

**LAG Support Officer**  
**35 hours/week**  
**Salary £22,434 (SCP25)**



## **Introduction**

Do you have an excellent eye for detail combined with a high level of IT literacy, ability to use complex software and first-rate customer service skills?

BRCC is seeking a high quality LAG Support Officer to provide day to day administration for its two LEADER grant programmes, on behalf of the Greensand Ridge and the Beds & Hunts Claylands Local Action Groups (LAGs). You will act as initial point of contact for the programmes while supporting the applications process, processing grant claims and maintaining excellent records.

LEADER is currently funded by the European Union (see p.2), so the future of the role beyond the first two years depends on the length and outcome of negotiations concerning the UK's exit.

## **Outline terms and conditions**

1. *Period:* 2 years, with the potential to extend depending on the timetable for the UK's exit from the EU
2. *Working hours:* 1820 hours per annum (35 hours/week on average)
3. *Place of work:* BRCC's offices at Cardington, Bedford
4. *Salary:* £22,434 per annum
5. *Expenses:* Mileage is paid at 45p/mile for car users
6. *Holidays:* 231 hours holiday per annum, which includes all Bank / Public Holidays
7. *Line management:* the post reports to the Rural Development Manager

## **Recruitment Process**

To apply, please send a full CV and supporting statement (showing how you meet the Person Specification) to Lisa King at [lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk](mailto:lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk), or by post to BRCC, The Old School, Cardington, Bedford MK44 3SX. The Job Description and Person Specification for the role are below.

The application deadline is 9am on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March in Cardington.

For an informal chat about the post, please contact Lisa on 01234 832643.

## **The LEADER Programmes**

### ***Rural Development Programme (RDPE)***

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is part of the Common Agricultural Policy, jointly funded by the EU and the Government. Through the LEADER approach, Local Action Groups across England have around £138 million available to spend on the rural economy and on creating jobs in rural areas. Funding will be available to farmers, foresters, other local businesses and rural communities.

The new LEADER funding programmes started towards the end of 2015 and were due to run until the end of 2020. There was a considerable hiatus around the time of the EU referendum in 2016. However, the programmes opened again for business in the autumn of 2016, and HM Treasury has guaranteed funding for projects approved before the UK leaves the EU, currently expected to be during 2019.

### ***Local Action Groups***

A Local Action Group (LAG) is established to direct and oversee the distribution of RDPE funds through the LEADER approach, based on an agreed Local Development Strategy (LDS). BRCC acts as the accountable body for two Local Action Groups (see maps overleaf):

#### **1. Beds & Hunts Claylands**

The Beds & Hunts Claylands LAG was set up in 2014 to bid for LEADER funding for the first time. It falls mainly within the Bedford Borough and Huntingdonshire local authority areas, as well as small parts of Central Bedfordshire and South Cambridgeshire. The population is 145,767.

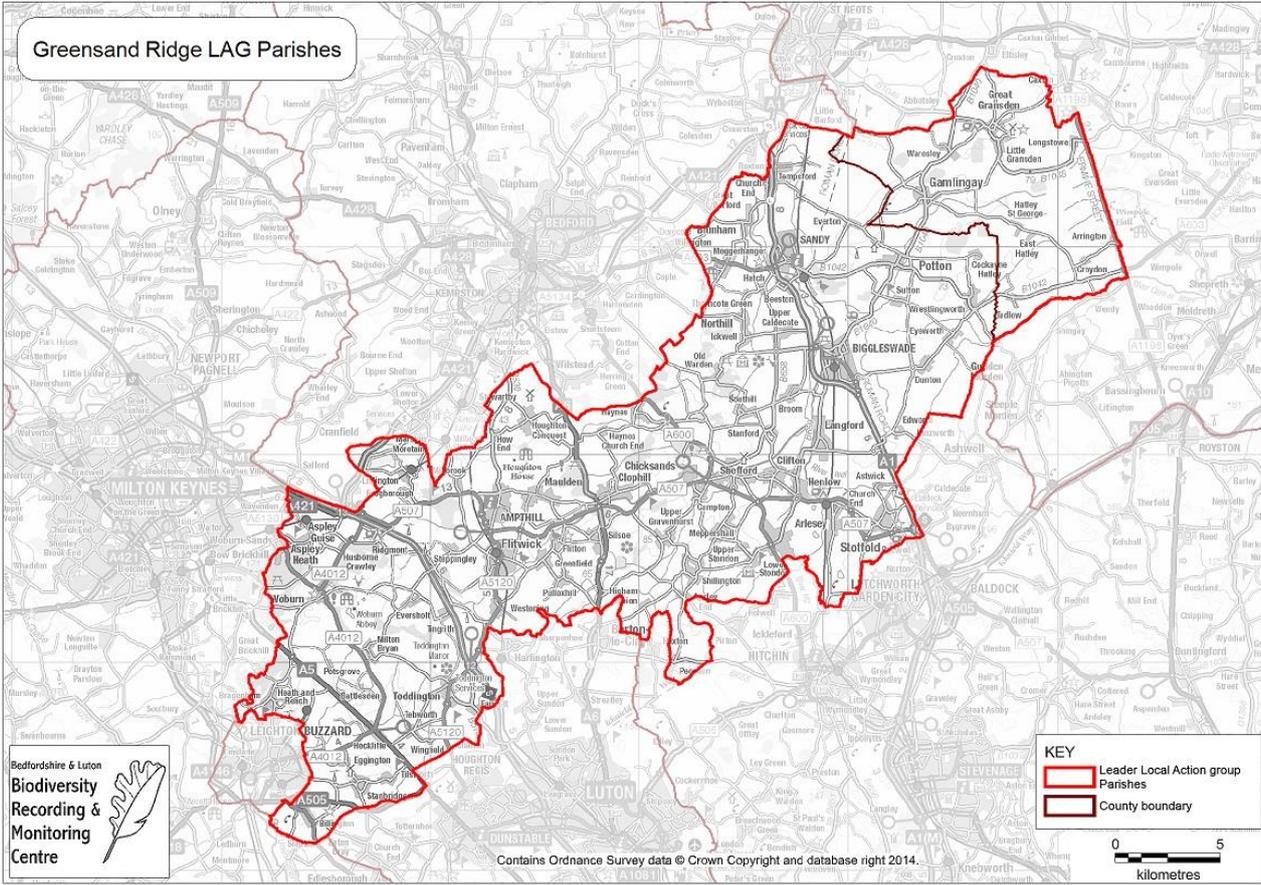
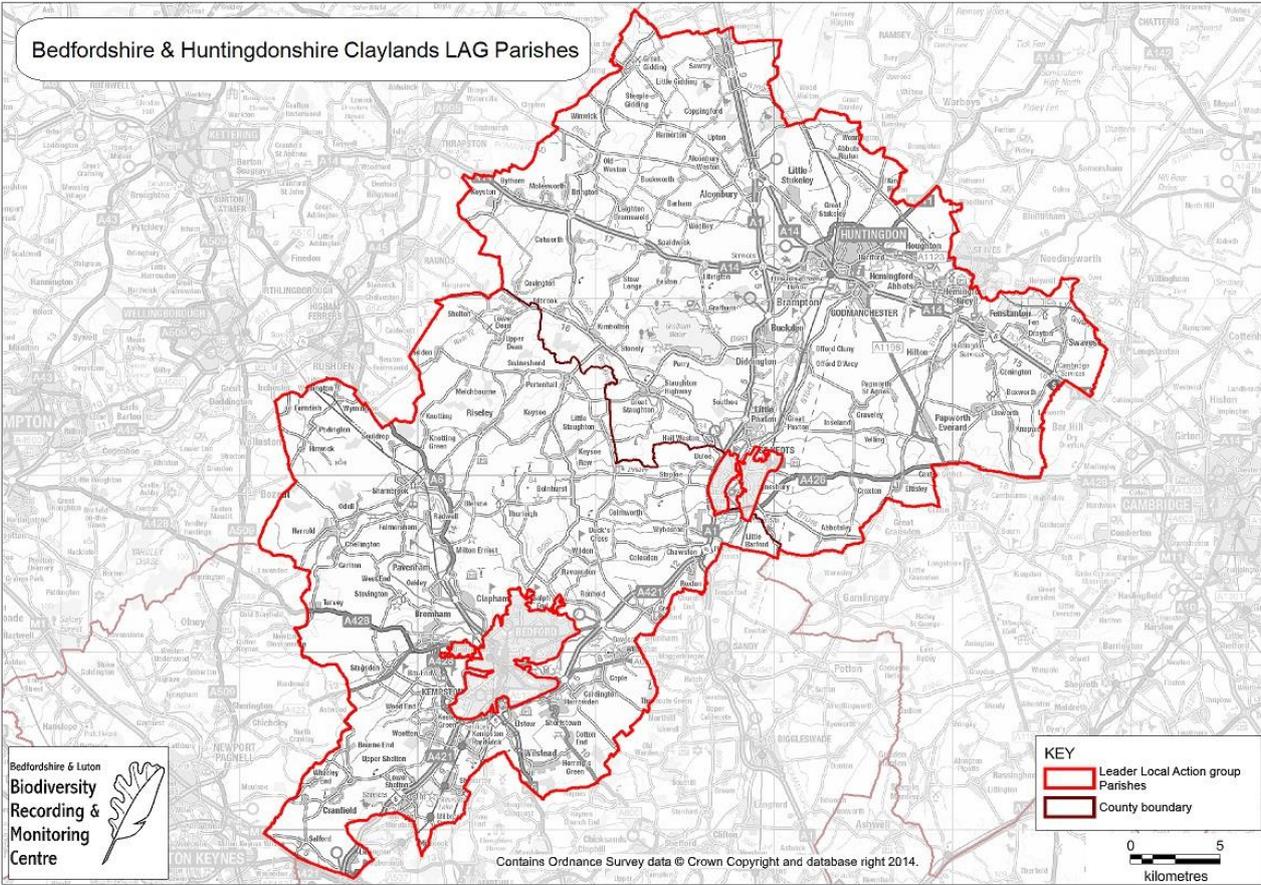
The area sits within the Beds & Cambs Claylands National Character Area, unified by the River Great Ouse as well as the predominantly clay soils, and surrounded by marked contrast on all sides. It is predominantly rural and sparsely populated, with settlements generally located along the river valleys and more recently along major road and rail corridors. Commercially farmed arable farms dominate the landscape with generally scattered and sparse woodland cover.

#### **2. Greensand Ridge**

The Greensand Ridge LAG existed during the last round of LEADER funding in 2007-13, when it invested nearly £2m in the local area (see [www.greensand.org.uk](http://www.greensand.org.uk) for more information). The area falls mainly within the Central Bedfordshire unitary authority area, although there are also small parts of Milton Keynes to the west, and Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire to the south. The population is 140,684.

The LAG area is based around the Greensand Ridge National Character Area (no.90). Much of the Ridge was regarded as 'marginal land' in medieval times due to its predominantly sandy soils, and was parcelled out following the dissolution of the monasteries to private estates, which have largely controlled development ever since. As a result, there is now a string of parks and manor houses across the Ridge that collectively form a considerable tourism draw.

# Local Action Group areas



## ***Funding priorities***

Although the priorities for the two LAG areas have been developed separately, there are certain common priorities reflecting the government's policy objectives for the RDP and LEADER:

- Increasing farm productivity
- Micro and small enterprises and farm diversification
- Rural tourism
- Culture and heritage activity
- Provision of rural services
- Increasing forestry productivity

## ***Delivery team***

Following a staffing restructure, the delivery team for the LEADER programmes will operate across the two LAGs, and will consist of:

### **Rural Development Manager (Lisa King):**

- Day to day responsibility for Programme Management
- Oversees delivery of LDS and operations
- Principal point of contact with Defra
- Reports to BRCC Chief Executive

### **LAG Officer (to be appointed):**

- Promote the programme and bring in new projects
- Support applicants in navigating the application process efficiently
- Ensure that Outline and Full applications meet detailed programme requirements prior to assessment and appraisal
- Reports to Rural Development Manager

### **LAG Support Officer (to be appointed):**

- Administer the Local Action Groups and associated communications
- Assist the LAG Officer as necessary in dealing with applications
- Check application documentation at key stages as part of Quality Control procedures
- Handle and process claims for approved projects
- Reports to Rural Development Manager

LEADER funding is complex and must be managed and administered according to the Rural Payments Agency's National Operational Manual. Training on the use of this Manual will be provided to the post holder. The ability and willingness to comply absolutely with detailed processes, and make sense of these for applicants, are essential for all team members.

## **Job Description**

### **Job Purpose**

The LAG Support Officer is responsible for the day to day administration of the LEADER Programmes for the Greensand Ridge and the Beds & Hunts Claylands, acting as first point of contact for project applicants and Local Action Group members; assisting and processing claims; maintaining excellent records and other documentation in line with funder, audit and legal requirements; and providing excellent administration support to the rest of the delivery team.

The post holder reports to the Rural Development Manager.

### **Job responsibilities**

#### **Project and applicant administration**

- Act as the initial point of contact for applicants and other people contacting the LEADER Programmes
- Assist the LAG Officer as required with handling and processing applications throughout the whole process
- Check application documentation at key stages as part of Quality Control procedures
- Assist applicants in submitting accurate and comprehensive claims to the Programme for processing and payment, in line with audit requirements
- Process project claims and recommend claims to the Rural Payments Agency for payment in liaison with the Rural Development Manager
- Monitor project compliance as required
- Maintain all project files and other paperwork, as well as the online database (DORA) provided by the Rural Payments Agency

#### **Local Action Group and delivery team administration**

- Provide the secretariat for the Greensand Ridge and Beds & Hunts Claylands Local Action Groups, including organising meetings, preparing and circulating documentation, and taking minutes
- Maintain the websites and social media presence for both Local Action Groups, and assist the rest of the team in promoting the Programme
- Provide administration services to the Rural Development Programmes delivery team, including organising and minuting team meetings and ensuring that application deadlines are adhered to

#### **General**

- Adhere completely to the strict requirements of the National Operational Manual for LEADER, including maintaining separation of duties and reporting any conflicts of interest
- Report monthly (or as required) to line-manager
- Actively pursue self-development, identifying training and Continuing Professional Development needs and potential solutions
- Adhere to BRCC's policies and procedures at all times
- Undertake other duties as may reasonably be requested

## Person Specification

	<b>Essential attributes</b>	<b>Desirable attributes</b>
<b>Experience</b>	<p>At least 1 year's experience in an administrative position</p> <p>Very good experience of using complex software</p> <p>Excellent experience of carrying out effective customer service</p>	<p>Administration in one or more of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural business</li> <li>- Grant giving</li> </ul>
<b>Skills &amp; knowledge</b>	<p>High level administrative skills with a precise eye for detail</p> <p>High level of numeracy</p> <p>Considerable IT literacy using complex software (minimum of sophisticated use of Microsoft Office products or equivalent)</p> <p>Excellent written and verbal communication skills</p>	<p>Knowledge of one or more of the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural tourism / leisure</li> <li>- Agri-food</li> <li>- Rural enterprise</li> </ul> <p>Knowledge of grant programme management/ administration</p> <p>Familiarity with social media</p>
<b>Personal qualities</b>	<p>Organised, methodical and logical approach</p> <p>Outstanding attention to detail / accuracy</p> <p>Ability to work under own initiative</p> <p>Ability to work as part of a highly focused team and a willingness to 'muck in' to get the job done</p> <p>Customer focused</p>	
<b>Other</b>	<p>Full driving licence or able to travel effectively and efficiently within a wide rural area</p> <p>Prepared to work occasional weekends / evenings</p>	<p>Own vehicle or ready access to effective and efficient travel</p> <p>First Aid at Work certificate and/or Fire Safety training</p>