



# Cheshire East Rural Action Plan

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## Introduction

As part of delivering its Corporate Plan outcomes, the Council has undertaken to build a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. The Rural Action Plan builds upon previous work by the Council to support its Rural area, identifying actions for the period 2019 to 2022. It is intended that this plan will provide a framework that supports consideration of policy and strategic direction for the rural area, positioning the Council to be able to respond to changes at national and local level.



## Background and context

**Cheshire East is defined by the Rural Services Network SPARSE classification as a council considered 'predominantly rural', while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'. Whatever the definition, the rural aspect of Cheshire East is significant in terms of population, economic impact and its contribution to the borough's Quality of Place. It helps to define the character of the place, but brings with it both the constraints and opportunities that are peculiar to rural areas.**

The quality of its natural environment and excellent location, combined with factors such as high educational attainment and employment opportunities, ensure that Cheshire East is a place offering a high quality of life to its residents and is an attractive place to do business; a place where people want to live, work and visit. Cheshire East was traditionally, and remains in many places, a rural area, with agriculture (particularly dairy) and land-based industries, a network of generally prosperous villages and mid-sized market towns serving as important service and functional centres.

Alongside their roles as retail, commercial, educational and leisure focal points, these places historically developed specialisms, including extractive industries, chemicals and silk.

During the decade to 2010 rural areas achieved higher rates of growth in numbers of businesses and jobs than any other category in England. Stewardship of the rural environment is central to achieving this balance between economic growth and environmental and societal wellbeing. Rural economies have demonstrated their potential to provide more growth and employment if given appropriate stimuli and support from national and local business leaders or policy makers.

In general, although rural areas can have lower unemployment than urban areas, rural wages can often be lower, especially those in agriculture and tourism where their seasonal nature can affect earnings. When combined in areas – predominantly rural – with higher house and fuel prices, the result can in some cases lead to instability of income levels or even pockets of deprivation. One of the priorities can therefore be to seek to increase employment opportunities, reduce seasonality and champion the creation of better-paid wages in certain sectors.

English rural areas contributed £211 billion to the UK economy in 2010. It is not surprising that key sectors are focussed on the land and landscape: agriculture, tourism, forestry and renewable energy. However, only 16% of rural businesses are involved in agriculture, forestry or fishing. Creative and digital industries also account for a significant proportion of businesses. Other areas of potential growth include renewable energy generation; advanced manufacturing and engineering; logistics; food and drink manufacturing, agri-tech and bio-renewables; financial and professional services and healthcare technology.

The economy in rural areas plays an important role in Cheshire East. The rural area boasts a diverse industry base and the Council continues to play an important role in taking forward rural economic strategy in the sub-region. As well as traditional large scale dairy and land-based enterprises, there are significant tourism businesses, creative & digital industries, distribution, and technology businesses as just some examples. Traditional land based businesses, the wider countryside, its rural tourism assets and events form an important part of the 'Cheshire' brand.





There is a significant value in the area's natural capital and character, and the contribution of farming and land management should not be underestimated or forgotten. It is after all what underpins our rural character, environment and communities, contributing to **'quality of place'**, which is accepted as an economic attribute, supporting locational decisions and investment in the area. It has been argued that those places with strong **'quality of place'** attributes can stand out from their competitors and therefore stand a better chance of landing new investment and skilled workers. An **'emotional connection'** to a place can become as important as more rational, number-driven determinants, particularly for knowledge workers. Cheshire East's rural character offers these attributes.



The agri-food sector in Cheshire East is well developed and diverse. This sector comprises of a range of companies from large scale food manufacturers and animal feed businesses, to dairy operators, salad producers and small scale operations (including traditional cheese producers, farm shops, breweries and distilleries). Cheshire East's food and drink sector is recognised by Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) being identified through the Northern Independent Economic Review as having growth potential for Cheshire and Warrington. Like the visitor economy, agri-food is an important sector in Cheshire East's economy based in rural areas.



Although representing a relatively small portion of the district's economic output (in terms of GVA), they both employ a high number of people and are important to the character of the area and its **'Quality of Place'**.

The Council has a direct involvement in agricultural land through the Cheshire Farms Service, which was created to manage the agricultural estates of both Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council on their formation as unitary authorities in 2009. Cheshire East Council retains an Estate of approximately 5,000 acres with a range of entry level farm types and sizes, providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture.

Land management industries are important to Cheshire but the economy in rural areas reaches far beyond this in terms of jobs, enterprises and output. The rural areas are now home to a wide range of non-land based businesses that appreciate the rural setting, including professional services and digital/creative. The **'Science Corridor'** in Cheshire East has many businesses based in rural locations with particular strengths in advanced scientific analysis and research, pharmaceuticals R&D, energy and radio-astronautics and astronomy. Alongside strategic employment sites based in a rural setting such as Alderley Park, Radbroke Hall, Waters(Wilmslow) and Jodrell Bank, the rural

area supports a diverse economy of SMEs and micro-businesses. Beyond the strategic sites, agri-food and the visitor economy remain the most visibly significant rural-based sectors, but with the development of high-speed broadband coverage, professional, knowledge based, creative and digital businesses are also important. Self-employment in the rural area (at 14.2%) is higher than in urban areas and higher than the national average.

Furthermore, Cheshire East's Visitor Economy (currently worth circa £921million, supporting over 11,000 fte jobs) is forecast to grow with potential to reach £1bn by 2020. The rural offer (and its related heritage) is a very important component of our visitor economy and there

are opportunities to improve destination management, increase the availability of quality accommodation, develop business tourism and exploit specialist sector based experiences (including filming and events) to allow the sector's contribution to increase and maintain a competitive position.

However, the rural economy does not sit in isolation from other factors: Planning, affordable housing, public transport, access to health facilities, education, older people's services, fuel poverty, viable local services, character/quality of environment and community engagement are all part of an associated matrix. Key areas for consideration in respect to the rural economy are:



- **Planning:** Positive planning allows rural communities to adapt and thrive. This must offer policies that reflect local circumstances and provide a workable planning system, which both engages and gains the trust of rural communities. The use of neighbourhood plans and supplementary planning guidance may be appropriate tools in some circumstances.
- **Quality/character of environment:** quality of place can be a significant factor in locational decisions to live, work or invest, providing an **'emotional connection'** and it is essential to visitor economy success. Prosperous places are supported by their inherent environmental, cultural or heritage characteristics.
- **Affordable Housing:** Rural communities need to be places where people from a range of age groups and backgrounds can live. Housing affordability is therefore a key concern with a need for affordable homes to meet the needs of rural communities, the economy in rural areas and address the issue of key workers. This needs to be addressed within the context of compliance with adopted planning policies.
- **Public transport:** Suitable public transport links are important to helping small businesses access markets or making it practical for employees to seek work in rural communities. Transport can also bring customers and tourists to local rural businesses such as shops, hotels and B&Bs. National research shows that 42% of households in rural areas had a regular bus service close-by compared to 96% of urban households.
- **Tackling fuel poverty:** Rural areas have a high proportion of households in fuel poverty, with many off the mains gas network or living in solid wall homes.
- **Viable village services:** Local services such as village shops, pubs and post offices are at the heart of functioning communities, as well as offering a lifeline to many vulnerable residents. Investment in local services not only benefits communities but also employee recruitment and new business development.
- **Schools:** Small and rural schools are important in functioning rural communities.
- **Broadband and mobile connectivity:** Rural businesses and communities need to share in the opportunities available with fast broadband services.
- **Road Network:** There is a strong interdependence between rural and urban economies. Urban centres are often major markets for rural based businesses and many rural residents work in local urban areas. Therefore, in order to realise the true potential of the rural economy, connectivity needs to be reduced as a barrier to trade and economic growth between urban and rural areas. The added benefit of good transport services is that it will attract visitors and their spending power to rural economies.
- **Climate change:** Cheshire East is a highly rural area and the Council owns or manages a range of agricultural and rural land holdings. This Council therefore has the potential to make a significant contribution to meeting both the Borough's and thus the wider UK's climate change targets.





## Developing a Rural Action Plan

Just fewer than 180,000 people, half of the Cheshire East population, live in rural communities including the rural towns. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meets the needs of rural communities. The rural area is also part of Cheshire East's 'quality of place', contributing to economic well-being by offering characteristics that are part of the area's distinctiveness. Studies have shown how quality of place influences locational decisions with innovators and entrepreneurs attracted to creative, cultural and beautiful places.





A draft Rural Strategy Action Plan was produced in 2014 following review and consultation, but was not formally approved. This was superseded by the **'Where Rural Communities Matter'** document in early 2015 which outlined a number of key actions. After reviewing the success of this approach there is a need for a new rural action plan to ensure there is one clear delivery plan with agreed timelines and accountability. This will ensure that Rural Strategy will link to other key strategies and outcomes rather than being separate from them.

Building on this approach, Cheshire East Council's rural action plan is set in the context of how existing strategies deliver on the rural agenda and at the same time, helping to identify those gaps that need to be addressed in the future. There is also a need to consider the role of the rural agenda in informing the Council's Economic Strategy and to look at future funding arrangements in the round, including the Shared Prosperity Fund and any changes to arrangements for agriculture and the environment.

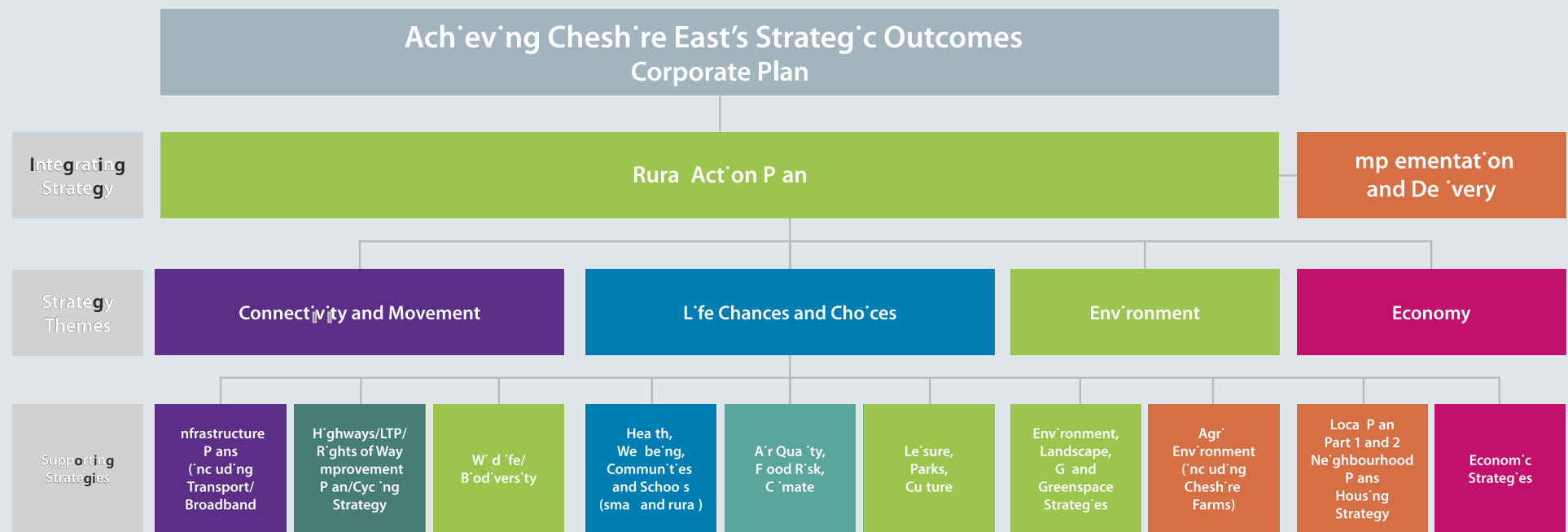
Both national and local Environment Strategies are also of significance in influencing the rural agenda. While future national funding arrangements are currently unclear, it is possible that they may reflect a broader understanding of those aspects that shape the character and nature of the rural area and will be of significance in how the rural action plan is delivered.

In the meantime, a number of Council strategies and plans that relate to the rural principles or priorities have been identified and their contribution audited against four themes of connectivity, life chances and choices, environment and economy. It is hoped that this framework will guide consideration of policy and strategic direction.

The diagram on the next page illustrates how a framework provides a cross-cutting approach to considering and integrating actions from a range of relevant strategies and plans, providing the basis for developing a Rural action plan. It is not intended to replace or take precedence over these strategies, but rather to allow consideration of how these may impact on the rural area or rural affairs.

The overall aim of the plan is to help inform strategic choices as part of meeting the Council's strategic outcomes and identify priorities regarding the rural area. This is based on the Council's existing strategies and plans along with their related evidence base. It does not replace those strategies and plans, but rather provides a rural focus on them to help decision makers ensure that the rural community, economy and environment are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions. This is part of an ongoing process that needs to be able to adapt to reflect changes.





## Strategic Actions 2018/19-2021/22

**This action plan provides a cross-cutting approach, reflecting the plans and strategies of the Council and the work of partners in delivery. It is aimed at anyone interested in the wellbeing of rural Cheshire East, helping to inform decision makers and policy makers from public, private or voluntary sectors, community groups, wider stakeholders and individuals. The plan is intended to be a flexible resource that reflects the Council's aspirations and enables people and groups to be engaged.**

Since **'Where Rural communities matter'** was published, the Council has continued to engage in further research, scoping and consultation. A working group representing services across the Council has drawn on this experience and identified a number of key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic priority issues:

**Rural Connectivity**

**Rural Economy**

**Rural Communities:  
Life chances and choices**

**Rural Environment**





## 'Where rural communities matter'

Here are some of the key actions and progress since 'Where rural communities matter' was published in 2015.

- Successful bids for LEADER funding and Rural Growth Funding, which to date has led to a £868,481.27 investment in rural projects with a total value of £2,173,676.33 overall in just under a three year period. Appendix 1 provides case studies on some of the businesses supported by this programme
- Continued growth in the Visitor economy and a strategic focus on a distinctive rural tourism offer.
- Successful development of a Food Enterprise Zone at Reaseheath College through a Local development Order.
- 31.7% of premises can receive ultrafast broadband above 100Mbps, and 94.3% of premises receive superfast broadband above 30Mbps
- Support for resident led Neighbourhood Plans, with 18 Plans having now been 'made' including 11 in primarily rural parishes.

- Local Plan strategy adopted
- Landscape partnership project developed with National Trust in the northern part of the Borough.
- Regular Town and Parish Council Conferences and engagement with ChALC.
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan adopted.
- Local Transport Plan & Cycling Strategy in place.
- Connected Communities e newsletter, circulated to over 4000 email addresses every 2 months, shares stories and promotes activities and events.
- 'Healthy walks' projects for areas around Crewe, Congleton and Knutsford.
- The Participatory Budgeting initiative in 2016 enabled community groups to bid for funding for innovative local projects. Over 70 local groups and organisations across the Cheshire East area obtained an overall total of £370,000 for projects that addressed health inequalities

No.	Priority Issues (not necessarily in priority order)	Rural Connectivity	Rural Economy	Rural Community	Rural Environment
1	Digital Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile	✓	✓	✓	
2	Access for residents, businesses and visitors	✓	✓	✓	
3	Rural Housing		✓	✓	✓
4	Strong, supportive rural places and communities		✓	✓	
5	Neighbourhood planning	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Planning for a green and sustainable place		✓	✓	✓
7	Visitor & Cultural Economy	✓	✓	✓	
8	Rural Based Businesses	✓	✓	✓	





# Rural Action Plan 2018/19-2021/22

## 1 Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Percentage of premises having access to superfast broadband

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
1.1	Deliver the Digital 2020: Digital support programme to support businesses to maximise the benefits of enhanced digital infrastructure	CEC Growth & Enterprise	Up to spring 2020
1.2	Promote access to rural connectivity schemes. Manage the award of vouchers	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
1.3	Contribute to delivery of a sub regional digital strategy ( including creative & digital sector business)	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/ LEP	2019 21



## 2 Access for residents, business and visitors

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Percentage of households within 400m of a bus stop served by a scheduled bus service
- Maintain Public Rights of Way so that at least 80% of the network is classed as easy to use
- Secure and deliver new and improved public access routes where funding opportunities arise, including through development proposals, where possible, to improve access for residents, business and visitors

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
2.1	Adoption of the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) which considers all areas of the borough and includes a local area profile	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.2	Development of Town Plans for each key service centre and principal towns, which will also encompass the surrounding rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019-23
2.3	Development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for Wilmslow, Congleton and Macclesfield that look at the towns and surrounding areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.4	Review of Little Bus service to ensure the service works efficiently for the borough as a whole including rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.5	Deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan: 2011-2026 through 4 yearly implementation plans. The current plan expires in 2019. Delivery of a plan after 2019 will be in line with the Local Transport Plan and related strategies (such as Green Infrastructure, Cycling Strategy and Local Plan)	Public Rights of Way/CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019-26



### 3 Rural Housing

#### Indicative performance indicators:

- Increase the provision of affordable homes on rural exceptions sites by 10% by 2021

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
3.1	Exploring opportunities to provide affordable housing to enable local residents to remain living within their communities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacting and working with rural communities who have identified a need for affordable housing within their Neighbourhood plans</li> <li>• Update our Rural Housing Enabling Guide</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities to develop rural exception sites</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for Community Led Housing Projects</li> </ul>	CEC Strategic Housing & Spatial Planning. Parish Councils.	2018 20  2019  2018 21 2019 20
3.2	Put in place up to date planning policy and guidance to support the provision of rural housing, including for essential rural workers, primarily through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020 21



## 4 Strong, supportive rural places and communities

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Monitor through the Public Health Commissioned services scorecard
- Annual review of the 'tartan' rug which will provide an overview of health and wellbeing in all wards including rural.
- Monitor through uptake of the commissions to support resilience and independence eg carers hub, early help framework, emotionally healthy child and young people programme and CVS contracts.

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
4.1	Support local communities to identify assets that are important to them, and promote the Register of Assets of Community Value as a means of recognising their value and potential for sale to community groups	CEC Communities, Legal, & Assets; Parish Councils; VCFS	2019-21
4.2	Improve health and wellbeing in the Borough by building on the distinctive strengths and characteristics of the towns and villages within Cheshire East, by encouraging and supporting Town Partnerships to help meet these outcomes	CEC Communities Team & Public Health Team, Town Partnerships, Parish Councils, VCFS	2019-21
4.3	Develop and support rural neighbourhood partnerships, which bring local people together to address the needs of the community and work collaboratively to improve their shared offer	CEC Communities Team, Parish Councils, VCF Sector Groups, Police, Health, CFRS,	2019-21
4.4	Create a place that supports health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire East, e.g. by increasing the number of people who use outdoor space for exercise/health reasons	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS,	2019-21
4.5	Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people, by assessing the levels of loneliness and social isolation in rural areas across the borough	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2019-21
4.6	Enable more people to Live Well for Longer through collaborative health and wellbeing campaigns that involve rural places	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2019-21
4.7	To progress the structured dialogue with rural schools to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of collaborative working are fully promoted and utilised	CEC Education /Schools	2019
4.8	To work collaboratively with the Regional Schools Commissioner and Diocese to ensure that identified rural schools receive appropriate levels of support and challenge which leads to improved outcomes for learners	CEC Education / Regional Schools Commissioner/ Diocese	2019
4.9	Utilising the knowledge and experience of 6.9 and 6.10 below, the Council will work with the Boroughs' schools, academies, colleges and associated partners to develop appropriate resources, practical educational and volunteering opportunities to ensure that Climate Change is incorporated into the wider curricula for young people and volunteers	CEC Education /Schools	2019 -22



## 5 Neighbourhood planning

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Number of resident-led Neighbourhood Plans 'made' in primarily rural parishes

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
5.1	Continue to support local councils in putting in place Neighbourhood Development Plans that help shape their areas and enhance quality of life in rural communities	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21
5.2	Support communities to review their adopted plans to ensure they continue to align with and inform the boroughs wider rural strategy, ensuring new opportunities are captured	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21

## 6 Planning for a green and sustainable place

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Green Infrastructure plan in place
- Detailed planning policies in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment
- Environment Strategy in place
- Climate change targets on track

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
6.1	Produce an evidence based plan that identifies and guides the approach to local Green Infrastructure (GI) needs and opportunities in Cheshire East	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy, Spatial Planning /LNP/NT/NE/ other partners	2019
6.2	Conserve the Countryside Management estate and Tatton Park's natural features and biodiversity for present and future generations	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
6.3	Seek continuous improvement in standards of estate management, maintenance, husbandry, good environmental practice and stewardship of the Council's farm estate whilst providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22
6.4	Further, detailed planning policies to be put in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment (landscape, heritage and biodiversity) through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020-21
6.5	Neighbourhood plans help to identify locally distinct habitats and landscapes which should be subject to specific protection and/or policies that positively manage the impact of local land use decisions and, where possible, farming practices in particular	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21
6.6	Prepare a Minerals and Waste Local Plan to ensure the proper planning and management of the Borough's natural resources	CEC Spatial Planning	2020-21
6.7	Review and amend supplementary planning guidance to ensure that the design and appearance of rural areas is maintained. This could include further guidance on the Best & Most Versatile agricultural land, landscape character, green infrastructure and biodiversity	CEC Spatial Planning	2021-22
6.8	Prepare an Environment Strategy that will provide the Council with a framework to help protect and enhance the environment and improve residents' quality of life, related to the natural and built environment of the borough and addressing transport, energy & carbon, waste and minerals	CEC Place Directorate	2019
6.9	Over the period, the Council will review its agricultural land holdings and on-going work with farm tenants to: (1.1) Optimise Opportunities to improve soil and livestock management practices. (1.2) Identify appropriate grassland and rough pasture released by (1.1) for tree and hedge planting. (1.3) Review the terms and conditions of all new tenancies on Cheshire East Farms, as they become available, to facilitate (1.1) and (1.2) above	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22
6.10	The Council will review (either through its own land ownership practice or with appropriate land owners and Natural England) the effective maintenance and restoration of peatland areas in Cheshire East, including the nationally designated Nature Improvement Area (Meres and Mosses) south of Crewe	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22

## 7 Visitor and cultural economy

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Cheshire East visitor economy worth £1bn by 2020
- Number/value of rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme
- Completion of the 'Twin trails' Tourism Growth project

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
7.1	Visitor Economy Strategy 2016-20 includes a focus on developing a distinctive rural tourism offer supported by website and social media activity	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019-20
7.2	Visitor Economy Forum and Cultural Forum support the delivery of visitor economy strategy and Cultural framework with cross-sector groups	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, other partners	2019-20
7.3	Residents Festival - Cheshire East attractions engaged with providing free tickets as promotional incentives	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019-20
7.4	Manage Discover England and other strategic funding projects relevant to rural business such as Gardens & Gourmet, Cultural destinations and Brilliant science	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019
7.5	Manage and monitor rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy / CWaC/LEP	2019-20
7.6	Delivery of twin trails Tourism Growth project (Sandstone and Gritstone trails)	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, CWaC	2019
7.7	Continued delivery of Rural Touring Network to support cultural priorities as part of Cultural framework	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy , CWaC	2019-21
7.8	Seek further opportunities to support economic benefit to rural areas from events as part of Strategic Events Framework	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
7.9	Seek further opportunities to develop and support rural tourism and cultural/creative businesses including through sector deals	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
7.10	Liaison and collaborative working with Peak district to identify tourism and other opportunities of joint interest	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy / PDNP/Visit Peak District	2019-21
7.11	Put in place up-to-date planning policy to maintain and enhance the visitor economy in the rural area through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2021-21



## 8 Rural based businesses

### Indicative performance indicators:

- Number of rural businesses engaged
- Number/value of rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
8.1	Engagement programme to understand the challenges and opportunities of the rural business community	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy	2018 21
8.2	Deliver programmes to provide points of contact for rural businesses to maximise government support and finance available	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/LEP	2018 21
8.3	Manage and monitor rural business projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy /CWaC/LEP	2019 20
8.4	Collate and interpret evidence and intelligence on market failure and growth opportunities to inform strategy development	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy	2018 21
8.5	Identify existing and future skills needs of rural businesses and engaging education and skills providers to develop provision to address these needs	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
8.6	Raising the profile of the economy in Cheshire East's rural areas and related career opportunities for residents and young people	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
8.7	Positive planning policy framework to support a prosperous rural economy including sustainable rural tourism to be reinforced through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020 21



## Appendix 1

# Support for rural enterprise and the economy in rural areas LEADER Case Studies

**Following a successful bid for a LEADER funding programme (2015-2020) and Rural Growth Funding, this led to a £0.9m investment in rural projects with a total value of over £2m in just under a 3 year period.**

Cheshire East has supported the sub-regional mechanisms steering this activity and directly provided practical support, developing a tailored packages from first enquiry through to final investment decision and delivery. At a national level the Council has also been proactive providing evidence for Commissions and consultations on matters such as the rural environment, the future of farming. Cheshire East has supported work streams that included broadband connectivity, Agri-Food enterprise, visitor economy development, support for major employers in rural locations, and development of strategies to support the creative & digital sector.

A number of case studies have been developed to demonstrate the diversity of businesses in rural areas in addition to the land-based sector and to highlight the success of those businesses and the support received. Appendix 1 provides case studies on some of the businesses supported by this programme.





## Rural Business Case Study: Chestnut Meats



**“Farming is very competitive and we certainly didn’t want to be our own best secret, so increasing our business offer seemed like a very positive step to take.”**

**Tim Dobson, Chestnut Meats.**

From dairy farming to meat supplier and from a small farm to wider business enterprise, Chestnut Meats is fast becoming one of our borough’s bigger rural success stories.

Starting as a small but successful dairy farm bought from his parents in 2000, Tim Dobson, along with his wife Marnie, created Chestnut Meats in 2006.

Twelve years on, the company is an award-winning business which sells its produce through its website and farm shop, farmers’ markets, food festivals, and sources its meat through 30 different suppliers.

In that time, the business has diversified beyond its core provision of goat and kid meat to also provide other locally-sourced meats such as beef, pork, lamb and venison.

Tim says: **“Our mission has always been to be the best goat meat retailer in the UK, providing quality, consistency and innovation but we knew that in order for the farm to thrive we had to look beyond the obvious”.**

This is where Tim and Marnie were able to call upon Cheshire East Council to help them realise their plans by securing expert support and rural grant funding through the Cheshire East LEADER Programme.

The programme helped the Dobsons relocate to a purpose-built facility at Longfields Farm. The grant contributed to the renovation of an existing building on the farm to house a butchery, offices, farm shop and café.

Diversifying the business has been important to Tim and Marnie but keeping a strong sense of loyalty in how they go about their work is extremely important too.

**“We have built up a good network of local suppliers and we only ever source from welfare-friendly British farms. This is something that is very important to us and to our many loyal customers that know that they can trust in what we do,”** said Tim.





## Rural Business Case Study: **J S Bailey**



**J S Bailey Ltd are a Cheshire East-based cheese manufacturer, established in 1984 in Nantwich, by founder John Bailey. By 2000 the company had outgrown their original home in Nantwich and moved to nearby premises in Calveley.**

The business manufactures an extensive range of cheeses that are produced in a state of the art production facility supplying cheese to the catering and food services industry. This includes a range of different brands to meet the varying requirements of a growing customer base both domestically and overseas. Their product range has constantly grown to meet demand with a wide selection of continental cheeses as well as a range of popular and adventurous flavoured cheeses.

A culture of innovation has been achieved by investing in new infrastructure, equipment, processes and IT to support the core business and the local economy; creating new jobs across the business.

Through the Councils Rural Business Support Programme we identified an opportunity for J S Bailey to apply for grant funding from the Manufacturing Growth Fund to support an IT project. The successful application secured a grant of 30% towards the implementation of a back-office process integration system.

Further support has enabled the business to expand its premises to a site across the road, with a £400,000 grant from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Growth Programme.

The scheme will provide an 11,500sq ft purpose-built packing and storage facility on site to enable the business to innovate further and produce a greater volume of cheese for the home and international market this is part of an ambitious £1.5m growth project.



## Rural Business Case Study: OverWater Marina

**OverWater is an outstanding award winning marina set in the beautiful South Cheshire countryside, close to the popular canal village of Audlem. The business strives to provide a warm, friendly, family run marina that prides itself on excellent customer service and a positive impact on the environment.**

The inland marina opened for business in 2010 and features 230 berths, a boat workshop, shop and café, as well as a small certified caravan and motorhome site. The Audlem Lass Boat service (a not for profit volunteer run boat service) is also based at the marina as well as the unique OverWater Wheelyboat service.

In 2016 the marina business identified an increasing need and demand for the number of caravan pitches and holiday accommodation. Further research identified a lack of high quality tourism accommodation in the area.

With the identified gap in the market, OverWater seized the opportunity to expand its tourism offer and with the support of Cheshire East Council, navigated through the planning system and accessed rural grant funding through the Cheshire Leader Programme to bring forward a new tourism project – a new touring caravan site and bespoke holiday lodges.



## Rural Business Case Study: **Lynton Lasers**



**Lynton Lasers Ltd, based in Holmes Chapel, is the UK's leading Laser & IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) manufacturer that specialises in the manufacture and supply of aesthetic and surgical lasers to private clinics and the NHS as well as a scientific division developing laser technology to clean and preserve ancient artefacts in museums. With over 20 years experience, the business is not just renowned for developing cutting-edge products but is also leading the market in providing outstanding after-sales and customer support.**

Lynton holds a confident position in the UK marketplace, the business has invested in developing new technology to expand its product range, developing and launching Excelight & 3JUVE in preparation for accessing the export marketplace.

Cheshire East Council have supported the business with their growth objectives and with securing rural grant funding through the Cheshire Leader Programme. This included expanding into an adjacent unit to increase manufacturing space, create a bespoke clinic for an on site training facility and a new office space. The grant was used to bring the project to fruition by contributing to the renovation of both units and created five highly skilled jobs.



## Rural Business Case Study: Forest Gin



**The business was set up in 2015 by husband and wife, Karl and Lindsay Bond, a truly family company whose daughter Harriet is an expert in knowing the best spots for foraging wild bilberries and raspberries which along with Peak District spring water, moss and ferns are used to flavour their gin. Their goal is to make the best tasting gin, using the finest locally sourced ingredients where possible. The business has remained true to this aim and does as much as possible by hand – right down to the bottling in batches of 85 at a time into their unique bespoke porcelain bottle handmade in Stoke.**

In their early days, production was undertaken at home in Langley with a dream to expand and relocate into the nearby Macclesfield Forest, the source of their key ingredients, relocating to their new Forest Distillery with support of the Council.

Forest Gin is now available in a range of premium retail outlets such as Harvey Nichols stores throughout the country and The Conran Shop in London. Alongside this, Forest Gin is currently the only premium gin served by Virgin Trains' First Class Lounge in Euston, as well being the gin of choice in many of the UK's best Michelin starred restaurants.

The Council also supported the business with their growth and encouraged Karl and Lindsay to look into export opportunities for their gin and referred them to the Department for International Trade's Exporting is GREAT programme. As a result, they are now selling Forest Gin into France, Germany, Switzerland and Japan.

Further support has enabled Forest Gin to secure grant funding through the Cheshire LEADER Programme. The project is to expand the gin distillery business into whisky production with associated visitor centre.







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