

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012  
title: CLITHEROE FOOD FESTIVAL RDPE BID  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To receive an update of the Clitheroe Food Festival bid submission to the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
  - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley, encompassing our objective to 'encourage economic development throughout the borough with a specific focus on tourism'

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A report was presented to the RVBC Community Services Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 titled: Clitheroe Food Festival Update regarding arrangements the provision of the Clitheroe Food Festival on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012, highlighting the future arrangements being made to facilitate the longer term provision of the festival events between the Council (with the in kind and financial resources that it provides to event activities) and the recently established company: Clitheroe Festival of Food Ltd, and that in addition to this support already provided a number of financial sponsors have been successfully secured to support the event.
- 2.2 The report also provided information regarding a Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) bid submission by the Council, which could provide further potential funds towards delivery of festival events through 2012 and 2013, including an additional food festival event during the Christmas trading period in 2012, and regardless of the outcome of this bid the Council had made a commitment to support the 4th August Food Festival in 2012 in the form of officer time, infrastructure and financial support, and dependant on that outcome also, proposals for the provision and budgets of future food festivals beyond this event will be revisited in partnership with the Clitheroe Festival of Food Ltd.
- 2.3 RDPE is a jointly funded programme by the European Union (EU) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The aims of the programme are to safeguard and enhance the rural environment, improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and foster sustainable and thriving rural businesses and rural economies across England. To meet European Commission requirements, programme activity is overseen and managed on a regional and local basis. In Lancashire this is undertaken by staff at DEFRA's Penrith offices and locally by an RDPE team at Lancashire County Council (LCC).

### 3 INFORMATION

- 3.1 The RDPE bid in its current form has been unsuccessful. However, discussions with RDPE representatives at both LCC and DEFRA have indicated that this position is primarily as a result of certain EU eligibility rules in connection with the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012 event, and that a more positive attitude has been taken in the bids proposals to develop and expand future festival events and activities which can support economic growth. The reasons for this current position are explained in the next sections of this report.
- 3.2 The proposals within the bid were to cover costs for the delivery of the Clitheroe Food Festivals over the single day 4th August 2012, a 2 day December 'Christmas' festival, and a 2 day August 2013 festival. It was determined by both RDPE officers within LCC and the DEFRA regional offices in Penrith that the bid in its current form could not receive funding due to concern over the European funding rules around 'additionality' and that there was limited justification as to how RDPE funding towards the delivery of the 4th August 2012 event would provide such 'additional' benefits to the funding programme as determined by these RDPE/EU rules.
- 3.3 The criteria for funding also specifies that any activities that take place on a project before an offer of funding is made will not be eligible for funding, and that all projects are appraised before any expenditure is committed. The appraisal must include justification that a) there is a clearly identified need for intervention and b) that any proposed intervention is cost effective and adds value (additionality).
- 3.4 Many applicants for funding have found the RDPE assessment and appraisal process particularly onerous and the programme teams at LCC and DEFRA Penrith also retain the right to defer grant applications where applications need further development to provide sufficient reasons for RDPE monies to be committed at any given stage, and as such many applications have been held in what's referred to as in 'pipeline' or development, as has this one at this stage.
- 3.5 Clarity has also been requested in terms of sustainability (i.e. some guarantees or evidence that the festival activities will continue once public funding has ended) this includes the support from RVBC. Otherwise, whether RVBC would continue to support or underwrite costs to deliver the festival in future years, which brings forward the dilemma that if RVBC can do this why the need for RDPE money.
- 3.6 The England Rural Development Programme documents specify that there are opportunities to improve the services offered and make rural tourism more sustainable, e.g. by forging better links between the businesses and their local environmental and cultural assets (including food and drink), and by encouraging collaboration and more effective use of ICT. All of these aspects can be strengthened and supported by the development and delivery of food festival events and other tourism support activities currently happening in Ribble Valley.
- 3.7 Rural tourism activity is fundamentally linked to the local environmental, landscape and heritage offer. As such, sustainable tourism is a priority area of development for rural tourism in England. Designated land, such as National Parks, indicates landscapes of national importance and therefore where there are in particular wider public benefits from managing visitor impacts sustainably and effectively. In addition, some regions have identified fragile environments as being especially vulnerable to visitor impacts.

- 3.8 Encouragement of rural tourism activities is also important for rural employment. Rural tourism can also benefit from close links with agriculture, through its role in landscape management, diversifying into provision of tourism services and through linkages with regional and local food, which form part of the offer to tourists. Encouraging collaboration between food and tourism businesses would increase local rural economic benefits, such as employment, from tourism. Regions have also identified specific rural tourism business needs, such as increased use of ICT.
- 3.9 Currently, evidence suggests events, together with the Ribble Valley Food Trail, have the potential to give the borough a regional and even national reputation as a food destination and so help support the Council's regeneration and tourism aspirations. However, much of this evidence can be subjective or anecdotal indications that these activities can continue to support the sustainable growth in both tourism and the food and drink sectors without continuing financial and resource intervention from public sources (i.e. RVBC and RDPE), and therefore a robust approach is required to monitoring and evaluating future activities in order to substantiate this.
- 3.10 An option remains to revise the bid to cover future activities and events over 2012 and 2013 with the further suggestion that a revised application incorporates robust monitoring and evaluation of these in order to examine development opportunities as well as their future viability and sustainability. These opportunities and proposals for the provision of the planned future food festivals, including budgets, will be revisited in partnership with Clitheroe Festival of Food Company Ltd and reported back to this committee regarding these future developments.

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background Papers: -

1. Clitheroe Food Festival report to Community Services Committee (22 May 2012)
2. Clitheroe Food Festival report to Community Services Committee (8 November 2011)
3. RDPE funding bid for Clitheroe Food Festival
4. Pennine Lancashire Local Development Strategy (RDPE)

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.