



The Prince's Countryside Fund

SIX MONTH REPORT

(Please note all sections need to be completed before further funding can be released)

NAME OF PROJECT:	Rural connection project
DURATION OF PROJECT:	12 months
TOTAL GRANT:	£40,219
GRANT RECIEVED SO FAR:	£20,109
DATE:	25 th January 2017
REPORT NUMBER:	1 st Report

OUTCOMES/ RESULTS

Results as outlined in grant agreement	Progress so far and any relevant changes. Have you achieved what you said you would? If not why not?
<p><i>Result 1</i> Deliver 100 hours' worth of mentoring in total made up of:</p> <p>Farming Business and Efficiency – 20 hours</p> <p>Knowledge transfer – 20 hours</p>	<p>65 hours' worth of mentoring completed to date</p> <p>Out of the 65 hours 15 hours have been spent on farming business and efficiency</p> <p>Out of the 65 hours 65 hours have included knowledge transfer</p> <p>As you will see from the results in just 6 months we are exceeding targets and we already have an additional 15 hours' worth of session planned for the next 3 months.</p> <p>The project has received high demand levels and is requiring us to manage the demand effectively.</p>
<p><i>Result 2</i> From the 100 hours we must work with:</p> <p>5 x Farmers in Hardship</p> <p>3 x Village Shops</p> <p>3 x Village Pubs</p>	<p>5 farmers reached</p> <p>0 village shops have received support as yet, but we have 1 planned</p> <p>1 completed</p> <p>The next 6 months will continue to focus on targeting</p>

	<p>those in hardship, village pubs and village shops to ensure we fulfil and where possible exceed our targets. Even though we have reached some of these targets we want to ensure these areas are fully supported.</p> <p>We already have sessions planned with village shops due to a targeted campaign carried out late last year, but we will continue to run campaigns to reach the intended audience.</p>
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FINANCIAL

Grant received to date:	
Funds spent to date:	
£22,931.04	
Expenditure Item:	Amount Spent:
Project management and admin	£1,962.29
Mentoring	£19,189
Overheads	£361
Travel	£858.75
Marketing and Printing	£560
Total: £22,931.04	

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GOING FORWARD

Is the projected timeline of the project still correct?	Yes
Is the projected financial breakdown still correct?	Yes
If you answered NO to any of the above please explain in more detail here	
Have your bank details changed in the last six months?	No
If you have answered yes, please provide a copy of your new account details below	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please indicate the principal issue your project is tackling	
Developing Thriving Rural Communities by improving service provision in rural areas	
Transforming Rural Livelihoods by supporting rural enterprise and farming businesses	Yes

Creating the Farmers of the Future by providing training opportunities for young people and the unemployed.	
Reconnecting people with the countryside	Yes
How the project has tackled it so far?	
<p>Transforming Rural Livelihoods by supporting rural enterprise and farming businesses</p> <p>This projects main focus on transforming rural livelihoods through digital technologies. All beneficiaries of this project have been transformed in one way or another, whether it is through creating an excel spreadsheet that automates orders which in turn improves efficiencies and saves both time and money to doing a full audit of a business's websites, ensuring a clear and positive portrayal of their business online, helping to ensure sales and reach.</p> <p>Business we work with are reporting increased engagement with clients, increase in sales and a high improvement in efficiencies due to their engagement with the project and digital technology.</p> <p>Reconnecting people with the countryside</p> <p>Through the use of digital technology platforms we are advising and helping rural businesses connect with a new audience. Many have had sessions focused around improvements to their website and social media accounts, all of which enable these businesses to connect with individuals outside of the rural area.</p> <p>We have done a lot of work with businesses helping them to see the importance of sharing images of the outstanding rural areas they live. This is not just increasing awareness for their own business, but has a far wider reach, making people aware of areas not seen people by the general public and helping businesses to engage more with their community and surrounding areas.</p>	
Please include any other information that you think might be relevant. For example do you foresee any changes or amendments to the project in the future?	
<p>We have received a high number of requests for this project as you will see from our outputs; the way in which the project has been structured has allowed us to build strong relationships with this sector, which has had a positive effect in terms of relationships. We are seeing a lot of businesses / individuals come to us because they have been referred from those already engaged with the programme.</p> <p>Just as the previous project it is likely this project will be oversubscribed, we are currently focusing the remainder of support on those in hardship, village pub and village shops, of which we already have several sessions booked in for the next few months.</p>	

CASE STUDY:

Please give a brief personal account of the project so far. It would be great to get your view on how you think the project is impacting on the intended beneficiaries and the future of the countryside
<p>We have been overwhelmed with this uptake for this project. The previous project we ran in part saw low up take in mentoring due to issues such as the RPAs payment scheme and we also did not see as much engagement on workshops as we would have liked. Changing the format to mentoring</p>

only, offering up to 4hrs worth of support and having the ability to be flexible in terms of what they learn and us being able to go to them has proved to be a winning formula.

Feedback we are getting from individuals participating in the project is extremely positive, they have advised that they feel empowered and more confident to embrace the digital world.

Although this project is showing an increase in business efficiencies and increased digital learning, another positive effect it is having is tackling social isolation. A lot of individuals we are working with say they feel more included due to the use of things such as social media and many are now able to connect with families who live far away through things such as Skype and Google Hangouts.

The project is enabling rural businesses to streamline processes through the use of digital technology, enabling them to save time and money.

We are extremely grateful that the PCT have allowed us to refine and build on our previous project. It is clear that the demand is out there and that rural businesses are starting to embrace digital, but we truly believe that many will struggle to do this without projects such as this.

Please include at least one case study of a beneficiary of the project including a quote and photograph

Case Study 1:

Company Name: **Flexible Horse**

Client Name: Jane Penfold

Website: www.flexiblehorse.co.uk

Social Media: [www.fb.me/FlexibleHorseJanePenfold](https://www.facebook.com/FlexibleHorseJanePenfold)

Location: North Molton

Jane approached us for support after seeing that it was available through and advert from Mole Valley Farmers. Jane runs a rural business in North Molton specialising in equine massage. Initially, Jane's main priorities were to improve her skills on Facebook and Twitter to reach a much extended audience. During the support that she received, we advised that it may be a good idea to incorporate some short videos of techniques that are used that she can easily capture on her smartphone to incorporate onto her website and social channels. Using Windows Movie Maker (a free, basic video editing software), she was able to create short videos of no more than 30 seconds that are easily shared with her audience. We also spent some time introducing Jane to Mailchimp, so that she can send out e-newsletters with special offers, new treatments, etc. to those that sign up to receive news from her. Over the four hours of support that she received, Jane's skills on Facebook, Twitter and Mailchimp have vastly improved and she is able to create short videos captured from her smartphone to upload to YouTube and social media with ease.



“The support I have received from Jack in a one-to-one basis has been so helpful to me as someone launching a small rural business. I don't have many IT-savvy friends let alone those with the patience to talk me through and help me with the basics! Jack has supported me with this and also introduced me to social media opportunities I might not have tackled alone, such as Twitter and YouTube. I am really grateful to Cosmic and hope that funding will continue for this really useful project” – Jane Penfold

Jane Penfold

Case Study 2:

Company Name: **Westcott Farm Cottages**

Name: Imogen Luxmoore

Website: <http://www.westcottfarm.co.uk/>

Social Media: www.fb.me/westcottfarmdevon

Location: Sheldon (East Devon)



Imogen approached Cosmic after seeing that we were advertising free digital support to rural business and farms across Devon and Somerset. She runs a rural farm bed and breakfast in the heart of East Devon and was predominantly looking for support with her Facebook page. The main things that she was unsure about was if the page had been set up to its most optimal state and was also unsure about topics and content to post out. She was also looking for some support around Search Engine Optimisation and the best way to help her website rank higher on Google. Jack, a member of the training team here at Cosmic, helped Imogen with keywords, image names, linking to social networks, etc. which are all good practice when trying to reach higher on Google. When putting it into practice however, Imogen noticed that Google wasn't placing her business in the correct location on Google Maps. A few clicks later, this was corrected. By the end of the support sessions, Imogen was far more comfortable with making changes to her website and Facebook page and was confident that all of the information was up to date. She is also actively trying to capture visual content whilst out and about, which would be more than valuable to share online.

"Thank you for your patience while opening up a little more of the world of the Internet to me. Some barriers of 'fear' have come down and I have more confidence in mastering moving information around. Great idea for small rural businesses" - Imogen Luxmoore

Testimonial from White Wood Management:

"Just a quick thank you for your time today and previously with White Wood Management introducing us to the power, breadth, depth and length of Social Media marketing and raising our awareness of the whole sector that it has become in its own right. That, plus showing the power of Google Analytics to track and monitor traffic to and around our own website, will certainly give us lots to think about and get to grips in the coming weeks / months / years!"

Jim White - www.whitewoodmanagement.co.uk

PCF PROMOTION:

It is vital that we continue to raise awareness of the PCF logo and the work that we do. Please summarise how you have promoted our support. Eg. Use our logo on your website/ logo is displayed on a vehicle/ Newsletter etc

We currently have a dedicated page on our website promoting the project which also includes the PCT logo, this can be found here: <https://www.cosmic.org.uk/portfolio/princes-countryside-fund>

We have also created leaflets and social media posts to promote the project, which has increased engagement levels:



We can offer Free 1-2-1 support for

- Farmers
- Village Shops
- Village Pubs
- Rural Businesses



Social Media
Website skills
Getting Connected
Buying & Selling online

Setting up Email
Google
Word & Excel
Ipad & Laptop technology

Contact us to find out more:

Lizzie@cosmic.org.uk

0845 094 6108



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND



digital. smart. ethical

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In August 2016 we collaborated with Mole Valley Farmers who added a piece about the project in their newsletter, this article can be found on page 44: http://www.molevalleyfarmers.com/cms-webapp/userfiles/image/0_campaigns/2016/1609sept/Newsletters/628August.pdf

Are you a farmer, village shop, village pub or rural business in Somerset or Devon looking for digital support and training?

If so, read on! Devon based business **Cosmic** has secured funding from The Princes Countryside Fund and is offering free one to one digital support for farmers, village shops, village pubs and rural businesses throughout the two counties. Staff can travel to you or you can utilise their office in Honiton for training

Below is a list of subjects that can be supported:

- Social Media and Marketing online. How to improve your website
- Basic computer skills to support scheme details – using iPad and laptop technology. Getting connected Buying and selling online

- Keeping in touch with Skype or Google Hangouts
- Setting up email
- Google – Introduction and how to benefit from free alternatives to Word and Excel
- And much more

If you would like to find out more contact Lizzie Whitchurch, Training Co-ordinator on 08450 946108 or 01404 548405 or email: lizzie@cosmic.org.uk



After this newsletter went out we saw a significant increase in engagement.