

ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Adding value, making a difference

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To enhance the vitality of the Island's rural community by supporting agriculture, rural businesses and local people to be more sustainable both economically and environmentally

The Isle of Wight (IW) is a predominantly rural county with a strong coastal influence, covering an area of 380 sq km (147 sq mi). Slightly more than half is designated as the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in recognition of the quality of its landscape. The 2007 mid-year population estimate for the Isle of Wight is 143,700 and the whole of the Island's area is included within our LEADER application due to the integration between urban and rural areas and the reliance of the rural areas on the Market Towns as outlets for goods and services.

Our LEADER application recognizes the strategic role of land-use in conserving and enhancing our varied rural environment. This will only be possible if farmers, foresters and growers are supported to become more economically viable and sustainable. We also recognize the growing importance of the environment to the tourism industry, and the impact this will have on the Island's economy.

Residents in the Island's rural areas tend to be healthier and benefit from lower levels of crime. However, these rural areas also suffer from poor access to services, limited employment and training options, and it is considered that the rural way of life is generally under threat. The 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation show that the IW is more deprived than the regional average (50%) on all 6 district measures.

Rural Wight accounts for 28% of full time equivalent (FTE) jobs but only 22% of economic output, and average rural productivity (£23,252 GVA / FTE job per annum) is lower than for the whole Island (£29,635). Both figures are well below the average productivity figures for the South East: £41,501 and UK: £40,462. This is due to the relatively larger number of jobs in low productivity sectors, notably Hotels & Catering and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing.

To compliment existing stakeholder engagement a significant consultation exercise has been undertaken to determine the actions to address these issues. This resolved that the key priorities would be: promotion of best practice, adding value, developing new income streams and encouraging an enterprise culture. Improved business margins would impact directly and indirectly on the rural economy and would enable landowners to preserve and enhance our valued environment; community vitality will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

The priorities selected for this application are:

- *Increasing the economic value of farming and land management*
- *Support for the wider rural economy*

- *Increasing the vitality of the rural settlements*
- *To promote the rural heritage*

Island farmers have indicated that we need to support the finding of new solutions to old problems, such as connectivity, lack of land-based infrastructure and poor co-operation. We will particularly encourage efficiency, adding value and co-operative working. These activities all seek to stimulate innovation and the take-up of best practice in order to develop new income streams and improve the margins of land-based businesses. Improved facilities regarding storage and meat cutting would enable farmers to meet local supply chain needs and promote Island produce. There is also a need to improve the reliability of the wood supply chain. The main opportunities are with woodfuel, which should enable woodland owners to bring more woodlands back into economic production and better management.

This application will help both farmers and other rural businesses to strengthen existing income streams and to develop new ones. We will look to support an economic environment, increasing the number of businesses with smart growth potential and helping more business start ups. With regards to tourism, we will be encouraging strategic projects that market wider areas, or that involve co-operation between several businesses.

We aim to support local projects that will help revitalise communities. In rural areas there is not always the critical mass for market forces to deliver services and facilities without grant support for their initial conception. We also wish to enhance the quality of life for all residents by fostering a sense of place and a pride in the Island's countryside. It will also help to achieve economic aims, as many projects supported will add to our tourist product and offer opportunities for local businesses and craftsmen.

Our partnership approach to bid formulation, implementation and achieving value from the funding and our strategic alignment will ensure that delivery embraces all aspects of the rural economy, community, and historic and built environment whilst respecting our unique environment.

Sustainability will be key to all our projects, and we will ensure that it will be incorporated from their initial conception. We will also be utilising our existing network of contacts to ensure that some local actions can be enhanced through co-operation with other Local Action Group (LAG)

The Isle of Wight LAG is small and strategic. The Island has a wealth of experience from implementing and delivering the LEADER+ programme and from the new LAG partners. This will be enhanced by recent work to streamline day-to-day administration, processing and project support across a number of rural programmes. Our Marketing Plan will ensure interest and take-up, and we are confident of achieving early programme spend.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF LAG AREA

2.1 Main features and levels of coherence

2.1.1 Geographic

The Isle of Wight covers an area of 380 sq km (147 sq mi). Slightly more than half is designated as the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – 191 sq km (73.7 sq mi) in recognition of the quality of its landscape. A predominantly rural county with a strong coastal influence, the Isle of Wight has 258 sq km (99.6 sq mi) of farmland, 52 sq km (20 sq mi) of developed areas, and 92 km (57 mi) of coastline of which 45 km (28 mi) falls within the Tennyson and Hamstead Heritage Coasts. The landscape is remarkably diverse. From open and dramatic landscape and coastline of the West Wight dominated by the famous chalk downland and ending in The Needles stacks; to the flat estuarine landscapes of the northern coast with their associated importance for wildlife. The rolling downs and sandstone hills of the East Wight with their rural villages and pastureland contrast with the productive Arreton Valley with its arable farming and horticulture.

Our LEADER application recognizes the continuing role of land-use in conserving and enhancing our varied rural environment. This will only be possible if farmers, foresters and growers are supported to become more economically viable and sustainable. We also recognize that the environment is important to tourism and thus the Island's economy. We will therefore be encouraging project applications that seek to improve business margins by adding value and developing new income streams whilst enhancing the positive impact on communities and the environment.

The Island is served by 3 car ferry ports, Yarmouth, East Cowes and Fishbourne. In addition, there are fast passenger routes from West Cowes and Ryde. Connectivity in terms of time is very good; foot passengers can travel from Cowes to central London in under 2 ½ hours. However the cost of the ferries is deemed to be a barrier. We will therefore be encouraging innovative businesses that are not reliant on movement of heavy goods or seek high value and therefore are able to absorb the extra costs. The road network centres on the County Town of Newport and given the relatively small area of the Island, there is a strong urban / rural interface.

2.1.2 Cultural, social and historic

The landscape has been shaped and modified by human hand for over 10,000 years. It bears witness to centuries of settlement, agriculture, industry, conflict, religion and ritual from prehistory to the present day. The story of the past is woven into its fabric – in Neolithic and Bronze Age tombs, Roman villas, Saxon settlements, medieval villages, Victorian holiday resorts and the defences of World War II. LEADER+ and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund jointly funded the Isle of Wight Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP). With the Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Isle of Wight as its basis, this document identifies areas of archaeological and historic landscape importance and sets out strategies for their local management. Our new LEADER programme will align with the work identified and is expected to deliver discrete projects identified in this plan.

The Island has inspired many creative works and through the patronage of Queen Victoria became a fashionable destination for the Victorian gentry. Scientists include Robert Hooke and Professor John Milne; the eminent seismologist who conducted many of his studies in Shide. Anthony Mingella is a more recent example of the Island's creative talent.

Early famous buildings include Brading Roman Villa, Carisbrooke Castle, Quarr Abbey and Osborne House. Henry VIII developed some of the sea fortifications. In 1897 the world's first radio station was set up by Marconi, at the Needles battery. More recently, the Isle of Wight Festival was held at Afton Down near Freshwater in 1970 and attracted around 600,00 people. This has been re-launched and is growing year by year.

The Isle of Wight is a world-famous centre for sailing and hosts several racing regattas. Cowes Week is the longest-running regular regatta in the world, with over 1,000 yachts and 8,500 competitors taking part in over 50 classes of yacht racing. The Isle of Wight Marathon is the United Kingdom's oldest continuously-held marathon, having been run every year since 1957. The Isle of Wight competes in the bi-annual Island Games, and will host these games in 2011. More recent events include Walking and Cycling Festivals. Our LEADER application recognises the importance of the Island's history and culture and seeks to encourage niche and green tourism as a means of both directly and indirectly supporting rural businesses. We will encourage dynamic projects that promote Island products at every opportunity.

Residents in the Island's rural areas tend to be healthier and benefit from lower levels of crime¹. However, it is considered that rural areas suffer from poor access to services, limited employment and training options, and that the rural way of life is generally under threat in a variety of ways. The 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) show that the Isle of Wight is more deprived than the regional average (50%) on all 6 district measures. On 4 of the measures the IW is amongst the most deprived 20% of Local Authorities in the region, and is the most consistently deprived rural Local Authority in the region. However on each measure, the IW's regional ranking has improved since the 2004 IMD. We will co-ordinate our LEADER programme with other funding streams such as Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP) in order that we best support our rural communities and ensure that there is vitality in our rural settlements.

2.1.3 Economic

The latest economic data commissioned from Experian² shows that rural Isle of Wight contributes approximately 22% of the Island's total £1.5 billion output. This proportion has been fairly stable since 1990 despite significant changes to the economy. Rural Wight also accounted for 28% of the Island's 51,250 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs. The economic structure of Rural Wight differs from that of the Isle of Wight overall. While Manufacturing is the clear leader for delivering output for the Isle of Wight as a whole, in the rural area, the leading output sectors are more evenly balanced between Construction, Hotels & Catering and Other Services. After these come Manufacturing, Retail and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing. Together, these 6 sectors account for over half of all rural output. The importance of Tourism to the rural economy can be seen across a number of sectors, including Hotels & Catering.

In terms of jobs, Hotels & Catering, Education, and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing are the top providers of Full Time Equivalent jobs. Construction, Other Services, Retail, Manufacturing and Health are also key providers of rural FTE jobs. Since Rural Wight accounts for 28% of FTE jobs but only 22% of output, we can see why average rural productivity (£23,252 GVA / FTE job per annum) is lower than for the whole Island (£29,635). Both figures are well below the average productivity figures for the South East: £41,501 and UK: £40,462. This is due to the relatively larger number of jobs in low productivity sectors, notably Hotels & Catering and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing. These sectors have not made much progress in improving productivity since 1995 and need to change if the rural economy is to remain viable, and land-based sectors are to continue to be able to maintain the Island's strong environmental assets. Since 1995, most rural sectors have made progress in terms of output. One exception is Manufacturing which during the period 2001-2005 suffered a significant decline from £44 million GVA to £28.5 million. For the Island as a whole, however, Manufacturing is showing strong growth and is the leading sector for output. The decline in the rural area in part is due to an increasing concentration of manufacturing activity in urban areas.

Sectors showing rapid growth from the mid-nineties are: Construction, Other Services, Retailing and Business Services. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing has enjoyed mixed progress but the overall trend has also been positive. More recently, Wholesaling seems to be enjoying strong growth in the rural area. Although manufacturing has declined, the expansion of other sectors means that the rural economy is now more evenly spread over a greater number of industry sectors. This should result in a more robust rural economy.

There is a strong agricultural presence, including sheep and dairy farming and the growing of arable and horticultural crops³.

Farm Types (number of farms)

Cereals	General Cropping	Horticulture	Specialist Pigs & Poultry	Dairy	Grazing Livestock	Mixed & Other
57	19	43	25	39	164	366

Land Use (2006)

Crops & bare fallow		Temporary grass		Permanent grass		Rough grazing		Woodland	
Area (ha)	H'dings	Area (ha)	H'dings	Area (ha)	H'dings	Area (ha)	H'dings	Area (ha)	H'dings
8,623	194	2,453	131	10,447	436	1,300	119	1,101	165

Agricultural Labour Profile

Farmers (fulltime)	Farmers (Part-time)	Agricultural Workers (f/t)	Agricultural Workers (p/t)	Casual Workers	Total Labour
303	479	361	308	76	1,607

* *treat with extreme caution*

Traditional agricultural commodities have to seek markets off of the island incurring costs, but farmers have managed to successfully exploit some specialist and high value markets. One of the most successful agricultural sectors at present is the growing of crops under cover, particularly salad crops. The Island has a longer growing season than much

of the United Kingdom and this favours such crops. Garlic has been successfully grown for many years and has led to the establishment of an annual Garlic Festival at Newchurch. The favourable climate has led to the success of vineyards, including one of the oldest in the British Isles, at Adgestone. Lavender is grown for its oil and hosts the UK Collection. Our study⁴ indicated that only 12% of businesses are involved in secondary processing and only 10% of owners derive an income from timber products.

Our LEADER programme will encourage farmers, foresters and growers to develop niche and high value products and shorter supply chains in order to offset some of the extra costs of severance. We are discussing a number of projects that will provide additional machinery to enable the applicants to develop new markets. We will also be encouraging more efficient supply chains particularly in the food and forestry sectors. The Isle of Wight has an Eco Island vision. To support this, we will be using LEADER to encourage on farm and community renewable energy projects. We will also be supporting the development of the woodfuel supply chain.

2.1.5 Environment

The landscape, natural and historic environments of the Isle of Wight are highly valuable, both inherently, reflected in the level of international, national, regional and local designation but also for their economic value as living working areas and for the tourism economy and for the quality of life and enjoyment that they afford to our community.

The Island's biodiversity is remarkable with a number of key species flourishing, Red Squirrel, Dormouse, Bat species, Glanville Fritillary Butterfly, Field Cow Wheat, Early Gentain and Wood Calamint to name a few. As stated previously, our application recognizes the vital role of sustainable land-use practice in conserving and enhancing our varied rural environment and the need to support farmers, foresters and growers to become more economically viable and sustainable.

Rural Wight is the major source of the drinking water, and water for industrial and agricultural uses. Our water utility company, Southern Water, import 25% of demand from the River Test in Hampshire via an under Solent pipeline. In recent years farmers have been encouraged to create winter storage reservoirs. The Eastern Yar, Atherfield Brook and Lukely Brook are over-abstracted (at risk of environmental damage under current usage), and the Medina over-licensed (at risk of damage if licences were fully used)⁵. These classifications are a first-pass attempt, using national, science-based methodology, and could be subject to further analysis and interpretation. However, it should be no surprise that small local rivers and aquifers are heavily used and there is no further water available for licensing in summer. We will encourage and support land-owners to apply directly to the Regional Development Agency for projects for water resource management eligible for the RDPE.

A significant proportion of domestic and commercial waste goes to landfill in Rural Wight. This implies additional transport impacts on the surrounding roads, along with the environmental effects of the landfill (litter, smell, emissions etc). Our LEADER programme will encourage applications to support community environmental initiatives, especially waste reduction, recycling and energy-saving schemes.

2.2 Critical mass in terms of ability to achieve progress

It is important to include the whole of the Isle of Wight within our LEADER application. The travel to work information within 2001 census shows that there is considerable integration between urban and rural areas. The lack of affordable rural housing forces many rural workers to live within towns. The towns also provide a market for rural production. Given a population of over 140,000 and a farming population that has previously been adverse to joint working, we think it is critical that we invest in facilitation in order to attract and develop the high quality, dynamic and innovative projects we believe are needed to achieve our vision.

2.3 Key population statistics and rural / urban split

The 2007 mid year population estimate for the Isle of Wight was 143,700⁶. Within this total just under 7,000 lived in dispersed areas, the majority residing in towns and villages. The rural area has a higher proportion of elderly people than the urban area with 33.8% of the rural population aged 60 or over. 45% of people age 90 and over live in rural areas and conversely the age groups with the least proportional representation in the rural area are 20-29 and 30-39 (26% and 29.7% of Island totals respectively)⁷. Similarly 39% of the widowed population live in the rural area, which is considerably higher than the 29% average of the rural south east⁸.

2.4 Focus on rural area

Whilst our bid is for the benefit of the whole island we have based our evidence gathering and data collection where possible on the Island's rural area, as defined by those Census Output Areas classified as rural by DEFRA in 2004⁹. This means that the data, in particular economic data, is not skewed by inclusion of the Medina Valley and Ryde area and the true rural priorities are reflected.

2.5 Inclusion of Market Towns requires rationale

All the Island's towns are included in the survey. Newport, the County Town has a vital role in supplying the Island's rural businesses and in providing outlets for their goods and services. Other Market Town's provide similar roles. However, the focus of the programme is such that projects will only take place in Newport, Ryde, East and West Cowes and The Bay (Sandown, Shanklin and Lake) when they are for the benefit of the rural area. Examples of possible projects would include creating sales opportunities for farm produce, or a central processing plant for livestock.

2.6 List of parishes and map

All Island parishes are included. For map please see Appendix 1.

Arreton	Brading	Bembridge	Brighstone	Calbourne	Carisbrooke
Chale	Cowes	East Cowes	Fishbourne	Freshwater	Gatcombe
Gurnard	Godshill	Lake	Newchurch	Newport	Northwood
Rookley	Ryde	Sandown	Shalfleet	Shanklin	Shorwell
St Helens	Totland	Ventnor	Whippingham	Wootton	Wroxall
Yarmouth	Havenstreet & Ashe		Nettlestone & Seaview		
Niton and Whitwell					

3.0 ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local engagement and consultation

3.1.1. Demonstration that this has taken place

Rural Priorities Group

In Spring 2007 a Rural Priorities Group was formed consisting of representatives of the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership, the Isle of Wight Council, the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership and Rural Community Council. The group has developed draft Rural priorities for consultation that had been identified through their existing programmes, and has drawn together all understanding about the Island's rural areas in a 'State of Rural Wight' document. Together with the South East LEADER Regional Implementation Plan, these formed the basis of our consultation.

To compliment existing stakeholder engagement a significant consultation exercise has been undertaken which included:

- Survey to all key stakeholders (via on-line and postal survey)
- Farm business confidence study (telephone and face-to-face)
- Rural services and community building survey (postal and face-to-face)
- Youth survey (face-to-face)

A key method of consultation was through QuestionPro electronic survey. We emailed 161 potential stakeholders in October 2007, inviting them to forward the survey on to whoever might be interested. The survey required stakeholders to prioritise measures, but also contained free response fields. 130 people completed the whole survey, but it was viewed by over 350 people. We were able to analyse the results by cutting the data to the following categories:

- All respondents
- Farming / land-based respondents
- Rural businesses

We commissioned consultants to contact 50 farmers and assess the agricultural business confidence of local farmers and make suggestions as to how the results might influence our LEADER application.

For our background preparation for the Rural Access to Services Programme, we published a survey in the local paper (which claims to be read by 97% of Islanders) and backed this up with face-to-face interviewing in local villages. These produced 116 and 168 responses respectively. Together with a survey of local community buildings and retail space¹⁰ this work has provided useful data to inform the LEADER programme.

In addition we surveyed 91 young people of 16 or under, and 32 adults aged 17 or over at a local Youth Event¹¹. Of the young people, based on an analysis of their postcodes, it is estimated that 1/3rd were from rural areas. The purpose of this survey was to give greater understanding regarding young people's concerns for the environment, whether they would volunteer for associated work, and what skills they thought they would need.

3.1.2 Outcomes

LEADER on-line consultation

Respondents agreed with the themes developed within the SEEDA Regional Implementation Plan and when asked to prioritise actions, there was a fairly even spread of results, this is reflected in our choice of objectives and targets.

Respondents in all categories felt that training in business skills was more important than land-based training or community capacity building. When asked to rank the importance of funding innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration activities on the Isle of Wight, supporting micro-business development and farm diversification scored the highest, followed by providing better-paid employment opportunities and developing an enterprise culture.

Regarding the importance of funding forestry and woodland management activities, the priorities in order of preference were improving the management of woodlands, developing markets for woodland products and use of woodlands for recreational purposes, but there was little difference between. However, when we analysed the farmer / landowner responses, there was a more marked preference for developing markets.

The preference for funding local food production and consumption activities was encouraging local procurement of food which was rated significantly higher than adding value to locally produced food and developing new markets respectively. When considering funding rural tourism development activities, new green tourism products/services, destination development and marketing and farm diversification all received the same rating.

Ranking the importance of funding the rural services enhancement activities, tackling disadvantage in rural areas, community activity facilities and services to help people return to work all scored very similarly. The farmer / landowners who responded particularly disagreed with funding such services to help people return to work through this programme. The importance of funding activities in order to address both rural and urban social exclusion/prioritised access to countryside for healthier lifestyles. This was thought quite a lot more important than addressing the needs of urban communities, which again was quite a lot more important than access to shops.

When prioritising the importance of funding the environmental enhancement our respondents selected enhancing biodiversity and landscapes and improving village environments with equal importance ahead of conserving cultural and historic assets. The farmer / landowners who responded gave greatest priority to enhancing biodiversity and landscapes. Regarding the importance of funding for climate change activities, renewable energy was by far the most popular. Resources management in rural businesses and mitigating the effects of climate change were respectively less popular.

Finally, regarding the importance of funding the following community linking activities with other LAGs and regions, sharing ideas and experiences, co-operation projects and creating cultural and commercial links were all weighted fairly evenly. The farmers weighted co-operation highest, while rural businesses favoured networking.

Farm business confidence study

The primary conclusions drawn from this survey were:

- There are significant barriers to farmers and growers venturing into secondary processing of agricultural and forestry products;
- There is low uptake of and significant barriers to accessing vocational training in particular business management training;
- The age of farmers and growers is a significant barrier to investment in modernisation and diversification within the industry;
- Collaboration is less common in the livestock sectors than in other sectors;
- Woodland and woodland products are not being used to the maximum potential in terms of income generation.

Rural services and community building surveys

The primary conclusions drawn from this survey were:

- There are in excess of 150 operations providing goods and services that draw a significant proportion of their business from Island residents;
- In terms of profile of retail businesses, $\frac{3}{4}$ draw on local trade as either a primary or secondary source of their business, and $\frac{2}{3}$ see locals as their main customer group;
- Of the 71 separate communities identified, almost $\frac{1}{2}$ have no retail operation;
- Under $\frac{1}{2}$ of all rural retail outlets offer some local and fresh produce but the range provided is relatively modest;
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of rural retail outlets provide some form of utilities key or card charging;
- Many community facilities exist for a primary purpose rather than generating income or promoting a facility for wider use and the extent of the programme of activities and events varies considerably;
- The majority of community buildings that actively seek outside hirings average between 25 and 50% utilisation across the week. The majority of buildings are utilised for activities/events no more than two or three times a week – often only for in-house uses.

Youth survey

There was a wide range of environmental issues which young people felt strongly about. For 28% recycling was their main concern, for 26% it was global warming, climate change or renewable energy, and for 22% it was animal welfare. To encourage young people to do something about their main concern the biggest single answer was for someone to visit their school to talk with them about the issue. Regarding volunteering, skills to be gained, these included specific skills – preservation, pond and river warden skills, animal welfare; information – both generally and for particular issues such as renewable energy, recycling, plants & animals and wildlife in general.

3.2 Major themes and visions for the LAG

Our vision is to enhance the vitality of the Island's rural community by supporting agriculture, rural businesses and local people to be more sustainable both economically and environmentally.

The promotion of best practice, adding value, developing new income streams and encouraging an enterprise culture will be key priorities. Improved business margins will impact directly and indirectly on the rural economy and will enable landowners to conserve and enhance our valued environment; community vitality will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

3.2.1 What rural communities and businesses wish to achieve

Our consultations reflect the need to assist all types of rural businesses. Diversification and adding value are major themes. Stakeholders feel that if the rural economy was improved, other social issues would be easier to tackle. Transport and affordable housing are highlighted often, although these cannot specially be tackled by the LEADER programme. The cost and difficulty regarding animal slaughter appears fairly frequently but is not addressed within this application as a slaughterhouse fits directly with the RDPE. Many of the respondents remarked that although rural businesses should be assisted, it should not be to the detriment of the environment.

3.2.2 How can LEADER funding help deliver this

We are applying for funding under both Axes 1 and 3 of the RDPE. We are requesting funding for the following measures:

AXIS 1

- 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings
- 122 Improving the economic value of forests
- 123 Adding value to agricultural and forestry products
- 124 Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies

AXIS 3

- 311 Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- 312 Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises
- 313 Encouragement of tourism activities
- 321 Basic services for the economy and rural population
- 322 Village renewal and development
- 323 Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
- 331 Training and information for micro-businesses

3.3 Fit with national, regional and local plans

- AONB Management Plan – The LEADER programme strongly supports and compliments the Vision, policies and policy objectives of this statutory plan which seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape. The importance of the sustainable land management practice, a vibrant rural economy and rural community underpin the approach of the plan
- IW Economic Strategy – this application aims to achieve smart growth
- Regional Economic Strategy – this supports the Rural policy objectives by focussing on increasing GVA, productivity and business efficiency and by supporting initiatives helping to reduce the Island’s ecological footprint
- Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming (‘Our Healthy Future’) - this application supports farmers’ markets, local meat promotion, and renewable energy

- South East Forestry and Woodlands Framework ('Seeing the Wood for the Trees') – this application supports this strategy as it aims to increase the economic value of woodlands and seeks to help local woodlands play a greater role in attracting tourism, inward investment and other economic activity
- South East Regional Plan – this application will in particular support the following cross-cutting issues of sustainable development, climate change, resource use and quality of life
- Eco-Island – Isle of Wight Sustainability Community Strategy – This emerging document builds upon the support for the Island's environment, rural economy and community in the current Island Futures community strategy.
- Island Plan – The emerging Local Development Framework for the Isle of Wight has identified the importance of environmental protection and management and a vibrant rural economy and community.
- Historical Environment Action Plan – this embraces all aspects of the historical environment, including landscape, archaeology and the built environment.
- Biodiversity Action Plan – supported by the new statutory duty of regard for biodiversity, this plan details the actions needed to protect, conserve and enhance the Island's important biodiversity and includes a plan for greater community involvement in the management and understanding of this resource.

3.3.1 DEFRA rural strategies and RDPE

DEFRA's Rural Strategy 2004 identifies three key priorities:

1. Economic and Social Regeneration – supporting enterprise and targeting resources to areas of greatest need
2. Social Justice for All – tackling rural exclusion and providing fair access to services and opportunities
3. Enhancing the Value of the Countryside – protecting the natural environment

This application will focus on priority 1, but recognises that in order to achieve coherence, funding will also need to be provided to support rural exclusion issues. Support of rural businesses will achieve priority 3 outcomes.

The RDPE also has 3 Axes:

- **Axis 1: Making agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable** – fostering a more competitive business environment through a focus on skills, knowledge transfer and innovation
- **Axis 2: Enhancing the environment and countryside** – Environmental Stewardship will be at the heart of this
- **Axis 3: Enhancing opportunity in rural areas** – investing in skills, enterprise and innovation, targeting support to those in rural areas that need it most, whether in the farming sector or the broader rural economy

Our programme will focus on the axes 2 and 3, through all four of our identified priorities. In particular we will be seeking to support farmers to increase their profitability by supporting collaborative initiatives, adding value to production and diversifying. Supporting local food, renewable energy and forestry initiatives will be key elements of this, with a focus on supply chain efficiencies as well as innovative production. We will also be supporting other rural businesses to expand and will be encouraging innovative

community-led projects that tackle local issues and seek to enhance the vitality of settlements. The programme will be complimentary to the work being undertaken in the rural areas under Axis 2. We will ensure that the LAG is aware of the work under Axis 2 and that those advising and assisting and benefiting from Environmental Stewardship are aware of the LEADER programme and its potential to add value to other aspects of their business. Natural England are an advisor on the LAG.

3.3.2 Sustainable Community Strategy (Eco-Island) and Local Area Agreement

The Isle of Wight Strategic Partnership (ISP) is overseeing the revision of the current Community Strategy 'Island Futures' towards the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy 'Eco-Island'. The Eco-Island vision for the Island is:

"To be a world-renowned Eco Island, with a thriving economy, a real sense of pride, where residents and visitors feel safe and are treated with respect"

This Vision is underpinned by a new series of Values for the Island:

- A strong sense of community engagement
- A passion and enthusiasm for the Island
- A desire and willingness to improve what we do & what we have
- Using the uniqueness of the Island as a reason to get things done with ambition
- Positive about change and outward-looking
- A respect for others and welcoming their contribution

Eco Island will set the strategic context for the new way that the Island will go about its daily business, from 2008 until 2020. Specifically, it will set out a new framework, within which the Island's carbon footprint aims to be reduced from current levels to almost nil by 2020, accompanied by increased sustainability in all of the Island's communities. This will be the responsibility of the ISP to deliver this aim, through the four themed Partnership Boards: Children's Trust Board; Health & Wellbeing Board; Crime and Disorder Reduction Board; Economic and Environment Board.

The Partnership Boards will be tasked with delivering the whole ISP work programme, which includes the new Local Area Agreement (LAA), to be agreed with GOSE in June 2008. The new LAA will see public money coming down from Government agencies, specifically aimed at partnerships, with an emphasis on cross-cutting ways of working which make a real difference to Island residents. The new LAA represents a change in the way which central government wishes to work with local authorities and their partners.

This application will focus on priorities within the theme overseen by the Economic and Environment Board's, although some projects supported will also benefit the other themes. The Chair of the LAG as a member of the Economic and Environment Board, will ensure that the LEADER programme forms part of the delivery of the Eco-Island vision.

3.4 Objectives and targets

We have included all outcomes applicable within the LEADER programme to allow for a wide scope for delivery. This is appropriate as it reflects issues raised in our consultations. However, not all outcomes will receive equal amounts of funding, as indicated below and reflected in the accompanying spreadsheet:

Top priority

- Modernisation of agricultural holdings
- Improving the economic value of forests
- Adding value to agricultural and forestry products
- Co-operation for the development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and the forestry sector
- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Business creation and development

Secondary priority

- Encouragement of tourism activities
- Basic services for the economy and rural population
- Village renewal and development
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
- Training and information
- Implementing co-operative projects between LAGs

We will be looking at linkages between activities undertaken in relation to the top priorities and how they can catalyse projects in the second list. Please see spreadsheet for associated outputs.

3.5 Priorities and major areas of activity

50% of our intended programme spend is within Axis 1. Therefore a major area of activity is with the land-based sector (who also can benefit from some of the Measures in Axis 3 in this programme and within Axis 2 within the RDPE as a whole).

Priority 1: Increasing the economic value of farming and land management through:

- Improving processing and storage facilities
- Encouraging on-farm renewable energy products
- Encouraging diversification activities
- Developing supply chains for food and forest products
- Developing new markets for food and forest products
- Introducing new technology
- Enhancing environmental performance
- Encouraging co-operation

Rationale:

From the extensive consultations undertaken Island farmers have indicated that we need to support the finding of new solutions to old problems, such as costs of mainland connections, lack of land-based infrastructure and poor co-operation. These activities all seek to stimulate innovation and the take-up of best practice in order to develop new income streams and improve the margins of land-based businesses.

This will have direct effects in allowing the farmers sufficient income to farm in a sustainable manner that will conserve and enhance the countryside, and indirect effects in terms of the multiplier effect on associated businesses.

The beauty of the countryside is also a major driver for the Island's tourist industry. There are no other appropriate funding opportunities for these activities, and we will be encouraging farmers to also consider agri-environmental measures within Axis 2 through direct working with them and their agents.

Evidence of need:

The top three priorities from our on-line consultation were:

- improving the rural infrastructure
- improving the management of woodlands
- encouraging local procurement of food

As an example of the improved infrastructure required there is a strong case for the Island to have its own slaughter-house or possibly abattoir. This would be funded through the main RDPE, but LEADER would assist a successful application where appropriate. For example through complimentary funding of small scale associated improvements such as meat cutting plants and secondary processing. EBLEX estimate that about 5000 pigs, 20,000 lambs and 4000 cattle are exported off the Island each year¹². Improved facilities regarding storage and meat cutting would enable farmers to meet local supply chain needs, promote Island produce and add value.

Our Farm Study¹³ indicated only 12% of businesses are involved in secondary processing and 50% already collaborate. We have already been approached by a number of farmers with smaller scale projects to add value to their produce. We will encourage co-operative working, and envisage that adding value and food supply chain projects to be a significant part of our programme. The Farm Confidence study also identifies a number of actions within this priority. The RASP surveys indicate that there is strong demand for local fresh produce, and this is currently not being fulfilled.

Our study¹⁴ indicated under 40% of woodlands are actively managed and only 10% of owners derive an income from timber products. There are a large number of public and private woodlands, however all apart from the largest diameter timber of a limited number of species has little commercial value. There is a need to establish a supply chain, including the potential for renewable energy. Many of the private woodlands have difficult access. They can only be made viable with mobile equipment including saw mills adding value before the 'forest gate'. There is only one such mill on the Island and two static saw mills. There are no tannelling facilities. The main opportunities are therefore with woodfuel.

The IW Council estimate¹⁵ a sustainable supply of 5,000 tonnes per annum of woodchip from Forestry Commission woodlands, and a similar amount from private woodlands. Processing of wood to woodchip requires chipping machinery and storage facilities. There are opportunities for small-scale pellet production from sawdust. We are working with the newly launched Woodland Forum, the Forestry Commission and South East Woodfuels to develop the infrastructure and co-operative working in order to improve the reliability of the supply chain, and to bring more woodlands back into economic production and sustainable management. This as a priority for LEADER support.

Specific comments:

“Development for an internal market for food grown on the Isle of Wight is important and goes hand-in-hand with encouragement of initiatives for producing a wide variety of high quality foods”

“Local procurement would benefit the whole Island, from the supplier, the end users, local economy, environment etc. The IW Leader programme could consider working with local government to promoting local procurement.”

“I feel we need to regenerate old coppice for firewood, charcoal, thatching and building purposes. We also need to encourage using wood as a fuel in homes and other buildings. This would provide employment, encourage biodiversity, and would help create green energy”

“I would love to see support for rural businesses who are intending to expand or diversify. Such expansion will in turn be of benefit to the local economy with job creation and an increase in productivity for both Island and non-island consumption. There is new equipment I would love to invest in, walls that I would love to knock down but this is not something that I can afford to really do...”

“Maintenance of 500 miles of rights of way requires considerable quantity of timber and use of other woodland products could be developed for sustainable solutions. Materials are sourced locally wherever possible, the importance of supporting local saw mills and expertise is critical. Developing sustainable recreational use of woodland is an important objective.”

Beneficiaries:

The main beneficiaries will be farmers, foresters and workers in the land-based sector. However the supply chain will ensure that there are wider beneficiaries in the economy. A vibrant land based sector is key, not only to the rural economy, but the overall rural community and environment.

Impact and Value for money:

Preference will be given to projects that involve co-operation between farmers and foresters. We will also be looking for projects that support the Island’s food supply chain. Improving the economic performance of farming and land management will also be beneficial to the tourist industry, which is reliant on the attraction of sustainably managed land with its associated environmental benefits.

Types of projects:

Through our existing networks we have already been approached to fund the following types of projects:

- Meat processing (storage, cutting curing)
- Dairy processing
- Farmer’s markets and selling opportunities
- On-farm renewable energy projects (some may be better suited to RDPE)
- Development of the woodland supply chain including wood hubs

Several farmers have indicated that they have projects that do not require planning permission and can spend in 2008.

Priority 2: Support for the wider rural economy through:

- Encouraging farmers and growers to diversify into non-agricultural activities
- Encouraging small business start-ups
- Encouraging small business growth
- Support and promote innovation and enterprise
- Encourage quality social enterprises
- Support opportunities for new entrants
- Developing the 'green' tourism product
- Developing new niche tourism projects
- Providing training to support farm diversification and micro-enterprise skills
- Encouraging sectoral co-operation

Rationale:

This priority will help both farmers and other rural businesses to strengthen existing income streams and to develop new ones. We will look to support an economic environment where the number of businesses with smart growth potential increases and a greater number of business start ups occur. The promotion of innovation and enterprise will be key aspects. Young people are the future of all economic growth and wellbeing for all communities and as such their positive introduction to employment will also be a priority. Growth should be undertaken in an environmentally sensitive manner in order to preserve the Island's rich natural assets. Development of new niche tourism will encourage extended tourism incomes beyond the traditional peak months. We will also be looking to extend and compliment existing business support networks and funds, the key being to add value rather duplicate activity.

Evidence of need:

In 2004 the IMD¹⁶ revealed that Totland, Freshwater, Shalfleet, Ningwood, Wootton, Niton, Central East Wight, Bembridge, Brading, Chale, Ventnor and their hinterlands were all calculated to be in the top 5% of areas in Rural South East in terms of employment deprivation. In 2005 1.7% of the workforce of Rural Wight were in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance, compared to 0.9% in Rural South East and 1.2% in Rural England. Colwell, Ventnor and its hinterland, Brading and Seaview were all within the top 5% of areas in the South East in terms of rates of claimants, and Freshwater Bay, Bembridge and Chale and its hinterland were within the top 10%¹⁷.

The decline of rural manufacturing demonstrates the continued need and potential scope for incubation of small scale manufacturing in rural areas with growing businesses moving to urban centres when ready.

There is also a high level of part-time and seasonal employment. The 2001 Census shows the part-time / full-time split in rural areas was (32%/68%) which is a lot higher than in SE Rural total (26%/74%)¹⁸. This reflects the dominance of certain sectors i.e. agricultural and tourism.

A key issue that employers have commented upon time and again is the attitude of young people entering employment. They are either very pessimistic or unrealistic in their expectations. The true economic potential of our young people is not being realised or retained on the Island to the detriment of business, families and individuals.

LEADER will look to encourage improved productivity in the traditional sectors and promote greater activity in the higher productivity business sectors. Innovative and enterprise will be key ingredients along with the encouragement of the next generation to contribute more fully to the Island's economic prosperity. A key result of higher productivity will be higher wage rates and employment opportunities.

Our consultation ranked supporting micro-business development and farm diversification the highest. With regards to tourism, developing green tourism products and activities was seen as the priority. Our consultation said:

“Providing initiatives to promote the rural economy are of great importance”

“More opportunities for young people so that they can stay on the island”

“Often there is plenty of innovation and ideas – pump priming is often needed to “get these ideas going or developed”

I would like to propose that the IW Leader programme help and encourage businesses that are providing employment and creating demand for Island produced goods and services, particularly food based... We believe that there remains substantial potential for increased sales of Island food, both to Island residents, holiday visitors and 'exports' to the mainland. This can only be good for the Island, it's economy, ecology and the wider environment.”

“Rural areas need supporting, particularly in the off season winter months. Any funding that could look into helping businesses develop and find new ways to work over this period would be good for all involved. Businesses and their suppliers would benefit, staff could be kept on over the winter instead of becoming unemployed, and more money would go into local shops and other enterprises.”

“The Island has the potential to be a leader in creative business, opportunities to cluster and support creative business and foster an enterprise culture should be pursued vigorously”

“Support and guidance for innovators and entrepreneurs - in the form of training, grants for research and product development and marketing would assist considerably in growing the economy.

Beneficiaries:

Rural businesses directly and through the supply chain , and the whole rural community.

Impacts and value for money:

With regards to business support, our work under the LEADER+ programme has revealed that small amounts of money can make a difference to start-up businesses and can be used as a carrot to tie new businesses in to on-going support and mentoring. However, there is a strong case to provide the right type of business with larger amounts of support. The LAG's synergies with wider networks will also enhance impacts.

With regards to tourism, we will be encouraging strategic projects that market wider areas, or that involve co-operation between several businesses. This will increase the

impact from a relatively small budget. Some projects in this section could have overlap with other funding programmes e.g. the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), so we will be looking to align all rural programmes to ensure that projects are directed to the most appropriate funding stream and the maximum return can be derived across all programmes. This joined up aspect is seen as a key strength of the Island's bid.

Types of projects:

We have been approached to fund the following:

- Development of Brading and Yarmouth as 'gateways'
- Niche farm tourism
- Inspiring young people
- On-farm café and education facilities
- Creation of flexible business accommodation

Priority 3: Increasing the vitality of the rural settlements through:

- Provision of basic non-statutory services
- Development of community facilities
- Funding for small-scale projects identified within Parish Plans
- LEADER lite small grant scheme for community projects

Rationale:

This priority will help us achieve our vision of sustainable communities. In rural areas there is not always the critical mass for market forces to deliver services and facilities without grant support for their initial conception. LEADER offers the opportunity to encourage services and facilities by providing seedcorn money and plugging the gaps from other sources of funding. It will be aligned and co-ordinate with both SDF and the RASP to ensure that there is no duplication. LEADER will offer the opportunity to deliver relatively small projects which can give quick wins and make a lot of difference to the Island's rural communities.

Evidence of need:

Some of the Island scores poorly with regards to barriers to services. Parts of the rural area are within the 5% most deprived areas of Rural South East¹⁹. This is calculated on distance to GP premises, convenience store or supermarket, primary school and post office. The only Town or Parish Councils that have drop-in offices are Wootton, Brading, Totland, Bembridge and Freshwater.

Within the LEADER programme we supported 92 community projects with our LEADER lite programme. These projects all received under £3000 grant funding and the programme offered a simple fast-track application and reporting process to ease the administrative burden for all parties. It produced numerable outputs and many hours of volunteer time and was a good way to get community engagement in delivery of areas of identified community need. We wish to continue this idea within the new programme.

The consultation work for RASP has identified that whilst the Island has many community buildings, there is a considerable under-utilisation due to a lack of capacity within the community, and also a lack of promotion of resources. There is a strong case for aligning RASP with LEADER to tackle this issue.

The LEADER consultation ranked the tackling disadvantage in rural areas highly. They also prioritised access to countryside for healthier lifestyles. Our consultation said:

“Enhancing rural services can help improve sustainability and help reduce local travel needs”

“Shops as community hubs and social networking points should not be undervalued”

“(Priorities include) promotion of Green Gym, Healthy Walks, Adopt-A-Garden Schemes, cycling and informal recreation”

“It would be great to see local post offices re-opened. Fat chance, I suspect. But it would be great to see help for places making better use of existing buildings, such as schools and churches, for wider public use. Libraries deserve more support from the Council, and perhaps there are ways Leader could help?”

Beneficiaries:

All rural residents, but especially those with difficulty accessing services.

Impact and value for money:

All services and facilities established will need to continue without long-term grant support. All applications will therefore be assessed against the sustainability of their business plan. It would be impossible to support all the requests we get for improvements to community buildings, so we are developing a strategy through RASP.

We will review Parish Plans to highlight any projects that can be supported through the programme. Additionally the LEADER lite programme was particularly successful at harnessing community engagement and delivered many hours of volunteer time.

Potential type of projects:

- Small capital grants to community buildings to enable delivery of strategic business plans
- Support to co-ordinate village shops

Priority 4: To promote the rural heritage through:

- Encouraging projects that seek to involve local communities in their cultural, historical and natural heritage
- Undertaking small-scale infrastructure projects
- Encouraging community involvement in nature conservation and environmental action
- Supporting festivals and events that celebrate the Island’s rural heritage
- Work with young people to develop their environmental awareness

Rationale:

This priority will help achieve our vision of increasing community vitality to enhance the quality of life for all residents by fostering a sense of place and a pride in the Island’s countryside. It will also help to achieve economic aims, as many projects supported will add to our tourist product and offer opportunities for local businesses and local craftsmen. LEADER funding will align with the AONB SDF.

Evidence of need:

The Island's heritage and natural environment is a major asset, which has for many years supported its economy. Holidays focused on natural heritage, including wildlife and geology are a growing alternative to the traditional seaside resort holiday. These are often in 'shoulder season' increasing the viability of other businesses that depend upon the visitor for their income and local residents as a result. As well as traditional tourist attractions, the rural area is host to walking holidays and cycling holidays through the attractive scenery. The Isle of Wight hosts an annual Walking Festival which is the largest of its kind throughout the UK. Almost every town and village plays host to hotels, hostels and camping sites. The Island remains an important destination for coach tours from other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan provides a vision for the future conservation and enhancement of over half of the land mass on the Isle of Wight that falls within the national protected landscape designation. The plan sets out policies, policy objectives for the area and specific actions being undertaken to further the objectives of the designation and achieve the vision within eight theme areas, Landscape Character; Earth Heritage; Wildlife; Historic Environment; Living and Working; Farming and Forestry and Visiting and Enjoying. The priorities in the LEADER Programme are in line, and will help with the delivery of the aims and objectives of the AONB Management Plan. The Biodiversity Action Plan also links to community and farming activities.

The HEAP was drafted in 2007 and embraces all aspects of the historic environment, including landscape, archaeology and the built environment. All are considered to be 'historic' in the sense that they are products of human interaction with the natural environment over time but certain elements of the historic environment exemplify the character and local distinctiveness of 15 distinct Historic Landscape Characterisation Areas. Its aim is to manage change and to conserve historic landscape and historic environment features. The LEADER programme will help in the aims, objectives and actions of the HEAP.

Our Youth Survey²⁰ reveals the wide range of environmental issues which young people feel strongly about including recycling, global warming, climate change, renewable energy and animal welfare. A large majority are keen to volunteer. Skills requested include conservation, pond and river warden skills and animal welfare. They also request more information is made available for particular issues such as renewable energy, recycling, wildlife and reducing carbon footprints. Community action, particularly by young people will be a vital ingredient for our Eco-Island aims. Our LEADER lite programme will offer a simple route for local groups to achieve relatively small amounts of funding to deliver projects which local people have identified as being important to their community.

When prioritising the importance of funding the environmental enhancement our respondents selected enhancing biodiversity and landscapes and improving village environments with equal importance. When ranking the importance of funding for climate change activities renewable energy was by far the most popular. Our consultation said:

“(Priorities should include) training and assisting local communities to improve their village environments”

“Encourage recycling at local level”

“Should not just be ‘conserving’ cultural and historical assets. There is a great need to enhance interpretation and access for both local people and visitors”

“The Leader programme should support communities to investigate, learn and enjoy their cultural heritage and to take forward projects to enhance it. This should also include physical schemes”

“Cultural and historic assets provide opportunities to attract visitors to an area. Once they are there they can be tempted to visit farm shops, village attractions etc”

Beneficiaries:

Rural residents and visitors, young people

Impact and value for money:

Other strategies and plans as mentioned above enable us to prioritise projects. By involving volunteers in community activity, we are increasing people’s skills and also increasing manpower. This theme offers great potential for engaging local businesses and craftsmen. Alignment with AONB SDF monies and other sources of investment will ensure that maximum value is achieved from public funding.

Types of projects:

We have been approached to fund the following:

- A series of small community archaeology projects
- LEADER lite small grant scheme for community projects
- Follow-up work and interpretation of Alverstone Iron Age site
- Historic lanes and tracks promotion
- Community river ‘naming’ project
- Environmental Observatories

3.6 Monitoring performance

The LEADER programme will appoint a Monitoring Officer. Capital projects will receive a visit to determine project completion. Revenue projects will be required to report on activities on a quarterly basis and will receive at least one visit. The Monitoring Officer will gather outcomes, output and spend and report to the LAG on a quarterly basis. The LAG will review and monitor the progress and oversee the annual reporting of the programme’s performance plan. It is important that performance is also reported to wider stakeholders. This will occur on an annual basis.

3.7 Facilitation, marketing and communication plans

The LEADER programme will appoint a Development Officer. This Officer will be tasked with promoting the programme to potential stakeholders. Through LEADER + and through the development of the new LEADER programme we already have an extensive network of contacts. The LAG is also tasked with promoting the programme to potential applicants, stakeholders, the public and funders alike. We have already

identified a number of projects that can help us achieve some early wins as part of our Local Development Strategy (LDS). Facilitation will be key, in order to ensure that projects are strategic, offer the best value for money possible and to encourage co-operative working.

Our marketing plan is covered later in this application.

Communications will be vital and we will use existing networks and organisations to both promote take-up of the programme, and to highlight its successes.

3.8 Working with other LAGs

3.8.1 Sharing facilities

The Isle of Wight will work with adjacent LAGs to facilitate appraisal and monitoring where potential conflicts of interest may arise. In addition, the Isle of Wight will be pleased to assist any new LAGs in sharing best practice, knowledge held from managing other programmes and developing suitable administration systems.

3.8.2 Co-operation projects

The Isle of Wight has worked with many LAGs in the region, within the UK and Europe during the LEADER+ programme. We have some commonalities with these partners that we can continue to develop. In particular we have the following ideas to work with partners on:

- New Forest – develop forestry skills and markets
- North Antrim – develop Women in Business skills and marketing opportunities
- Menorca, Irish Islands and Texel – farm diversification ideas in an island context

Additionally, through the University of Gloucestershire we have had initial conversations with a LAG in Sardinia and will be meeting with them to discuss the potential for co-operation in April 2008. The Isle of Wight has also benefited from other European funding and LAG members have other contacts within their networks with skills and expertise both at a local, regional and national level that will help us to continue to engage with LAGs in other areas and internationally.

3.9 Innovation

The Isle of Wight LEADER Programme will encourage and stimulate innovation and enterprise. Being an island we have a track record as a test bed for new ideas and practice. This approach will be strongly encouraged as part of the LEADER Programme. “The Island is often seen as a “living laboratory”. Innovation will include use of new technologies, use of new techniques or methods of delivery. The LAG will not be adverse to supporting risk if appropriate controls are in place and clear benefits can be demonstrated. New thinking and risk taking go hand in hand.

The LEADER Programme will also look to inspire and encourage young people to fully participate in rural commerce and community affairs. A key aspect derived from our consultation work has been the desire for new solutions to be found to address long standing problems; we see the next generation as vital to the fulfilment of this aspiration.

It is unlikely that established activity of existing projects will be supported except in exceptional circumstances or where there is significant alignment with the programmes core priorities. However, as befits the LEADER approach, additional activity in existing

projects may be supported if it clearly meets the objectives and priorities of the Isle of Wight LEADER programme and adds value.

3.10 Use of non-LEADER funds

Public funding can be used as match, but only up to the maximum grant rate.

Although in theory some measures can receive 100% funding, the Isle of Wight LEADER programme will insist that at least 20% funding is provided from other sources. In the instance where 100% grant rate applies, public match funding can be used up to 100%. We have chosen to insist on co-funding to ensure that our programme monies can be distributed further, and it also indicates commitment to the project from either the project operator or other funders.

3.11 Complimentarity

Part of the appraisal process will be to ensure that all projects are complimentary to the Island's strategic aims and to other initiatives. However, public match funding rules may require the applicant and monitoring officer to ring-fence some of the project funding.

3.12 Training and skills

3.12.1 LAG staff

LAG staff will require two skills sets, technical proficiency and market knowledge including alignment with strategies and understanding of the programme ethos. The current LEADER+ programme ensures that we already possess a high knowledge base with regards to facilitation, monitoring and programme management. However, we recognise that this programme is very different from LEADER + and thus needs new skill sets, particularly regarding relationships with land-based industries. LAG members can help enhance staff understanding of these. One member of the current staff has been studying for a Masters degree in European Rural Development. All new LAG staff will be required to undergo applicable training.

3.12.2 Project holders

Project holders will be required to possess appropriate skills to deliver their projects. If these skills are not present, the project holder will be required to obtain them in order to receive grant payment. The LAG staff will liaise with SEEDA appointed training providers to encourage the appropriate skills to be delivered locally.

3.13 Commitment to sustainable development

Current LEADER+ staff and staff from partner organisations all have commitment and expertise in this subject. Project facilitation will ensure that applicants take sustainability into account from the initial conception of their project. In addition, all projects will be scored against a sustainability checklist provided by SEEDA. Projects with significant negative environmental impacts will not be supported.

3.14 Exit strategy

The majority of project spend will be for capital projects that will result in lasting benefit for Island businesses. Capacity building and training will also support local businesses to maximise gains from the capital input. Therefore businesses benefiting from LEADER funding will be more viable on a long-term basis. We are working to develop a better understanding of financial flows in the rural economy emanating from grant funding. This will enable us to break down barriers preventing local purchasing and aid supply chain development. Thus through the multiplier effect we should minimise leakage from the local economy and LEADER funding will benefit a lot more businesses indirectly. A more buoyant local economy will stimulate innovation and provide more private capital for future projects.

The Rural Priorities Group will grow and continue to meet beyond the RDPE Programme period. Part of its remit is to maintain the intelligence with regard to the rural community that has been developed as part of this bid. It is too early to identify future funding sources, and it is also likely that priorities will change in the interim. A key remit of the LAG is to ensure sustainability and this is reflected in the vision and ethos of this Programme.

4.0 LAG PARTNERSHIP

A Local Action Group has been established to strategically steer the application process. This currently consists of:

- Independent Chair (Judi Griffin)
- Country Landowners and Business Association (David Langford)
- Isle of Wight AONB Partnership (John Brownscombe)
- Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry (Kevin Smith)
- Isle of Wight Council (Ashley Curzon)
- Isle of Wight Economic Partnership (Graham Biss)
- Isle of Wight Rural Community Council (Michael Bulpitt)
- National Farmer's Union (Sue Fisk)

At present most membership is represented by officers of the organisations concerned. It is the aim for the LAG to evolve so that it includes members of organisations rather than officers, and this migration will take place as the LAG establishes itself. The LAG may choose to expand their membership, or appoint advisors for particular subjects such as rural women or youth.

The LAG will work closely with Young Chamber to ensure that the views of young people are considered, and to engage them within the decision-making process.

The IW LEADER LDS will provide a common framework for LAG action, whilst its Constitution will provide the complimentary framework to determine how the LAG should operate to maximum effect and provide for a structure to develop rural partnership working on the Isle of Wight.

4.1 The purpose of the LAG

In general terms the LAG will be guided by national and regional policies set out for the rural areas primarily by DEFRA and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

Each member of the LAG will be expected to commit themselves to the aims of the LAG and to achieve the national, regional and local objectives in the ways outlined in this Constitution and the LDS.

The primary purpose of the LAG is to ensure the maximum benefit is derived from the LEADER programme for the benefit of the identified rural priorities. The LAG will also:

- a) Provide effective governance and strategic direction of the LEADER Programme on the Isle of Wight
- b) Promote sustainable development and seek to foster economic and social wellbeing of local communities in the rural area as appropriate to the delivery of the LDS
- c) Promote public and political awareness for the Island's rural areas both locally and nationally
- d) Promote the LEADER programme to potential applicants, stakeholders and the wider community
- e) Prepare, adopt and review the LDS and oversee its implementation.

4.2 The role of the LAG

The LAG acts as a catalyst and facilitator in implementing the LDS. The LAG manages and allocates resources and steers, develops and supports initiatives to help enhance the Island's rural areas. It does not attempt to control the work of its constituent bodies within their own areas of responsibility.

Specifically the LAG will:

- a) Provide the strategic direction of the LEADER programme
- b) Provide governance and accountability
- c) Oversee the annual reporting of the programme's performance plan
- d) Review and monitor the progress of the LDS
- e) Undertake the Funding Approval process
- f) Promote the programme to potential applicants, stakeholders, the public and funders alike.

4.3. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the LAG will be as follows:

- a) To forge and maintain effective working partnerships with authorities, institutions, organisations and groups towards the delivery of the LDS
- b) To secure implementation of national and regional policies relating to the Island's rural areas in relation to the preparation, implementation and review of the LDS
- c) To influence the plans, strategies and activities of authorities and organisations working in the Island's rural areas to ensure their policies and practices are consistent with the LDS and achieve optimum outcome
- d) To promote liaison and co-ordinate action between members implementing the LDS and ensure integration between different projects and actions and with the priorities and programmes of other organisations and agencies
- e) To act as a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas on rural issues
- f) Commission, set up and determine the terms of reference for any working groups it considers necessary or appropriate for the performance of its functions
- g) Monitor, review and report on the progress of working groups and other agencies delivering the LDS
- h) Monitor the overall effectiveness of the LEADER operational structure and report any changes to the stakeholders
- i) Steer and contribute to the LDS work programme and the work of the LEADER officers
- j) Oversee the preparation, delivery and monitoring of the LDS
- k) Develop and manage the LEADER budget, direct expenditure and oversee the development of funding bids
- l) Agree and sign-off an annual report of the activities of the LAG to be distributed to the stakeholder group and the Island Strategic Partnership.

4.4. Membership of the LAG

The LAG shall have an upper limit of 10 members of which no more than 49% should be from the public sector. The strength of the LAG will be in the experience and scale and

breadth of knowledge and skills of its membership. All members should be willing and able to contribute to the aims of the LAG by virtue of either financial resources, influence, expertise or commitment of time. By becoming a member of the LAG, individuals accept these principles and in doing so commit themselves to supporting the aims of the LDS.

Membership of the LAG will initially consist of the following organisations:

- Country Land and Business Association - private
- Isle of Wight Council - public
- Isle of Wight Economic Partnership - private
- Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - public
- Isle of Wight Rural Community Council - private
- Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce and Tourism - private
- National Farmers Union – private

It is expected that the member organisations will undertake a formal process within their own constitution to determine an appropriate representative for the LAG.

An independent chair will be elected as a core member with no specific portfolio.

All organisations will have one member and one vote.

Initial observers will be:

- Natural England (NE)
- Forestry Commission (FC)
- South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)
- English Heritage (EH)

Observers will not be entitled to vote.

The LAG may also appoint, or co-opt for specific issues and time periods, individuals who it considers have relevant experience, and who it believes can make a significant contribution to the general aims, or specific aims of the LDS.

Core members of the LAG must be at least 18 years of age.

4.5. Membership representation

Each member of the LAG will be entitled to nominate 1 specific individual to the LAG, who will ideally hold office for a minimum period of 1 year. Each member may specify an individual who will act as substitute if the nominated representative is unable to attend. For the effective operation of the LAG and for the LAG to have maximum influence it will be essential that the appropriate representatives are appointed. This will be an experienced member or a senior officer. Each representative should be properly briefed and have the necessary authority to contribute to effective decision making on relevant matters.

The LAG may delegate functions to sub-groups who will be accountable to the LAG. Each member will maintain an attendance record of more than 50% of LAG meetings. The membership of the LAG will be periodically reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As/when its remit evolves the membership of the LAG will need to reflect these changes. New member representatives may only take up their position with the majority support of the existing members.

4.6. Chairman and Vice Chairman of the LAG

The LAG will elect an independent chairperson to serve for a minimum period of 2 years. The LAG will elect a Vice Chair to deputise for the Chairman again to serve for a period of 2 years. The LAG will benefit from continuity of service of these posts, therefore subject to the LAG's approval the posts can be renewed for an additional optional two years. Nominations for the Chairman and Vice Chairman will be sought from the LAG and a decision taken by the LAG. The Chairman will chair any open forums. The Chairman may chair any working groups. In the event of neither the Chairman nor the Vice Chairman being present at a meeting of the LAG, a Chair will be elected from the members present.

4.7. Operation of meetings of the LAG

The secretariat for the LAG shall be provided by the managing agents. They will prepare agendas, call for, distribute and copy papers, take and distribute minutes, organise meetings and venue.

The LAG will normally meet 6 times a year or at such other times as it may determine. If a member has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any contract, proposed contract or other matter, and is present at a meeting at which the contract or other matter is the subject of consideration, he shall at the meeting and as soon as practicable after its commencement disclose the fact and shall not take part in the consideration or discussion of the contract or other matter or vote on any questions with respect to it.

Special or extraordinary meetings may be arranged following consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the LAG. The LAG may also make arrangements for seminars, tours and site visits on issues and projects relevant to its work as it considers appropriate.

Wherever possible, decisions made at the LAG meetings will be by means of consensus. In the event of a vote being necessary, voting will be by a show of hands and decisions reached will be based on the majority of votes cast for or against a particular proposal. In the event of the vote being equal, the Chairman of the LAG will have a second or casting vote, but in the event of the Chairman choosing not to exercise the second or casting vote, the proposal in question will fail.

There shall be a quorum of the LAG when 50% of members are present. Agendas for meetings of the LAG will normally be despatched to members seven working days in advance of the meeting.

The Chairman's agreement will be sought prior to dealing with any urgent items of business or any other business not listed on the agenda for meetings of the LAG. The Managing Agent will keep minutes of the proceedings of the LAG and its working groups. Draft minutes will be produced and distributed within 21 days of each meeting to each LAG member. Minutes will be agreed and signed at the next LAG meeting.

Any organisation or individual can submit a request to the Managing Agent or Chairman for consideration by the LAG. The LEADER Managing Agent and Chairman will decide whether it is appropriate for the LAG to do so. On receipt of an appeal to a decision of the LAG the Chairman will decide if the decision should be reviewed and referred back to the full LAG.

4.8 The Managing Agent

The Managing Agent will be appointed by the LAG in consultation with the Accountable Body. The LAG will be hosted by the Managing Agent. The members of staff allocated to the management of the programme will remain the employees of the Managing Agent.

The LAG may recommend the appointment of other staff as part of a planned work programme and to undertake specific functions. Secondment or Service Level Agreements may also be sought from member organisations, as appropriate.

4.9 Finance

The funding requirements of the LAG will form an integral part of the LDS. The LDS will be reviewed and submitted for approval to the LAG on an annual basis.

The budgets will distinguish between core budget and project costs.

The LAG and LEADER staff will operate within the budget limits agreed in advance and in accordance with any conditions imposed by the funding bodies.

4.10 Review

This Constitution will be reviewed one year after full implementation. Revisions will be recommended and agreed in accordance with the LAG voting rights.

4.11 Termination of LAG membership

A member who wishes to withdraw from the LAG will be required to give not less than 3 months written notice to the Chairman of the LAG setting out their reasons for withdrawal. A review of the viability of the continuation of the LAG will be carried out by the remaining partners.

5.0 ACCOUNTABLE BODY

5.1 Responsibility

The Isle of Wight Council are the Isle of Wight Accountable Body. They are currently the Accountable Body for LEADER+ and the AONB Partnership and are therefore experienced in this role. The Accountable Body will be represented on the LAG.

The Isle of Wight Council will legally be responsible for the LAG activities and the handling of the financial arrangements. It will be responsible for providing a bank-rolling facility for project funding subject to necessary conditions being fulfilled.

5.2 Day-to-day management

The Rural Priorities Group (see 3.1.1) has been meeting on a regular basis since early 2007 with the aims of understanding the rural area, improving co-ordination and improving efficiency of rural delivery. The work of this group has provided the evidence which has been used as the basis to this bid.

These key partners will continue to work closely to streamline day-to-day administration, processing and project support across a number of rural programmes. This will give a clearer route to appropriate funding for grant applicants and will ensure value for money with centralised skills sets for the benefit of all partners and grant beneficiaries.

Day-to-day management of the LEADER Programme will sit with one of the local bodies involved in the rural sector and the chosen body will act as a Management Agent for all appropriate rural schemes by mutual consent and based on sustainability. The decision-making powers will not sit with the Managing Agent, but with the LAG or appropriate governing body.

The Managing Agent will be responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with RDPE operating procedures, which will be supplied by SEEDA;
- Appraising, selecting and issuing grant offers for individual projects, and making subsequent payments against approved claims ;
- Maintaining records of each project to provide an audit trail;
- Monitoring the progress of the projects regularly and carrying out physical checks on project expenditure;
- Annually rolling forward their Implementation Plan and submitting it to SEEDA for approval of activities and funding for the financial year ahead;
- Employment of LAG staff (including pension contributions, redundancy costs, and any costs associated with proper winding up of the LAG at the end of the programme;
- Indemnity insurance;
- Access to financial management and project management skills;
- Advice on procurement of some services and activities;
- Involvement in delivery of complimentary activities and initiatives;
- Support for the LAG.

When required, responsibilities of these duties will be confirmed within a Service Level Agreement.

5.3 Division of duties

The Managing Agent will ensure a clear separation between the functions of project development, appraisal and approval. The following duties will be performed by different members of staff:

- Development
- Appraisal
- Claim checking and recommending for Payment
- Monitoring / Inspection
- Payment Authorisation

Those staff involved in development of projects will not be involved in their appraisal or in taking the decision on whether to recommend them for approval. Those involved with the appraisal of projects will not be involved in the decision on whether to approve them as this would be taken by the LAG. Those checking and recommending the claims for payment will not be the same people as those authorising them for payment.

All members of the LAG and all members of staff will be required to declare an interest where a potential conflict of interest occurs. A register will be maintained by the Managing Agent.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Potential Problem	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
Failure to recruit quality LAG staff	Low	High	L+ staff are still employed. LAG partnership has many contacts within specialist fields
Failure to establish good systems and procedures	Low	Medium	Existing knowledge from operating previous rural programmes and support from SEEDA
Failure to attract suitable projects	Medium	High	LAG to identify suitable projects in advance of programme funding being granted, LAG to produce marketing plan, Experienced Development Officer employed
Failure to achieve spend	Medium	Medium	LAG to identify suitable projects in advance, LAG to produce marketing plan. LAG to 'over commit' at year end in order that projects can be brought forward
LAG overspends in financial year	Medium	Medium	LAG to make some offers conditional on availability of spend
Funding wrong type of projects	Low	Medium	Projects will not just be assessed on eligibility, but also they will be scored against their potential to contribute to the Island's four priorities. Value for Money will be key aspect
Project failure to deliver outputs and spend as profiled	Medium	Medium	Experienced monitoring / claims team will be deployed.
Breakdown of LAG partnership	Low	High	Constitution allow for development of LAG as well as ensuring commitment from all
External rural community / agricultural problem leads to failure to engage	Low	High	LAG will meet regularly and review take-up and any issues affecting the Island. LDS is flexible in order to allow for modification of projects should external issues (such as a disease outbreak) so require
Rural community / businesses disengage with programme	Low	High	Development Officer will facilitate project applicants and assist with application process. Stakeholders will be regularly informed of programmes process through emails and rural forum. A key function of the LAG
Failure to achieve targets	Medium	High	LAG will require regular update from Programme Officers. LAG will review any shortfalls and support officers with remedial actions

7.0 MARKETING PLAN

As befits the local ownership nature of LEADER, all partners will have a role to play in promoting the programme, whether in a formal capacity or simply through word of mouth.

The consultations that have already taken place have provided a list of farmers and growers, rural businesses, local organisations and other key stakeholders. This will be added to existing lists of stakeholders who will be kept informed through regular email bulletins and through an annual report.

In addition, various marketing and communication tools will be used to maximise publicity for the programme. The Marketing of LEADER has four themes:

- Marketing to farmers, foresters and growers in order to achieve aims
- Marketing to rural businesses in order to achieve aims
- Marketing to community groups in order to achieve aims
- Marketing to stakeholders and wider community in order to publicise achievements

Each of these themes requires slightly different approaches and timescales.

Farmers, Foresters and growers

If we are to achieve projected spend in 2008, it will be essential that we have projects waiting to be approved, as soon as we have confirmation of funding. We will therefore follow a low key but concerted effort to drive up interest prior to programme funding being approved. This will be time-consuming and will involve ensuring that all potential paperwork (e.g. statutory papers) is in place. LAG members will be key to dissemination.

Once programme funding is approved, an immediate press release will be sent to relevant local organisations and all members of our contact list that are noted in this category. A brochure will also be produced specifically to highlight opportunities for farmers, foresters and growers.

Rural businesses

A similar approach will be followed as for farmers, foresters and growers above, however, the publicity and marketing produced will be aimed specifically at these businesses.

Community groups

Whilst following a similar approach to the above, it will be recognised that community groups will usually be a lot slower at identifying both projects and match funding. Our experience with LEADER+ has ensured that we all ready have many contacts, but we are aware that these groups will require a greater degree of facilitation.

Stakeholders and the wider community

It will be important to highlight both the funding award and on-going activities and successes being brought about by the LEADER programme so as to enthuse the local

population and encourage feedback. We will look to produce plaques to be displayed where applicants have received funding.

Channels of communication will include:

- Isle of Wight Radio
- Isle of Wight County Press
- Items on partner Websites
- Items in parish newsletters and magazines
- Items on partner publications
- Partner email distribution contacts
- Posters in community buildings

All P.R. will stress the role of SEEDA and EU funding and all literature produced will contain the relevant logos.

The immediate responsibility for promotional activities will be with the LAG and the Managing Agent.

All publicity will need to be reviewed on a regular basis as it will be necessary to tweak demand to specific areas, dependent on programme spend. The LAG will therefore review publicity when they review spend, at least twice per annum.

Start Date	Campaign	Responsibility	Additional info	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
May-08	Application success	LAG and LAG staff	General publicity	v				v	
May-08	LEADER for farmers, foresters and growers	LAG and LAG staff	Press releases to sector organisations and specialist groups Leaflet campaign	v	v	v	v	v	
May-08	LEADER for businesses	LAG and LAG staff	Press releases to sector organisations and specialist groups Leaflet campaign	v	v	v	v	v	
May-08	LEADER for the community	LAG and LAG staff	Press releases to community organisations, specialist groups and parish councils Leaflet campaign	v	v	v	v	v	
May-08	Isle of Wight LEADER success	LAG and LAG staff	Press releases to local press, stakeholders etc Mid term review Programme evaluation	v	v	v	v	v	v

8.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1 Programme Monitoring

Outputs and spend will be monitored quarterly and the LAG will be updated. Any variances will be discussed and appropriate action taken to rectify and underage.

The LAG will receive updates on individual project milestones, outputs and outcomes from staff under the four priority themes:

- *Increasing the economic value of farming and land management*
- *Support for the wider rural economy*
- *Increasing the vitality of the rural settlements*
- *Promoting rural heritage*

This will help to identify any particular activities within the programme that need to be strengthened to achieve the vision.

8.2 Programme evaluation

The overall success of the LEADER programme will be judged by its delivery against the programme vision - to improve the Island's rural community, making it more sustainable and helping agricultural and rural businesses in an environmentally sensitive way. On an ongoing basis we will measure levels of satisfaction from recipients. This will provide useful information to enable us to amend our internal processes if necessary.

In order to carry out an end of programme review we will need to baseline levels at the start. We will use the Farm Study as a basis to determine farm confidence. A further survey will be carried out at the end of the programme. It will be important to determine whether any negativity is due to circumstances outside of the control of the LAG (e.g. an outbreak of animal disease).

The performance of the wider economy will be determined from changes in GVA, although it has to be acknowledged that LEADER will have a marginal effect on this and therefore our output indicators will be of more importance in this area.

With regards to the vitality of rural settlements, we will conduct a baseline survey of parish clerks at the start of the programme, and will repeat this at the end. We are currently collating a list of actions identified in parish plans and we can monitor LEADER's impact on this list of actions.

The HEAP provides a useful baseline for rural heritage. Whilst not all actions funded through LEADER will contribute to the HEAP, we will review LEADER's impact on the HEAP at the end of the programme and use this proxy to determine LEADER's impact on rural heritage in general.

Priority	Baseline	Evaluation
Increasing the economic value of farming and land management	Farm Study	Further study
Support for the wider rural economy	GVA	GVA
Increasing the vitality of the rural settlements	Parish Survey and Parish Plans	Further survey and review of Parish Plans
Promoting rural heritage	HEAP	Review of HEAP

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The LAG recognises and accepts its legal responsibilities with regard to Equal Opportunities. Moreover, it aims to reach beyond legislative boundaries to provide equality of opportunity for all persons irrespective of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age. All individuals within the LAG are responsible for ensuring that their actions are carried out within the terms of the general policy statement and should recognise that they may be personally held accountable should any complaint arise.

The LAG will:

Ensure that the LAG partnership ensures all its activities are undertaken with regard for equality of opportunity and diversity issues and ensure that all partners are made aware of this document and LEADER guidelines with regard to equality of opportunity and diversity.

Ensure that mechanisms are in place to provide all relevant equality of opportunity and diversity information in alternative formats to written English, should it be required.

Ensure that there are no physical barriers to participation in LAG meetings.

Ensure that the LAG decision-making body includes/receives appropriate training in equality and diversity issues.

Critically review, on an on-going basis, all internal systems and procedures to ensure they represent good equality of opportunity and diversity practice.

Ensure that a culture of fairness and equality exists for all.

Maintain the correct standards of behaviour of its representatives and partners.

Set up a complaints procedure whereby any complaints can be promptly and thoroughly dealt with while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

The LAG will ensure that all stages of the recruitment, selection and behaviour of staff conform to this stated equality of opportunity and diversity policy.

It will:

Ensure that all job advertisements state a commitment to Diversity and Equal Opportunities and that job qualifications or requirements, which have the effect of inhibiting applications from a certain group of people, will not be imposed except where legally or morally justifiable in terms of the job requirements.

Ensure that in all cases, the ability to perform the job well will be the primary consideration in selection of staff and that staff are made aware of, trained in and abide by the stated Diversity and Equal Opportunity policy.

Provide initial and on-going training to all staff so as to ensure their personal development and the continuous improvement in the quality of provision of the LEADER programme.

As a project delivery agency, the LAG will ensure that all bodies benefiting from the Leader programme will comply with this policy. Applicants for project funding will be required to have an equivalent Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy in place or in the absence of this commit themselves to the LAG policy statement as part of any acceptance of grant funding from the LEADER Programme.

10.0 SELF-SCORING

1. Appropriateness of partnership	4
2. Coherence of the area	4
3. Quality of the Local Development Strategy	3
4. Financial and administrative capacity	3
5. Fit with National Programme objectives	4
6. Integration of sustainable development principles	4
7. Commitment to integration across the three axes	4
8. Commitment to co-operation	3
9. Alignment with regional and local strategies	4
10. The RDPE funding addresses the needs of the area	3
11. Skills	3
12. Maintaining momentum / exit strategy	3