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CHESHIRE EAST RURAL ACTION PLAN 2022 – 2026			
1.	Digital Connectivity: Broadband & Mobile		
	Key actions	Primary Responsibilities and other contributors	
1.1	Complete the Superfast broadband 30gb rollout and deliver related SME support	CEC Growth & Enterprise	All Superfast rollout with Openreach has been completed for some time. Activities to close contracts have been carried out and there was a dispute with Openreach regarding returned funds which delayed closure of Contract 1. This has now been resolved and Contract 1 is closed. Contract 2 is in the closure stages currently.
1.2	Continue the rollout of the Airband contract for full fibre broadband	CEC Growth & Enterprise	Airband have experienced financial difficulties and are no longer able to complete remaining development. Closing the contract and financial issues have created a complex legal position which has required external support. Our position is now cleared and the Airband contract is due to be closed shortly.
1.3	British Digital UK (BDUK) voucher top-up scheme for rural communities with less than 100mb/sec	CEC Growth & Enterprise	The voucher scheme was paused (during gigabit procurement) by BDUK which delayed rollout. The pause has now been lifted and is now underway. We have approx. 40 areas with an interest in schemes.
1.4	Support Project Gigabit – a BDUK operated scheme with scope for input/involvement by local authorities.	CEC Growth & Enterprise	Support for Gigabit and co-ordination with BDUK is underway and is having a positive impact on project progress and scope.
1.5	Deliver the Cheshire East Digital Strategy	CEC Place Directorate	The strategy is being delivered. Some aspects are behind (re Gigabit Pause) so is looking to be extended.

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1.6	Develop a Digital Inclusion Plan	CEC/Health & Wellbeing Board	Activities on Digital inclusion have started, including better co-ordination of disparate (including external) support services, procurement of a support project and recruitment of a Digital Exclusion support member who will focus on improving communications and co-ordination and developing meaningful support activities.
2.	Access for residents, business, and visitors		
	Key Actions	Primary Responsibilities and other contributors	
2.1	Adopted Local Transport Plan (LTP) addresses all areas of the borough and includes a local area profile. LTP refresh 2024: Guidance for refresh of the LTP to be published 2022, including application of LTP in rural areas.	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	Work to develop a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) is underway with a consultation on vision and objectives taking place in spring 2025. The LTP is boroughwide and considers the challenges and opportunities for rural areas. An informal reference group of elected members is established to support the preparation of the Council's LTP, including member representation for rural areas.
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	Local Transport Development Plans (which are called Town Plans on the LTP) have been produced to support the delivery of transport schemes at a local level. They have been developed for each key service centre and principal town, including surrounding rural areas.
2.3	Deliver Go-too pilot demand-responsive bus service in south-western part of Cheshire East funded by DfT Rural Mobility pilot scheme	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	Plans are underway to integrate the Go-Too pilot demand-responsive bus service (which operates in the area south and west of Nantwich) with the Council's FlexiLink service to offer a single, integrated demand responsive bus service in the borough. This will support rural communities in particular who have limited access to fixed route bus services.

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2.4	Deliver projects under the Rights of Way Improvement Plan: 2011-2026. Delivery for the period will be in line with the Local Transport Plan and related strategies (such as Green Infrastructure, Cycling Strategy and Local Plan).	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	Recruitment of a dedicated Countryside Access Development Manager in 2024, has helped provide greater focus on projects delivered under the ROWIP. These include support for Bradwall and Holmes Chapel Parish Councils in creation of permissive paths to reduce road walking and improvements on Wilmslow Footpath No. 80 as an active travel route. Delivery of a variety of other projects is ongoing.
2.5	Sustainable travel enhancement programme (STEPS)– annual capital programme of investment in schemes to promote walking or cycling for local travel.	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways/Public Rights of Way	The Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme is an annual programme of investment which includes schemes to promote sustainable and active travel. Active travel projects delivered under STEPS include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Footpath No. 2 • Stapeley Footpath No. 1 Delivery of projects is ongoing.
2.6	HS2a – implementation of mitigation and route changes	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	HS2a cancelled – proposals held on file.
2.7	Implement PROW changes and improvements related to strategic road schemes impacting on the rural area, including Middlewich bypass, Poynton relief road, A500 and SEMMMS	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	PROW changes and improvements delivered on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poynton Relief Road • South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (A6 Manchester Airport relief road) • PROW changes designed for Middlewich bypass. • A500 dualling scheme postponed
2.8	Extend provision of EV charging points to CEC car parks in rural areas as part of LEVI (local electric vehicle infrastructure fund) programme	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	Work to extend provision of EV charging points to CEC car parks in rural areas as part of LEVI (local electric vehicle infrastructure fund) programme is ongoing.

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2.9	Active travel plans to be developed in partnership with major rural employers to provide better access and reduce car dependency. Council to recruit a dedicated Active Travel officer to lead this work.	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	Work on active travel plans is ongoing with continuing business engagement with local rural employers to understand their issues and the changes that would help improve their employees access to active travel options to workplaces e.g. recent discussions with Barclays at Radbrooke Hall in Peover Superior. Plans to recruit an Active Travel officer remains in Service structure plans and this will be progressed as soon as possible to help support the work in this area.
3.	Rural Housing		
	Key Actions	Primary Responsibilities and other contributors	
3.1	<p>Exploring opportunities to provide affordable housing to enable local residents to remain living within their communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting and working with rural communities who have identified a need for affordable housing within their Neighbourhood plans. • Undertake Housing Needs Surveys across our rural parishes • Continue to explore opportunities to develop rural exception sites. • Explore opportunities for Community Led Housing Projects. 	CEC Strategic Housing & Strategic Planning/ Parish Councils.	<p>Housing Officers undertook a review of all Neighbourhood plans in 2022/23 and attended follow up meetings where interest has been shown. Unfortunately, there is little interest.</p> <p>The Rural Housing Enabler (DEFRA funded post) has also contacted Parish Councils and there has been no take up.</p> <p>We have supported the completion of 2 Housing needs surveys and continue to respond to requests. A further survey is due to commence.</p> <p>The Rural Housing Enabler has promoted Community Led Housing with Parish Councils, but there has been no interest. There have not been any groups who have registered an interest for Self-Build.</p>

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3.2	Promote and deliver sites within rural areas, via the CEC Housing Development Framework, which will deliver a mix of housing types and tenures, including affordable housing.	CEC Strategic Housing	<p>We have undertaken a mini competition through the Housing Development Framework and are working through the decision-making process (also there have been changes to the NPPF which may impact on rural exception sites)</p> <p>117 new homes have been delivered within rural areas since 2022.</p>
3.3	Develop, adopt and implement a new Housing Strategy for the borough	CEC Strategic Housing	The Interim Housing Strategy 25-28 is currently out for consultation and then will be taken forward for adoption in Summer 2025.
3.4	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 (SADPD)	CEC Strategic Planning	<p>SADPD adopted in 2022 and includes multiple policies related to rural matters, including housing and exception sites. Housing SPD completed in 2023 to provide further guidance on affordable housing policies.</p> <p>Housing attend the Rural Housing Task Group meetings to explore potential opportunities for rural housing development along with CEC Strategic Planning.</p> <p>CEC Strategic Planning Team and Housing Team are now members of the Rural Housing Enabling Group, exploring options with landowners.</p>
3.5	Secure grant funding to retrofit off-gas homes	CEC Strategic Housing	We have been successful in securing £4.95m of Home Upgrade Funding for the Sub Region and retrofitted 146 off-gas homes.
4.	Strong, supportive rural places and communities		
	Key Actions	CEC Primary responsibilities	

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		and other contributors	
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	Community Right to Bid guidance document to be reviewed and updated in 2025.
4.2	Deliver the connected Communities Strategy to 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 Partnerships to help meet these outcomes.	CEC Communities Team & Public Health Team, Neighbourhood Partnerships, Parish Councils, VCFS	<p>The Council's Community Development team continue to work with local people and organisations in order to create and build upon ideas for the benefit of their local area. For example, driving the voice and inclusion of Voluntary and Community Frontline Sector (VCFS) groups at Primary Care Network (PCN) development meetings. This includes work across rural areas of Cheshire East.</p> <p>The recently recommissioned Cheshire East 'One You' service specification includes a requirement for physical activity sessions to be delivered in rural locations.</p>
4.3	Develop and support Connected Communities neighbourhood partnerships covering rural areas, 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,	Eight 'Care Communities' cover the whole of the borough and bring together partners to focus on improving health and wellbeing. They recognize the challenges and needs of rural communities and are working to address these.
4.4	Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people, through assessing the levels of loneliness and social isolation in rural areas across the borough, the carers strategy, and 'living well for longer'.	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	A Social Isolation and Loneliness joint strategic needs assessment is underway and due to be published in spring 2025.

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4.5	Working with the CE Wellbeing Network co-ordinates health and wellbeing campaigns, 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	The Cheshire East Wellbeing Network has been disestablished. An 'Eat Well, Move More' Partnership has been created with a focus upon helping people maintain a healthy weight and a more active lifestyle. Opportunities to focus upon rural communities and the use of green spaces for wellbeing purposes are under consideration. Two funded projects have focused upon mental wellbeing in rural communities.
4.6	To promote strategic training and development and encourage rural schools to access the programme	CEC Education /Schools	<p>All Cheshire East Schools, including those in rural locations, are supported through the school development pathway (updated annually) which provides curriculum and specialised training/networks across all subject areas. The pathway aims to support long term impact on pupils' outcomes by providing professional development programmes following the guidance in the standard for teachers' professional development report. All schools can access evidence-informed professional development with the focus across the three Cheshire East priorities (Attendance, Disadvantaged, Inclusion).</p> <p>Schools have also been supported and challenged to ensure that they make best use of opportunities through other well-established partnerships which School Improvement colleagues have directed through their work with the Maths and English Hubs, the Research School and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).</p>
4.7	(Subject to a successful bid) to establish a Multi-Academy Trust as part of a national pilot, giving rural schools the opportunity to consider the academy trust solution.	CEC Education /Schools	The 2022 Schools White Paper outlined plans for local authorities to set up their own academy trusts with officials hoping this would speed up conversions among reluctant council schools. The CEC Education Team worked with schools, including rural schools, and submitted a bid in autumn 2022. Unfortunately, the government dropped the

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			<p>legislation intended to support the Schools White Paper targets, and the pilots were not taken forward.</p> <p>The government has recently published the first draft of its Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, planned legislation that will bring academies in line with maintained schools in some areas where they have previously had freedom. The CEC Education Team continues to support both the maintained and academy schools in Cheshire East, including those in rural locations.</p>
4.8	Manage the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) with a focus on support for Communities and Place.	CEC Place Directorate	<p>The Rural Digital Support project has completed distribution of grants to 18 community organisations that have received support for various community focused digital services. Case studies will be developed to showcase the positive impact of this popular scheme.</p> <p>The Improved Greener Communities Facilities Fund has supported capacity building and infrastructure for 33 local civil society and community groups across rural areas.</p> <p>A Rural Cultural and Heritage Infrastructure Grants scheme is in progress and has provided capital grants to date for access improvements to 4 rural cultural, historic and heritage institutions to date. We are currently awaiting information on whether further rural SPF grant support will be continued in the 25/26 period.</p>
4.9	As part of the Council's Carbon Action Plan and net zero the Council will work with the Boroughs' schools, academies, colleges and associated partners: to promote resources available for young people to understand and engage with measures to address Climate Change; and to undertake tree planting	CEC Education/ CEC Place Directorate /Schools/Mersey Forest/Cheshire Wildlife Trust	<p>The Council continues to engage with schools and young people on issues relating to climate. The waste volunteers managed by ANSA work with schools to encourage recycling through a network of junior recycling officers and schools are engaged with competitions and activities such as naming the hydrogen powered refuse vehicles. Woodland creation scheme procurement include a requirement for social value,</p>

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	schemes as part of the natural capital programme		contractors are expected to engage with the local community including local schools to provide expertise and experiences to pupils.
4.10	Promote Crowd Funding through 'Cheshire East Crowd', with up to £10,000 available to support community projects.	CEC Communities Team	The Crowd funding platform was available for use by Community Organisations up until May 24. Funded projects can be seen here: Discover Projects in the Cheshire East Crowd
4.11	Maintain 'social value' as part of the CEC procurement strategy.	CEC Procurement	<p>Maintain 'social value' as part of the CEC procurement strategy. Social value forms part of the procurement strategy and we have a separate social value policy here</p> <p>We consider social value in all procurements and apply a minimum 10% weighting to all procurement over £100k. We also ask supplier to obtain the social value award as part of being awarded a Cheshire East Contract here</p>
4.12	Undertake a needs assessment to understand the health and wellbeing issues facing older people in our rural communities, with recommendations to the Council and its partners on a theme of connectivity	CEC Public Health VCFSE OHID Parish Councils Residents	The Care of Older People joint strategic needs assessment work will begin in 2025 and last 12 to 18 months. It will include the issues associated with living in rural areas.
4.13	Undertake the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA	CEC Public Health/NHS/ VCFSE	The JSNA is being worked upon and updated on an ongoing basis. Each review considers the issues associated with our rural communities.

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4.14	Address rural needs as part of the 'Winter wellbeing group' working with the community and voluntary sector	CEC Communities Team/Public Health/Winter wellbeing group	<p>CE Community Grants programme has also supported a wide range of community projects, which can be found here Grant funded projects The Improved, Greener Community Facilities Fund focused mainly on rural community buildings.</p> <p>The Winter Wellbeing Group no longer meets as a result of lack of capacity to service the meeting.</p>
4.15	Develop Family Hubs in line with government expectations and criteria	CEC Children's Services Health, VCS	<p>Five family hubs are now open in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oakenclough, Wilmslow • Oak Tree, Crewe • Monks Coppnall, Crewe • Ash Grove, Macclesfield • Congelton. <p>There is also a digital family hub to support children and families targeted who are unable to visit a physical location or would prefer online access to resources.</p>
5.	Planning for a green and sustainable place		
	Key Actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	
5.1	Conserve and manage the natural features and biodiversity of the Council's Countryside assets and Tatton Park for present and future generations	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	<p>As one of the region's foremost environmental assets, and the largest public green space in the borough, Tatton Park 's management and operational teams continue to manage and conserve habitats of national and local importance. Options to deliver decarbonization and nature-based inseting have been progressed with tree and wildflower plantings delivered, feasibility into air source heat pumps to replace fossil fuel heating systems and increased accessibility to the parkland and natural habitat being assessed. The Tatton Mere and Melchett Mere is part of a</p>

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			<p>wider DEFRA scheme through Natural England to investigate how to improve water quality and management of this Special Site of Scientific Interest.</p> <p>The Countryside ranger team continue to manage and conserve natural habitats and features in nineteen council owned sites whilst balancing visitor access to these important recreational green spaces. An annual programme of regular ranger led events aim to educate and share a wide range of conservation and nature-based skills with the public.</p>
5.2	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 Strategic Planning	<p>Completed in December 2022.</p> <p>Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain SPD introduced and adopted July 2024</p>
5.3	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 Strategic Planning	Support programme ongoing, 40 plans currently completed, approximately 10 in pipeline.
5.4	Support communities to review their adopted Neighbourhood plans to ensure they continue to align with and inform the boroughs wider rural strategy, ensuring new opportunities are captured	CEC Strategic Planning	Ongoing support continues.
5.5	Adoption of a Minerals and Waste Local Plan to ensure the proper planning and management of the Borough's natural resources	CEC Strategic Planning	Draft Minerals and Waste Plan consulted on in 2023. Now proposed to align with production of New Local Plan.

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5.6	Review and amend supplementary planning guidance to ensure that the design and appearance of rural areas is maintained.	CEC Strategic Planning	No further update on this theme, to be reviewed as part of the local plan and development of a Design Guide
5.7	Adopt supplementary planning guidance for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	CEC Strategic Planning	Adopted July 2024
5.8	Seek continued 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	<p>During this action plan period, five long term lettings of equipped farms have been entered into with new entrants which involved the Council responding to 317 individual requests for detailed particulars and information, leading to viewings and 45 detailed applications.</p> <p>Individual lettings have been advertised and let with provisions to encourage improvement in the management of natural capital.</p>
5.9	During the period, the Council will review its farms strategy, agricultural landholdings within the farm estate and ongoing work with farm tenants to: - (1.1) Optimise Opportunities to improve soil and livestock management practices. (1.2) Identify appropriate opportunities for tree and hedge planting or mossland restoration within farm holdings to improve natural capital benefits and nature-based approaches to carbon sequestration. (1.3) Review the terms and conditions of all new tenancies on Cheshire East Farms, as they become available, to facilitate (1.1) and	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	<p>A Members Advisory Group has been set up to support the CEC Farms Strategy review. An initial meeting has been held where general principles, data and information was shared with Members. The intention is to follow national Rural Asset Management best practice guidance for the review stages with the aim of making recommendations for adoption in 2025/26.</p> <p>Opportunities have been identified for tree planting including the allocation of approx. 225 acres of land from five farms on the Batherton, Cranage, Coole Pilate, Haslington & Peover Estates for planting schemes, the latter of which was completed during 2024.</p>

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	(1.2) above. (1.4) Notwithstanding the above, maintain a viable farm estate to provide opportunities for entry-level access to farming		
5.10	Implement the Environment Strategy (2019) to 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	Progressing with decarbonisation of council services with gas boilers replaced by Air Source heat Pumps at both main council offices and several leisure centres. Fleet vehicles working across all urban and rural areas are being decarbonised where a solution is available. The council is also pursuing natural sequestration solutions to offsetting residual carbon and has planted 4 large mixed woodland sites in rural areas.
5.11	Deliver the Council's Carbon Action Plan targets including decarbonising the delivery of Council services in rural areas, increase local renewable energy and sequester carbon through nature-based solutions	CEC Place Directorate	The council has developed a wider borough carbon action plan with a focus on building partnerships with communities, businesses and charities across the borough.
5.12	Develop proposals for the Council and the role of our rural areas in supporting delivery of net-zero for the borough by 2045 (UK100 pledge)	CEC Place Directorate	Specifically rural focused areas such as agriculture and land use are considered alongside those areas which affect rural communities differently such as transport infrastructure and industry.
5.13	In support of its Carbon Action Plan, boroughwide targets and biodiversity CEC Place Directorate 2022 - 26 36 policies, the Council will review, and implement where appropriate, opportunities for improving natural capital, including tree and woodland cover, peatland restoration and other nature based solutions on Council-owned land, and	CEC Place Directorate	The council is working to increase biodiversity on its own land assets through the creation of natural woodland resources and through amended maintenance regimes designed to enhance biodiversity net gain through targeted interventions. Regenerative farming methods are prioritised where possible.

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	encouraging/facilitating such investment on other appropriate land		
5.14	Support the Council's environmental and carbon action plan objectives as part of the Mersey Forest Partnership, in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and working with the Local Nature Partnership,	CEC Place Directorate/ Mersey Forest/ CWT/LNP	<p>The council continues to be an active partner of both the Mersey Forest and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The collaboration with The Mersey Forest has enabled the development of six natural woodland sites sequestering carbon and providing species habitat. Working with The Cheshire Wildlife Trust has enabled peat restoration to take place on one site and we are hopeful additional sites will also be suitable for these targeted actions.</p> <p>The Council are represented on the steering group of a sub-regional Local Nature Partnership with the aim of taking a strategic overview of the local natural environment. The partnership includes Cheshire West and Chester Council, Warrington Council, Natural England, Environment Agency, National Trust, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Mersey Rivers Trust, Mersey Forest, United Utilities & Tatton Estates.</p> <p>The Cheshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) looks for ways to manage, enhance and promote nature recovery and management that will produce outcomes that integrate the needs of nature, people and the economy. Recent work has included working alongside the Peak District National Park to prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cheshire & Warrington. This involved engaging and collaborating with a wide audience across different communities to inform the policies for nature recovery in our area, as well as the actions to deliver these priorities. The mapping of opportunity sites for nature recovery and a Statement of Biodiversity Principles is in progress. Engagement with landowners, farmers, businesses, local and national government agencies, e-NGO's, communities</p>

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			and schools has fed into the process for public consultation in 2025. Home - Cheshire Local Nature Partnership
5.15	Work with the Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and others to strengthen and diversify the energy network in rural areas to enable the transition to net-zero and tackle fuel poverty.	CEC Place Directorate	The Council is engaged with the three DNOs covering the borough of Cheshire East and seeking to take an active role in the development of the Regional Energy Strategic Planning Framework Consultation (RESP) to ensure that rural economies are able to benefit from clean energy and the associated economic benefits. The council also works to support community energy groups across the borough and acts as intermediary with the DNOs.
6.	Visitor & Cultural Economy		
	Key Actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	
6.1	Implement (September 2021) Tourism Recovery Plan including deliver with partners of the hospitality recruitment and retention programme.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, Job Centre +/Springboard	The Tourism Recovery Plan was implemented during COVID and was completed once the new Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy was approved in February 2023
6.2	Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-28 includes a focus on developing a distinctive rural tourism offer supported by website and social media activity.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	Visitor Economy Strategy was approved February 2023 and identifies 6 priorities, all of which provide a focus on developing the rural tourism offer.

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6.3	Facilitate a 'Destination Cheshire' network support for the delivery of visitor economy strategy.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, other partners	'Destination Cheshire' meets regularly and includes all 3 Local Authorities plus Marketing Cheshire, as well as representatives from the attraction, market towns and accommodation sectors.
6.4	Promote an annual Cheshire Day to promote the best of Cheshire as part of destination marketing.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	Cheshire Day is 30 th March and is a strong fixture in the Cheshire calendar, utilized to promote Cheshire as a place to live, visit, work and study.
6.5	Promotion of Sandstone and Gritstone trails and opportunities to improve visitor infrastructure	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, CWaC	Promoted as part of visitcheshire.com along with on site signage.
6.6	Promotion and support for rural attractions and events that generate tourism, economic and cultural benefits to Cheshire East	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	Rural attractions and events are actively promoted through various channels including visitcheshire, blogs, PR Agency working with national media plus various social media channels.
6.7	Support and promote through the Cultural Framework activity and organisations that address CEC priorities and benefit the rural area:	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	Wild Rumpus have been supported financially through the Cultural Framework. This has strengthened the organisation by providing match funding for their successful Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation application. It has also supported delivery of large-scale rural events including Just So Festival and Yuletide at Tatton Park; Development of a Green Events Network; artist and creative community development.
6.8	Manage Tatton Park as one of the region's foremost tourism, cultural and heritage assets	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	The joint vision of the Council and the National Trust is to 'conserve Tatton Park for the enjoyment of present and future generations'. The Tatton Park Business Plan 2024 –

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			<p>28 helps to realise this vision by providing a framework to develop and maintain the necessary income to achieve the plan objectives. Tatton's financial sustainability and operational model is currently being reviewed as part of the council's Transformation Programme.</p> <p>Tatton continues to be a significant heritage attraction, being one of the top paid for attractions in England and the winner of many plaudits and awards including Visit Britain's Large Visitor Attraction of the Year, Sandford awards for excellence in heritage education, and annual Green Flag/Green Heritage site awards. Tatton is a major contributor to the borough's tourism and visitor economy, being a key attractor and creating economic benefit through its supply chain and events, as well as its contribution to 'Quality of Place' that supports inward investment and business location.</p> <p>Tatton continues to build upon its cultural assets, incorporating them into the formal and informal education offer and working with the Councils Cultural Economy team and external partners such as the Art Fund and Arts Council England to leverage grant funding for cultural exhibitions and events.</p>
6.9	Continue delivery of Rural Touring Network to support cultural priorities as part of Cultural framework.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy , CWaC	Delivery of Cheshire Rural Touring Network has continued, although reduced funding levels from ACE have led to reduced activity in this period. Advocacy and relationship development with ACE continues with a view to increasing funding levels during the next ACE funding period.
6.10	Liaison and collaborative working with Peak district to identify tourism and other opportunities of joint interest	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy , PDNP	The council continues to contribute as a Responsible Partner and Key Delivery Partner on relevant elements of the Peak District National Park Management Plan delivery group.

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6.11	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 Strategic Planning	SADPD adopted December 2022 and includes policies on rural development and tourism.
7.	Rural based businesses		
	Key Actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	
7.1	Seek to maintain and grow the diverse economy in rural areas, including key sectors, working with businesses and others e.g. Rural Strategy Group	CEC Growth & Enterprise, CWaC, LEP, RSG	<p>The Rural England Shared Prosperity (REPF) grant funding programme has been delivered from April 2023 through to end of March 2025. This fund was specifically for areas identified as being rural under DEFRA guidance. In line with REPF intervention priorities, two types of businesses were targeted for support: micro and small enterprises; and visitor economy businesses. Two capital grant schemes were delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheshire East Visitor Economy Grant supported 16 businesses totalling £144,802 grant awarded Rural Business Capital Grant Scheme supported 33 businesses totalling £270,197 grant awarded <p>The Rural Strategy Group is an advisory body, providing guidance and support to Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils in developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long-term physical, social and sustainable economic development of the rural area. With recent devolution opportunities the importance of the work of this group to contribute towards a sustainable and inclusive economic strategy has given more focus to plans in place for 2025.</p>

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			<p>The group's Terms of Reference were renewed in 2024 and the following priority areas agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and grow the diverse economy in rural areas including a focus on sustainability, decarbonisation, natural capital and quality of place. • Ensure skills provision meets the needs of rural employers and access for individuals to local opportunities. • Ensure that digital and physical connectivity is improved across the rural area, including mobile, broadband, transport and access to services.
7.2	Seek to maximise government support and finance available.	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/LEP	<p>The Council are members of the Rural Services Network, a special interest group of the LGA. They campaign on behalf of local authorities for fairer funding for public services in rural areas, share best practice and rural expertise and advocate on the Council's behalf to ensure the rural voice is raised up the agenda with parliamentarians and decision makers.</p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 introduced a requirement for local authorities to be responsible for creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to help reverse biodiversity decline and improve environmental outcomes. The Council is working with Warrington and Cheshire West & Chester Councils on developing Cheshire's LNRS which has already engaged the Local Nature Partnership, landowners, community groups, third parties and the wider public.</p> <p>Priorities will have implications for the rural economy and communities e.g. the development of a Future Farming group to test and promote good practice, focusing on how farming business can be improved through nature-based solutions such as species rich headlands improving</p>

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			<p>adjacent field yields. Public consultation on the draft LNRS will take place during Spring 2025.</p> <p>The Council are represented on the steering group of a sub-regional Local Nature Partnership with the aim to seek improvement in the local natural environment. The partnership includes CEC, Natural England, Environment Agency, National Trust, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Mersey Rivers Trust, Mersey Forest, United Utilities & Tatton Estates. One of the projects being progressed by this partnership is 'Cheshire Living Landscapes' which is focused on a landscape/catchment scale approach to collaborative working and stimulating investment in the environment. It will enable the partnership to bid for DEFRA funding for round 3 of their Landscape Recovery Scheme, one of DEFRA's Environmental Land Management (ELM) programmes.</p>
7.3	<p>Manage the Shared Prosperity Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting local business • People & Skills 	CEC Growth & Enterprise	<p>The Rural England Shared Prosperity grant funding programme has been delivered from April 2023. This fund was specifically for areas identified as being rural under DEFRA guidance. In line with REPF intervention priorities, the rural projects include a variety of initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital grants for investment and support for digital infrastructure for 18 rural community organisations through the Improved Greener Community Facilities Fund. • Capital grants for access improvements in 4 rural cultural, historic and heritage organisations through the Rural Cultural and Heritage Infrastructure Grant scheme.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital grants for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for 33 rural local civic society and community groups through the Improved Greener Community Facilities Fund. • Capital grants for investment in the development and promotion of 16 rural visitor economy businesses through the Cheshire East Visitor Economy Grant scheme. • Capital grants for investment in 33 micro and small rural business enterprises through the Rural Business Capital Grant Scheme.
7.4	Deliver a 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 Strategic Planning	Adopted December 2022