

Kent Rural Plc Initiative

'Championing food production and developing the 21st Century Garden of England'

Introduction

The title of this initiative "Kent Rural Plc" is based on the premise that if the value of this sector to the Kent economy was aggregated its turnover would rival that many FTSE 100 companies.

Presenting the value, growth prospects and investment potential of the sector in a PLC style "annual report" will raise awareness of its profile - and showcase the opportunities it can offer for investors, employees, supply-chain and product development.

Purpose

Whilst the overall objective of the initiative is to raise the profile of the economic value of Kent Agricultural and Horticultural production, it is with the explicit aims of:-

- Increasing investment in the sector
- Demonstrating and maximising its multiplier effect in the Local Economy
- Expanding job opportunities and the creation of quality jobs
- Raising the productive capacity through investment, exploitation of R&D resources and innovation
- Improving the image of the sector to make it more attractive to new entrants

The work streams of the initiative to deliver against these aims are:-

- **The Kent Rural Plc report** which will be produced in the style of annual report – providing an overview of performance and financial indicators, an assessment of the asset value of agricultural business in Kent, strategic prospects for business in the sector and profiling key investment and growth opportunities.
- **An investigation into the means and opportunities to expand R&D capacity** that will support crop and product development to increase the productive capacity and profitability of food production in Kent.
- A targeted **inward investment campaign** showcasing key projects and locations. This sector is currently being viewed by investors as one of the "safe havens" for investment as markets retrench in the principle factors of production (i.e. land, raw materials, minerals etc) in the face of global economic uncertainty.
- The **development of higher and technical skills** to service the increasingly technical and industrial means of production. A Task & Finish Group has already been formed to address this issue raised as one of the key concerns amongst business in the sector. Coupled with this work stream will be activities to promote the occupational opportunities in the sector and attract new entrants to balance the age profile of the current labour force and reduce dependency on immigrant labour.
- **Planning and Infrastructure** – an assessment of the specific issues that are manifesting themselves as barriers to growth, and the subsequent identification of solutions and best practice that could be adopted.

Framework Action Plan - Draft

Underpinning all these tasks is the profile raising campaign element of the initiative which will need to be serviced with a **communications plan**, to include the creation of a website, network development, events & seminars etc. A key ambition is to present the Kent Rural Plc report at the 2012 County Show – and showcase achievement against each of the work streams noted above.

The detailed project plans for each element of this initiative are under development based on a framework action plan set out below.

Framework Action Plan - Draft

Workstream	Tasks/Deliverables	Timescale	Project Lead (s)
1. Kent Rural PLC Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agree brief with Kent Rural PLC Board b) Seek commercial sponsorship c) Commission Annual Report d) Finalise annual report 	September 2011-March 2012	Nick Holmes/Jon Regan Liz Harrison <i>with input from the wider group</i>
2. Expanding R&D capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Set up task and finish group to identify key opportunities 	October 2011-January 2012	Kent Rural PLC Group Member TBC/Megan McKibbin
3. Inward investment campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop an inward investment campaign with Locate in Kent b) Host an investor day 	October 2011-July 2012	Micheal Bax/Locate in Kent
4. Skills Development	<p>Work with the KEB Skills for Growth agricultural and horticultural task and finish group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) deliver activities to promote occupational opportunities in the sector and attract new entrants b) establish more apprenticeship opportunities 	August 2011-June 2012	Kent Rural PLC Group Member TBC/Roger Gabriel
5. Planning and infrastructure	<p>a) Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) work with the Kent Planning Officers Group to contribute towards their education and training programme for development control officers to raise awareness of what the sector needs ii) commission research to develop a map of where the approvals and refusals are, what's working well and where there are the greatest issues <p>b) Broadband - Continue to articulate the sectors needs within the delivery of the Kent Local Broadband plan</p> <p>c) Water - Investigate the risk of water resource constraints and identify potential mitigation measures and actions to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.</p>	<p>October 2011-May 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>November 2011-July 2012</p>	<p>Jon Regan</p> <p>Kathy Putnam (planning); Liz Harrison (broadband); Alan Turner (water)</p>
6. Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a dedicated web presence for the Kent Rural PLC initiative b) Develop and agree communications plan with the Kent Rural PLC Board c) Launch the Kent Rural PLC report at the Kent Show in 2012 	September 2011-July 2012	Liz Harrison/Marcus Chrysostomou/Charles Tassell