

By email

Anna.

Please find my response to the LEI process as part of your consultation, as a “front line” officer dealing with project development and delivery, I am well versed in various funding mechanisms and processes, these are my observations on the process.

The first thing that I must stress is that we were very excited with the prospect of a funding stream that looked solely on landscape works. So often funding streams have to be multi benefit projects that end up diluted in their outputs just to tick boxes, so this was refreshing to have the potential for simple effective projects on the ground.

The benefits derived from the project will have positive effects on the landscape for generations to come.

It was a big hoorah and excitement for the principal and potential, and we look forward to the delivery... and hope for more!

Unfortunately, there were some niggles that we encountered along the way:

- Initial set up was simple, clear, guidance good, it seemed effective to set up and deliver
- EOI and electronic submission process was cumbersome not being able to save edits, leave page and resume work. With the work required for a full submission this is problematic.
- £200K thresholds or max 3 projects per area/ I appreciate that you needed to gauge responses and uptake, but it's a shame that these limiters are in place as we would be looking to present more ideas if possible.
- The bids have been developed/presented by Local Authorities with full audit and financial governance in place to regulate the process, yet, the application process has seen the proposals being scrutinized by 3 sets of decision makers (Barnaby Hopson and his team, National Grid and OFGEM) adding an excessively long time frame to the decision process and undoubted additional costs. Bearing in mind that these are for applications of £200K it sees over administrated. OFGEM could have delivered much more on the ground with reduced administration costs on what are fairly simple projects, which would have given more value for money to the tax payer.
- The level of detail required for submission is costly to gather with no guarantee of funding coming through.
- Questions/issues raised by one assessor and addressed are not filtering through the document trail as the same questions were subsequently asked by NG and OFGEM, which is frustrating and time consuming.
- The time involved in decision-making is terrible. It took over a year for two of our projects to be approved despite being simple and straightforward projects. This is over 18 months since we talked to land managers who in turn have gone out to get quotes and pencil in contractors. Delivery time frame has had severe implications with works that can only be carried out seasonally not being able to be undertaken, new quotes and tenders to be gained as too much time had passed and other work programs competing for the suppliers.
- Cost benefit analysis of the LEI : VIP project... in my humble opinion the LEI project will deliver much more in landscape, biodiversity, access enjoyment and socio economic benefit than any VIP project, and that a greater proportion of funding should have been allocated to the LEI aspect of the project.

regards

Rhys

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