farmers and churches to organise a barn nativity and/or harvest festival on a farm. Organise events to engage people, raise awareness and understanding of the issues affecting the rural urban fringe.

Agricultural Support Volunteers. Continue recruitment, management, support and training for volunteers

Highlight and *raise awareness* amongst local residents and local & regional decision makers of the work that is being undertaken through press releases, websites and articles in community publications

Badger hide at Ruislip Woods. Help submit funding application to convert redundant building.

Continue to develop the *Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre* as a central information point for countryside attractions in the park.

Lottery landscape partnership. Work with partners to agree a project and submit an application to the Lottery.

Assist *Hounslow Community Farming Association* with grants to cover start up costs.

Future intentions

School visits to farms, woodlands and other countryside sites. Help improve facilities to make more attractive for schools to include:

- Education room at ***** Farm
- Education Officer at Ruislip Woods
- Classroom at the CVP Visitor Centre
- Convert courtyard to education facility at ***** Farm
- Education facilities at ***** Farm
- Visitor Centre for school visits at ***** farms
- ***** Farm – support the expansion of educational programme targeting teenagers.
- ***** – the creation of a sensory garden to benefit the local community.

Adult education. Link the county programmes with local farmers. e.g. workshop led by farmers on growing at horticultural/gardening courses

Seek funding to design and install *interpretation along public footpaths* running across farmland raising awareness of how farming works and where people can purchase local produce.

Link in with *nationally promoted events* E.g. Be nice to nettles week, Farmhouse breakfast week, Open Farm Sunday and Apple Day

Access to Nature. Link to funding applications in neighbouring urban areas to offer people a taste of the countryside on their doorstep. Develop 'your countryside needs you' application to increase community involvement with local countryside sites.

Traditional *countryside management services*. Build list of local contractors and signpost smallholders and community land management organisations to local services.

Picture the Past. Develop and submit application to the Lottery 'your heritage' scheme to re-visit the 1983 photo study, repeating the exercise and evaluating changes that have taken place over time. Involve local people in discovering more about landscape change and surviving historic landscapes.

Investigate options and feasibility to establish a *Farm Park* on the edge of London.

Care Farms highlight the opportunities offered through establishing a care farm.

E Tourism & day visits (opportunities for farmers, foresters, growers)

Current projects

***** *Farm* - Looking to increase the number of visitors to farm, following a fall in numbers last year. Also seeking ways in which education can be further developed.

Future intentions

***** *Farm* - would like to make a year around attraction, rather than just seasonal.

Seize opportunities for local farms to benefit from the *Olympics* e.g. on farm caravan/camping/mobile home sites

Produce a strategy to *promote the Colne Valley Park* as a tourism/day visits venue. Promote local farm and countryside attractions

Bed and breakfast. Assist farmers with diversification proposals to cater for Heathrow, Brunel University and business meetings as a unique alternative to a 'Travelodge' style room and urban B&B's.

Partnerships and Management

Current projects

RDF Executive. Organise quarterly meetings.

Rural Development Forum. Organise meeting in November/December to engage farmers and woodland owners, provide support and develop collaborative projects.

Newsletter and communication. Produce and circulate quarterly newsletters. Email updates of funding and other opportunities as they arise.

Collaboration. Look at opportunities for cross boundary partnership working, particularly with the Chilterns AONB

External consultations and surveys. Respond as appropriate with reference to the vision of the Rural Development Forum

Ensure *sustainability* of rural economy support. Engage with the Colne Valley Partnership, local authorities and other key partners.

Appendix 1 SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to vast population with high spending power • Quality of the countryside close to London– historic parkland, farmland, woodland & waterscapes. • focussed on natural landscape and rural urban fringe rather than “artificial administrative boundaries” • Longstanding cross-boundary partnerships exist – over 40 years of partnership working • Long term Groundwork involvement in facilitating cross boundary projects. • History of involvement of farmers with the Colne Valley Park. • Robust history of educational and visitor centre use/opportunities. • Local history of horticulture e.g. Coxes Apple, Feltham Pea • Diverse rural enterprise. CVP has fruit, veg, meat, dairy. • Long standing history of filming industry – Pinewood Studios (and Denham). 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of involvement from woodland owners to date. • Public perception of quality of countryside in some areas “its not the Cotswolds” • 8 x LAs, 3 x Govt regions. Even national organisations are split regionally • Disjointed planning across LA boundaries • CVP concept held together by a voluntary agreement and key partners and people. • Not having National Trust, RSPB or other big not for profit coherent landowner involved. • Green Belt policy could weaken opportunities for sensitive diversification • Holding and neglecting land for potential future development or sale value. • High land prices and poor returns make it difficult for new entrants into farming. • High house prices for local workers
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Development forum providing a long term vision & delivery structure. Opportunity for sustainability of farming, forestry & growing. • RDS could act as a regional/European focus on R/U fringe business and land management. • The Gateway to England’s Countryside for London and Heathrow. Massive tourism/day visit opportunities • Use of derelict/disused land (e.g. grazing, short rotation coppice) • Opportunity to engage with supply chains • Surrounded by affluent areas-people willing to pay extra for what we can supply • Some strong and lively parish councils with plans and sound structures • Farmers and growers wanting to work together. Creativity of farmers • Potential future change in Green Belt policy. What will happen? Well managed =Opportunity. Badly managed = Threat 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure on land for farmers and landowners? More money available by selling or developing. • Decline of farming, particularly on R/U fringe • Gravel extraction leading to a loss in agricultural and/or amenity land. • Development proposals. Motorways, airports, Railtrack, etc. • Likelihood of future urban expansion. If Green Belt policies change. need more water, gas, etc. • Heathrow growing - Poor grazing under flight path of airport. • Infrastructure development associated with Heathrow expansion. • Future disease outbreaks relating to issues of bio-security. • Increasing disconnection between people and land. • Water resources – high abstraction – development pressures – water availability – affecting biodiversity and sustainability • Current policy of disposal of farms from some local authority agricultural estates when tenancy expires.

Appendix 2

Achievements

The grant from SEEDA has been used to appoint a Rural Development Officer to build local partnerships, develop projects, facilitate grant applications and create a Local Development Strategy.

To date the officer has:

- Made *contact with over 40 farmers*, most of who are prepared to support measures to improve the promotion of their products and the development of their business.
- Created a *database* of farms by parish listing details of former farms and current working farms.
- Recruited trained and supported 3 Agricultural Support *Volunteers*. In total the project has benefited from 40 volunteer days.
- Organised a *forum meeting* with over 20 attending which developed priorities that have since been pursued by the officer
- Set up an *executive committee* of 6 who have had 8 meetings
- Drawn up and agreed *terms of reference* for the Rural Development Forum
- Undertaken *G.I.S. mapping* including current working farms, woodland cover, existing retail outlets and other relevant data to inform and help target future work.
- Ensured that the *vision* of the Rural Development Forum has been adopted as a new fifth key aim by the Colne Valley Partnership. (The other four key aims relate to Landscape, Resist Urbanisation, Biodiversity and Recreation)
- Submitted, or helped submit, *25 grant applications/projects* to the value of £366,785,
- Had approval for projects to the value of £310,655. With £175,906 of projects still awaiting a decision from funders.
- Facilitated the development of a *local food distribution* scheme, Colne Valley Foods.

Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe

- *Pinewood Nurseries* – advised & supported grant application to install energy saving thermal screens for greenhouses.

Local Food To Local Markets

Collated, analysed and published results of the Rural Development Forum survey on *public demand for local food*.

- Facilities and venue. Researched *distribution depot* venues and analyse pros and cons of each.
- Prepared a clear brief and appointed consultants to undertake a *feasibility study* on local food distribution options.
- Produced a costed *business plan* for agreed option.
- Agreed an *organisational structure and legal form* for the chosen distribution scheme option. Established the enterprise.

- *Submitted application(s) for start up grant for revenue and capital costs. Which included ongoing revenue costs to be degressive over the first few years while the business*
- Created *publicity material* promoting farmers / growers and their produce in the local landscape that can be used locally. This included a display on local food and where it can be obtained. Exhibited at the CVP Visitor Centre with a tour around other countryside sites, community buildings and town/village/countryside festivals and events.
- Groundwork purchased equipment to enable the friends of the CVP and other volunteers to *promote local food and sell local produce at community events* and festivals.
- *Evaluated the success* of September farmers market and family activities. Plan similar event(s) in 2010. Research costs and write funding application(s).

Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep

- Researched options and undertook a community consultation on the future community use of *field at Richings Park* adjacent to the M25.
- *Apple day*. Assisted Iver Heath parish church/Home Cottage Farm in running an event in October 2009.
- *Open Farm Sunday*. Identified farms willing to participate in 2010, outlined activities, promotion and costs. Engaged wider community and other farmers.
- *Community herb garden*. Created garden. Organised a community/volunteer planting day, produce a management plan.
- *School visits to farms*. Submitted funding application(s) to cover Groundwork education officer time who liaised with schools and support farmers.
- *Iver Nature Study Centre*. Developed and ran a joint education programme with Mansfield Farm.

- **Appendix 3**

Colne Valley Park
Rural Development Forum

Terms of reference

The Vision of the Rural Development Forum is:
“To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside”

Five key issues have been identified by local organisations, all relate to and sit under the overarching theme of the Rural Urban Fringe. These key issues are:

- A Viability of farming in the rural urban fringe
- B Local Food to Local Markets (a co-operative approach)
- C Woodland management
- D Links between local people and the countryside on their doorstep
- E Tourism & day visits (opportunities for farmers, foresters, growers)

Membership of the Colne Valley Park Rural Development Forum (RDF) will be open to all farmers, woodland owners/managers and community groups within the RDF area. In addition local authorities, parish councils, government agencies, voluntary organisations and private companies with an interest in Rural Development in the Colne Valley and surrounding areas of rural urban fringe will be eligible to attend.

The Rural Development Forum will meet annually

An Executive group will be formed with membership made up of RDF members relating to the 5 key issues.

Nominations for membership of the Executive will be submitted annually to the RDF who will elect the Executive annually.

Executive

The Executive will meet as required with a minimum of 3 meetings/year.

Executive members will be expected to attend at least 80% of meetings

Quorum will be a minimum of 3 elected members.

Elected members will have one vote each with the chair having the casting vote.

Groundwork's Rural Development Officer will attend all meetings, can advise on issues and decisions but does not have a vote.

The roles of the Executive will be to:

- Provide guidance and support to the Rural Development Officer
- Drive the production and implementation of the Local Development Strategy
- Encourage community involvement, partnership and innovation
- Develop a network for communication
- Ensure equal opportunity to obtain funding and that funding secured achieves maximum benefit for RDF area
- Advise on communication and publicity

- Review development tracker
- Ensure RDF fits into the existing structure of the Colne Valley Partnership, increase engagement of farmers, foresters and rural communities with the Colne Valley Partnership.

The role of Executive members will be to:

- Represent wider interests, present a balanced view and ensure work plans relate to the wider context.
- Network and communicate with other organisations in the sectors which they represent
- Ensure communication with other similar initiatives.

The Chair of the Executive will:

- Be elected annually by members of the Executive.
- Lead on sustainability and exit strategy
- Chair meetings of the wider Rural Development Forum
- Report to the CVP Partnership on an annual basis.