



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu
Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

LEADER 2014-2020

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

For

Rural Bridgend County Borough

Updated December 2015

VERSION: 1.4
UPDATED SUBMISSION DATE: December 2015
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Please use Arial Size 12 throughout the document for consistency

This template is intended as a guide. Please ensure that you complete this in conjunction with the full LEADER 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy Guidance document issued in June 2014

NAME OF LAG AND CONTACT DETAILS

Name of Local Action Group	Bridgend Local Action Group (reach)
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LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALES

Proposed Start Date (no earlier than 1 January 2015)	1 January 2015
End Date (no later than 31 December 2021)	31 December 2020

Suggested word limits have been provided for each section as a guide however these are not prescriptive

SECTION 1 – STRATEGIC FIT

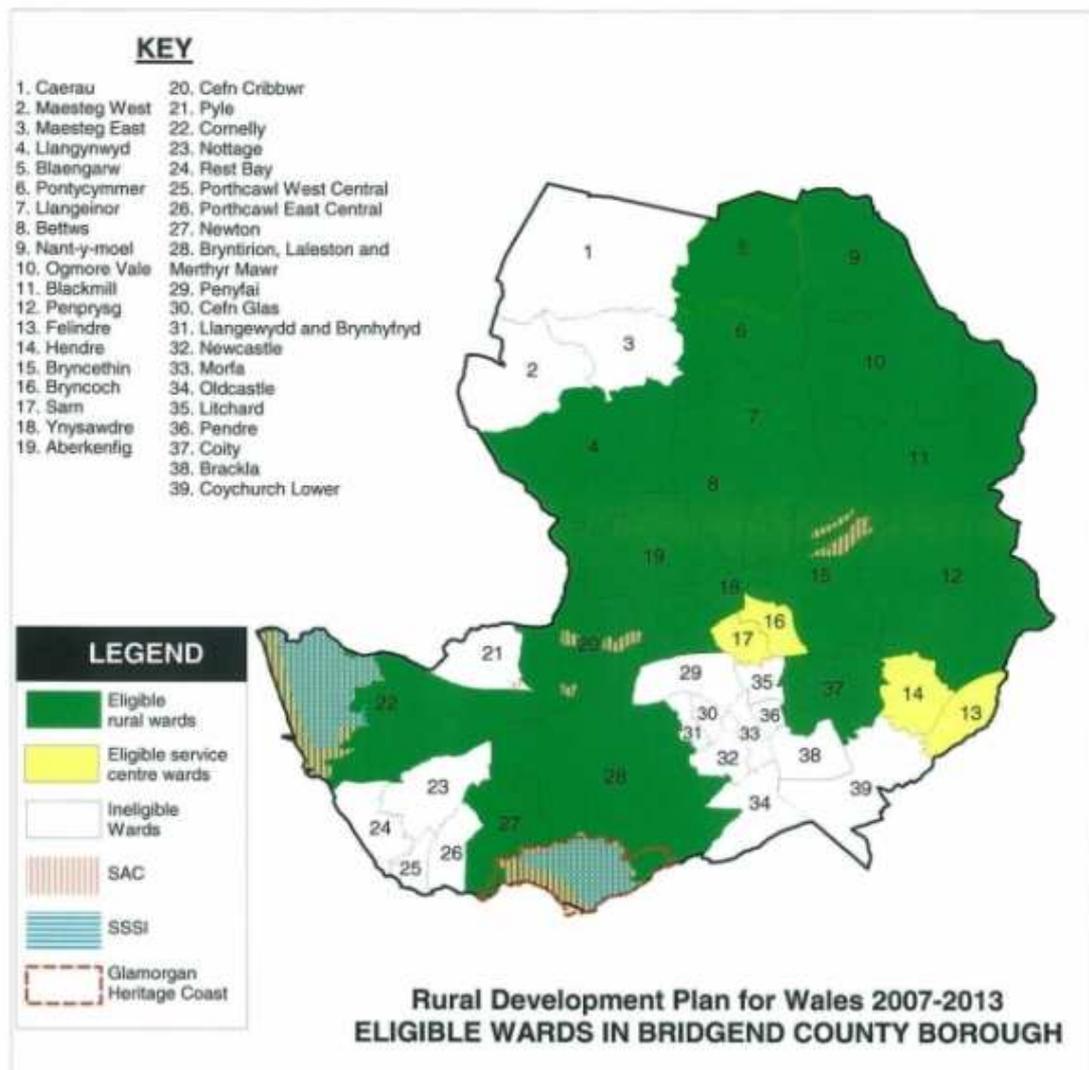
Description	Explain how the Local Development Strategy (LDS) fits with EU strategies, policies and programmes and the extent to which it aligns with the Focus Areas of the Wales Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) and the five LEADER themes as appropriate to the context of the LDS.
Linked to	Sections 3.1 and 3.5 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

1.1 Definition of the area and population covered by the strategy
(2,000 words)

The County Borough of Bridgend is at the geographical heart of South Wales. It encompasses to the south a rugged coastline with historical sand-dune, villages and active coastal life, and to the north, the village communities and sloping landscapes of the valleys. The area extends approximately 19 km across, covering approximately 177 sq. km., and with a population of 140,480¹. Of its 39 wards, there are currently 21 classified as rural with a total population of 53,584. This includes 4 eligible service centre wards. These wards have been formally classified under the Welsh Government’s rural wards classification exercise undertaken ahead of the 2007-2014 programme and are illustrated at Figure 1. The population of rural Bridgend accounts for approximately 45% of all Bridgend County Borough residents².

¹ National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011
² National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011

Fig. 1: Eligible Rural Wards in Bridgend County Borough



Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

One of the themes that cut across this LDS is Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion. This section provides some baseline data and statistical evidence to underpin the strategy. The population statistics and data for economic inactivity of the working age population within each rural ward at the time of the 2011 census is as follows³:

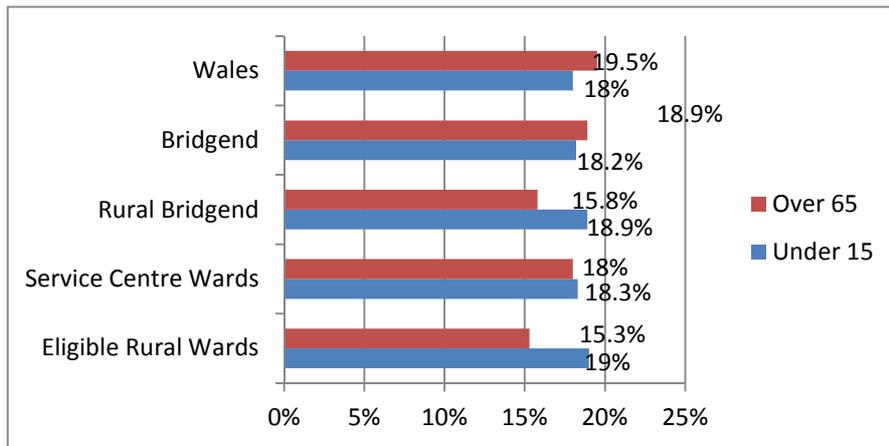
³ Bridgend Local Service Board data

Figure 2: Rural Population and Worklessness

Eligible Wards	Population	% of working age economically inactive	% Never worked or long-term unemployed	% of households without access to a car or van
Eligible Rural Wards:				
Aberkenfig	2,039	28.2%	4.2%	17.7%
Bettws	2,253	44.4%	12.1%	30.4%
Blackmill	2,493	39.1%	7.2%	25%
Blaengarw	1,789	35.4%	5.7%	29.7%
Bryncethin	1,319	24.2%	3.3%	11.5%
Bryntirion Laleston and Merthyr Mawr	8,713	23.6%	3.1%	10.2%
Cefn Cribwr	1,481	36.7%	4.2%	22.7%
Coity	2,071 (includes prison population)	66.2% (includes prison population)	20%	8.1%
Cornelly	7,059	37%	7.1%	25.2%
Llangeinor	1,243	36.2%	4.9%	18.3%
Llangynwyd	3,032	35.4%	3.8%	17.8%
Nantymoel	2,344	36.6%	5.5%	27.3%
Newton	3,608	37%	3.3%	13.2%
Ogmore Vale	3,117	33.1%	5.9%	26.7%
Penprysg	3,155	30.6%	3.4%	12.3%
Pontycymmer	2,499	36%	6.9%	28.1%
Ynysawdre	3,367	31.7%	5.1%	19.1%
Eligible Service Centre Wards				
Bryncoch	2,252	34.2%	7.5%	25.3%
Felindre	2,774	33.7%	3.8%	18.8%
Hendre	4,125	33.3%	2.9%	14.5%
Sarn	2,443	41.8%	7.6%	25.5%

Figure 3 below shows that the rural wards of Bridgend County Borough have a lower population of residents age 65+ than the Wales average while at the same time have a higher population of residents under 15, collectively leaving a slightly higher than average population of working age. However, it should be noted that Bridgend County Borough has a higher percentage of Employment Support Allowance and incapacity benefits claimants, carers and registered disabled than Wales overall.

Fig. 3: Population Age Profile

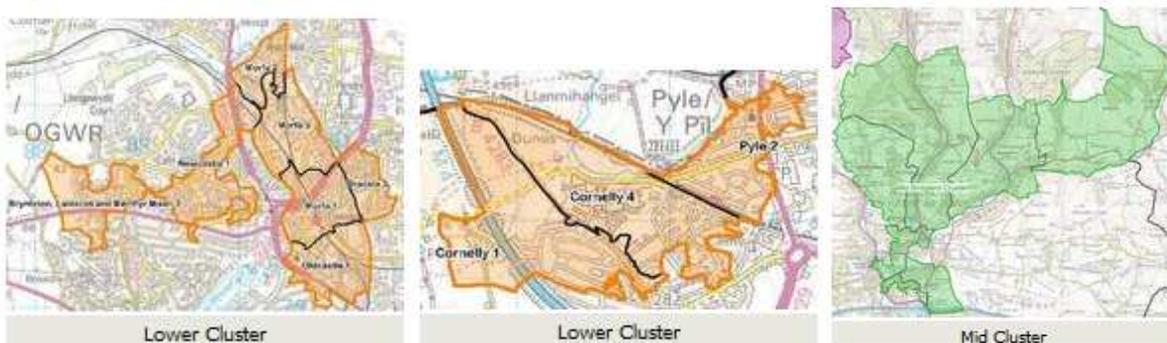


Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011

The percentage of economically inactive people in Rural Bridgend is fairly consistent with Wales at 65.1% and 65.8% respectively⁴. Whilst comparative statistics show that economic activity among the population in Wales has grown, since the 2001 Census, Rural Bridgend has fallen behind the Wales average of economically active with an increase of 3.77% compared with an increase of 4.22% across Wales. Between 2001 and 2011, skills levels in Wales and in Bridgend have seen an increase. This is evidenced by a recorded 11% decrease in residents with no qualifications, Bridgend County Borough having the most significant decrease⁵ in residents without any qualifications.

Many parts of the rural county suffer continued problems with deprivation, which comes in many forms and WIMD data illustrates which forms of deprivation are most prevalent across each ward. Bridgend County Borough has three Communities First cluster areas, upper, mid and lower. Eight of the county's eligible rural wards and service centre wards fall within two of these clusters having areas within them (Lower Super Output Areas) amongst the highest ranking areas of deprivation relative to the rest of Wales under the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). The mid and lower cluster areas are shown in the map illustrations below and include: Bettws, Sarn, Blackmill, Ynysawdre, Bryncoch, Llangeinor, Cornelly, and Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr wards.

Figure 4: Communities First cluster areas within rural wards



⁴ National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011

⁵ National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011

Source: <http://www.commfirstbridgend.co.uk/>

Rural Bridgend County Borough has seen a shift in its major employers away from large manufacturing employment towards service industries and professional services which tend to be mainly small and micro enterprises. When combined, the service industries are now the largest employer in rural Bridgend⁶.

One of the most significant service sectors within the County Borough is tourism which contributes significantly to the local economy. According to the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model (STEAM) £268m was injected in the local economy in 2011 with the industry supporting over 4,100 jobs as shown at Figure 5 below.

Fig. 5: Impact of visitor spending in Bridgend

Sector	Spending £m	Direct Employment (FTE)
Accommodation	15.42	399
Food and drink	36.42	779
Recreation	11.45	297
Shopping	68.33	1,332
Transport	20.15	192
Total Direct Revenue	151.78	2,999
Indirect/other impacts	117.06	1,198
Total	268.84	4,197

Source: STEAM 2011. FTE = full time equivalent

Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming

With the exception of Coity, which includes data for a prison population, all rural wards have a relatively even demographic profile of men compared with women, close to or at a 50:50 ratio as can be seen at Figure 6 below. This evidences the need to ensure equal representation across genders in all LDS activity including representation on the Local Action Group through to involvement at every stage of programme delivery, consultation and evaluation including giving full consideration to gender equality in marketing activity. Specific programme activity should seek to increase opportunities for both men and women to develop their capacity and be fully economically active where appropriate.

⁶ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

Figure 6: Population Data for Males and Females and Ethnicity in Rural Bridgend

Eligible Wards	% Males	% Females	% White British/Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish	% Total other ethnicity
Eligible Rural Wards:				
Aberkenfig	50%	50%	95.3%	4.7%
Bettws	49%	51%	98%	2%
Blackmill	49%	51%	98%	2%
Blaengarw	50%	50%	98.7%	1.3%
Bryncethin	48%	52%	96.9%	3.1%
Bryntirion Laleston and Merthyr Mawr	49%	51%	94.6%	5.4%
Cefn Cribwr	48%	52%	98%	2%
Coity	83%	17%	91%	9%
Cornelly	48%	52%	97.1%	2.9%
Llangeinor	52%	48%	98.6%	1.4%
Llangynwyd	49%	51%	97.5%	2.5%
Nantymoel	48%	52%	97.6%	2.4%
Newton	48%	52%	97%	3%
Ogmore Vale	49%	51%	96.7%	3.3%
Penprysg	51%	49%	97%	3%
Pontycymmer	50%	50%	98.4%	1.6%
Ynysawdre	48%	52%	97.4%	2.6%
Eligible Service Centre Wards				
Bryncoch	49%	51%	95.3%	4.7%
Felindre	50%	50%	96.9%	3.1%
Hendre	50%	50%	97.2%	2.8%
Sarn	50%	50%	98.1%	1.9%

Source: Bridgend Local Service Board Data – Ward Profiles.

Figure 6 also demonstrates the percentage of individuals of ethnic minority residing in each of the rural wards. The figures are relatively low across all of rural Bridgend, nonetheless, they are significant enough to require robust procedures for ensuring equality of opportunity for people of all ethnicities in the delivery of this LDS, in particular in those area of highest prevalence, such as, Aberkenfig, Bryntirion Laleston and Merthyr Mawr and Bryncoch. As with gender equality, this means ensuring appropriate representation at all levels of delivery from the Local Action Group and its rural networks through to implementation and evaluation of activities.

Welsh Language

The Welsh speaking population in rural Bridgend accounts for just under 10%, of the rural population. This is below the national average for Wales which stands at 19%⁷, however, it demonstrates a significant audience for activity and marketing to be delivered through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, particularly activity which is directly targeted at the Welsh speaking community, for example, in working with Welsh schools within the county borough of which there are currently four primary schools and one secondary school, or in working with Cylch Meithrin, Welsh for Adults or Menter Iaith in the course of project delivery.

Sustainable Development

The Bridgend Destination Management Plan 2013-2017 has been developed to maximise the impact of tourism whilst providing a holistic approach to developing sustainable tourism.

The key strengths of the landscape for rural tourism include the Glamorgan Heritage Coast and two coastal areas of particular note, Kenfig National Nature Reserve which is a SSSI and the Merthyr Mawr Sand Dunes NNR. There is a wealth of natural and cultural resource, for example, heritage and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The valley areas provide dramatic and attractive upland scenery with large tracts of forest and upland common plus a number of country and nature parks. These areas offer the most visible legacy to the industrial past, this geographical area is explained more fully in the section on the Uplands.

The M4 motorway divides the county east to west along with an inter-city high speed rail service, both of which offer connections to the national rail network and to Cardiff Airport 30km away. North of the M4 is primarily valleys made up of small town and village settlements. It can be seen from the table above at figure 2 that access to private vehicles is lower in the upper valleys increasing reliance on public and alternative transport arrangements in order to access services and economic opportunities.

An improved and sustainable local, regional and national transport infrastructure could play a significant role in ensuring Bridgend County Borough can maximise opportunities for the economy and business. It is anticipated that investment including £1bn for the electrification of the Great Western Mainline Railway between London Paddington and Swansea, the Welsh Government's priorities for Cardiff Wales Airport and the recently announced improvements to the M4 motorway at Newport, will bring further opportunities to strengthen links in the future. However, it is recognised within this strategy that there are limitations to the contribution that can be made with RDP funding, in particular LEADER funding, with support being primarily directed towards piloting new approaches in support of creating an evidence base.

Strategically, Bridgend County Borough forms part of the Cardiff Capital Region and is also adjacent to the Swansea City Region. This will potentially offer rural Bridgend

⁷ National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk) Census of Population 2011

the opportunity to benefit from economic prosperity and sustainable development through a greater exchange of knowledge, ideas and innovation; larger potential markets for goods and services and a larger and more efficient labour market if the conditions are right for collaborative and regional working opportunities to be pursued. Opportunities will be explored for collaborative approaches to delivering across the LEADER themes in, for example, food marketing, outdoor pursuits and coastal activities, with synergies having already been identified with the Vale of Glamorgan LAG and further synergies to be explored with other LAG areas prior to programme implementation.

During the 2007-2014 Rural Development Programme, the Bridgend Local Action Group (LAG) has undertaken regional co-operation projects with other LAG areas. These include the Pub is the Hub project which worked in co-operation with 7 other inter-regional teams covering 8 LAGs in Wales. Bridgend was also the lead partner in the Community Foodie project, delivering community food growing projects across three Welsh counties in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan and Torfaen providing the LAG and Administrative Body with the experience, knowledge and skills required to lead on future co-operative bids.

Bridgend County Borough will ensure added value to the existing investment portfolio in the area and contribute to integration through local, regional and national programmes through using the Economic Prioritisation Framework.

The *Collaborative Approaches to Rural Development* research report undertaken between January and April 2015 identified a number of areas of synergy with other LAG areas across Wales, primarily in the south of the country. These key areas of synergy include:

- Local food, including its production and preparation
- Tourism
- Renewable energy
- Heritage
- Green spaces
- Community-led non- statutory services
- A cross-cutting theme of digital inclusion and broadband connectivity.

Based on the priorities identified in the Local Development Strategy and these potential areas for collaboration a range of co-operation activity has been identified by the LAG.

At least initially, key areas for regional working will have a focus on economic development through co-operative activity with other LAGs and wider stakeholders in the areas of food and tourism. Bridgend County Borough will actively encourage the formation of, and take an active role within, regional networks that have the capacity, skills and knowledge to work collaboratively for shared benefit. This work will build on a wealth of activity that has already happened at the local level with food producers and regionally through working with other LAGs on food related projects. The focus of the LAG now is to extend the scope and scale of its local food producers' network and engage better with tourism, hospitality and retail sectors -

doing so on a regional basis.

The coast will be another natural link across borders, building on existing relationships with partners within the Glamorgan Heritage Coast area. The LAG will add value to work currently being developed through other programmes to enhance and protect the coastal zone through supporting projects within the rural coast to encourage sustainable management of significant and valued sites and to encourage responsible use by tourists and other users of those sites. Opportunities will be sought to work with partners across the border through, for example, joint awareness raising initiatives.

A third area of interest to the LAG in working across borders will be to maximise the impact of LEADER funding through collaborative approaches. This might include conducting shared research, such as understanding the root causes and frequency of rural poverty within the south east Wales area; or piloting the delivery of shared non-statutory services such as community transport initiatives enabling residents to find work across neighbouring local authority areas. Through working in collaboration both within and outside of the local authority boundary, the LAG will seek to achieve a more meaningful impact, work harder to tackle poverty together and to realise economies of scale.

1.2 Description of the Integration

(2,500 words – to be linked in to the actions described in Section 3.1 – Intervention Logic)

The LAG recognises that, whilst focusing on the specific local needs and opportunities identified within Bridgend County Borough's rural wards, the Local Development Strategy must look to maximise the benefits of delivering an integrated programme and align delivery with other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI), European programmes, Welsh Government policies, and other relevant initiatives impacting on Bridgend which also includes some statutory departments within the local authority.

Bridgend County Borough's LEADER programme has been specifically designed to complement existing programmes and interventions. A number of principles, proven in the delivery of 2007-2014 LEADER activity, will be taken forward along with additional new and innovative approaches as they become evident during delivery.

These principles include:

- Linking with other European funds, such as the European Structural Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF).
- Working with national and regional partners to deliver against Welsh Government Programmes, including other parts of the RDP, such as, Farming Connect.
- Close partnership working with national bodies, such as Natural Resources

Wales.

- Close working with local authority statutory departments and alignment with key strategic themes, such as Communities First or Workways.
- Adding value to thematic areas of economic growth and linking into local and regional partnerships such as South East Wales Local Food Talks.
- Aligning delivery to Government priority areas, for example, the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.
- Aligning delivery with other key funders to support activity in response to rural needs, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Dovetailing Local Action Group working activity with other strategic partnerships, such as the Destination Partnership.

Some actions will adopt more than one of these principles in order to maximise the potential investment, support and impact that can be achieved.

Whilst approaching integration, this strategy is mindful that LEADER offers a limited pot of funding that must remain focused on the seven key principles of LEADER. It is therefore essential that the interventions supported by the LDS add value to other initiatives and seek to fund innovative, new models of delivery that could potentially then be signposted to other funding for further support and mainstreaming.

It is recognised that integration in Wales during the next round of ESI funds will work at a number of different levels, so the practical implications of the integration agenda will be different depending on where areas fit in the various partnerships across Wales. The following section outlines examples of how the LDS will integrate at the strategic level and the subsequent section looks at integration at the point of delivery.

Integration & Strategic Fit

The Rural Development Programme in Bridgend County Borough has fed into the ESI fund programme consultations and will seek to monitor the work of the new joint Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) and contribute to any reviews/ evaluation exercises in order to ensure continued fit and opportunities for integration.

Supporting how the individual operations (projects) funded by ESI funds are tied together, the LAG is working with the South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration group, is part of the RDP Task and Finish Group discussing the development of projects to support common themes and opportunities across the area and is also part of the task and finish group Co-ordinators Group, ensuring that RDP LEADER projects can best align with emerging European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) projects. The Economic Prioritisation Framework sits behind this work, as does the work of the Cardiff City Region Board and South East Wales Learning Skills and Innovation Partnership.

At a regional and then national level, the strategic objectives fit with *South East Wales Regional Strategic Framework: Delivering a Future with Prosperity* which has three strategic priorities Place; Business Support & Development; and People & Skills. These are included within the overarching RDP objectives summarised within

European Programmes 2014 – 2020: A Draft Prospectus for South East Wales and follow through into the regional chapter of the Economic Prioritisation Framework. The LAG does, and will continue to, work with LEADER groups from across Wales, both attending and contributing to the all Wales and south Wales officers' meetings and in the delivery of co-operation projects across Wales. Bridgend County Borough is committed to the Wales Rural Network (WRN) concept and is a current member of the steering group. The LAG welcomes a refreshed approach to the delivery of the WRN for the 2014-2020 programme.

Bridgend County Borough has signed up to a Single Partnership Plan (SIP), "*Bridgend County Together*", that sets out actions aimed at improving the lives of people living, working or studying in the county, focussing on issues such as health, education, employment, the local economy, tourism, crime and the environment. The Rural Development Programme had an input into the consultation and development process of this plan with a view to supporting integration with initiatives that will impact on rural Bridgend. The over-arching vision of this plan sits comfortably with the strategic objectives of this LDS: *A Place to Live, A Place to Visit* and *A Place to Work*.

Bridgend County Together sets its vision for the County so that:

- People in Bridgend County are healthier
- People in Bridgend County are engaged and empowered to achieve their full potential
- People in Bridgend County benefit from a stronger and more prosperous economy
- Bridgend County is a great place to live, work and visit.

This LDS has been specifically aligned with *Fit for the Future: Regeneration Strategy for Bridgend County 2008-2021* which has four strategic aims:

- Enabling wealth and increasing enterprise.
- Building up skills levels and entrepreneurial attitudes in an active labour force.
- Making a great place to live, work, visit & play.
- Strengthening & renewing infrastructure.

The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020 'Partnership for Growth' has a vision that *'Wales will provide the warmest of welcomes, outstanding quality, excellent value for money and memorable, authentic experiences to every visitor'* The goal is for tourism to grow in a sustainable way and to make an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environment well-being of Wales. There are clear synergies with this vision under the strategic objective of the LDS *A place to visit*.

To achieve this vision, focus will be on:

- Promoting the Brand
- Product Development
- People Development
- Profitable Performance
- Place Building

Enabling the protection of Wales's heritage whilst encouraging public access, enjoyment and participation is the main guiding principle behind the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Strategy and this has clear synergies with the LDS particularly in relation to adding value to natural and cultural resources. As a principle, the LAG will ensure that funding is sought for priorities that also fit with the Commission's 3 over-riding objectives – the competitiveness of the rural economy, sustainable management of our natural resources and climate action and the balanced territorial development of rural Wales.

Integration at the Point of Delivery

This following section outlines how the LDS will aim to integrate the delivery of its objectives and actions with other programmes and schemes, these are further illustrated within the Intervention Logic Table.

Communities First (C1st)

Bridgend County Borough has three C1st Cluster Areas, Upper, Mid and Lower, including eight wards which fall within the rural area. This offers the opportunity to integrate in several ways. Firstly there is the opportunity to deliver the C1st priorities of Prosperous Communities, Learning Communities and Healthy Communities in other rural areas which do not qualify for C1st support. These will align with the vision and strategic objectives of this LDS, for self-sustaining, diverse and vibrant rural communities, in particular through the Prosperous Communities priority but elements of LDS activity could align to each of these priorities depending on the activities themselves.

Certain complementarities here also offer the opportunity to work with C1st as a mainstreaming partner, mainstreaming LEADER approaches, including tools and methods of working, within the work of C1st, and vice versa, where this can potentially bring added benefit.

Another example would be to empower a rural community to take forward actions outlined in the Intervention Logic Table, such as community mapping or action plans with the majority of support not necessarily coming from LEADER but from initiatives such as Communities First and Families First or, similarly, the support programmes offered by local housing associations, for example Valleys to Coast in Bridgend County Borough.

Destination Management

The strategic objectives and delivery plan of this LDS ensures alignment and added value to Bridgend's *Destination Management Plan & Action Plan*, and the LAG will continue to work in close partnership with Visit Wales, and other key regional and local stakeholders to ensure the potential of assets across rural Bridgend is maximised, this will include making the appropriate representations on the County Borough's Destination Partnership and the Local Action Group.

This strategy is committed to managing the destination in a coherent and sustainable way, building on the strengths of the area, making some key interventions for integration within the economy, linking producers with the hospitality and tourism sector, for example, and improving the range, quality and

marketing of the offer to target audiences regionally and internationally. Where appropriate, links will be made with other funders for project activity that can help to achieve these aims, for example, aligning activity with the Heritage Lottery Fund and delivering co-financed projects to maximise the potential of the heritage tourism sector, or working with the Arts Council to maximise opportunities for the cultural tourism sector.

Food & Food Tourism

The Welsh Government has recently launched *Towards Sustainable Growth: An Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014–2020* which provides a framework within which to build on the work of the producers, hospitality providers and education sector of Bridgend County Borough as we move into the 2014-2020 LDS period.

Collaboration and partnership working is seen as being crucial to achieving growth. The advantages to supply chain businesses through vertical and horizontal integration include:

- Fairer price negotiations for producers and processors.
- Customer commitment to purchase agreed volume and quality specifications.
- Improved market intelligence/knowledge transfer.
- Improved business planning.
- Assured food produce.
- Increased confidence in the integrity of the food chain.
- Persistent problems (e.g. food distribution and logistics) can be resolved

Through work already undertaken, the LEADER programme has established a strong partnership with Bridgend College which has mainstreamed food tourism onto the college curriculum as a direct result of project activity. The LDS is committed to making stronger integration through education, linking with local schools and school communities, to educate the consumers of the future. Activities could include free school visits to meet local producers – to learn about, see and taste local produce.

There is clear potential for an inter-territorial co-operation project to look at developing major local produce contracts and a supply chain provision that will ensure consistency of volume and quality by pooling supply from similar producers across adjoining RDP areas and across Wales and in addition, to align renewable energy opportunities with local primary producer & processor businesses

Activity will also include joint working with the local authority tourism department, local tourism businesses and Visit Wales (SEWLFT) to promote food tourism and a local Sense of Place.

Natural Resources Wales

There are a number of synergies between the work of the LEADER programme and NRW which will continue into the new programme. For example, Bridgend County Borough has made a commitment to a green infrastructure approach in its Local Development Plan, an integrated approach to natural resource management. For

example, managing land use, forestry and water flow in the Upland areas will reduce flood risk in the lower catchment areas. The approach involves joint working between Planning, Regeneration, Parks, Countryside, Sustainability and Rural Development departments as well as integration with NRW, Keep Wales Tidy, The Wildlife Trust, Swansea University and Cardiff University and working as partners with the farmers that have environment programmes in place. The Green Infrastructure approach will support the P1 commitment *'We will deliver an effective and co-ordinated response to environmental incidents and risks, such as flood events, pollution and disease outbreak, and help decrease the risk of flooding to people and properties'*

The LEADER programme will act as a mechanism for disseminating information and data amongst partner organisations in its role as network facilitator e.g. for the Countryside Volunteers Network and Invasive Species Group. These networks allow NRW to consult with stakeholders on key matters and will also enable RDP and NRW to work together, with others, to realise renewable energy generation opportunities. These networks also support the P2 commitment *'We will provide and enable recreation and access opportunities which contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing'*.

The LAG is represented on the NRW 'Come Outside Network' which develops projects to tackle inactivity and support young people at risk of being 'not in education, employment or training' (NEETs) within Communities First areas, in line with the P3 commitment: *'We will help ensure people are able to live, work in, and visit a good quality environment, including those in urban areas and those in our most disadvantaged communities, and will channel economic benefit to help tackle poverty'*.

In the year since the LDS was first drafted, the Come Outside Project has experienced a challenge in integrating with projects in Bridgend and the Come Outside Network no longer meets. This was in part due to many of the services offered by that programme already being provided in Bridgend by the successful Countryside Volunteering Network. No projects were developed dealing specifically with NEETs in Bridgend. It is unlikely that Come Outside will continue past March 2016 and there is no risk of it competing with DFES Traineeship programme in Bridgend.

The LAG and NRW are currently represented on the Bridgend Environmental Education and Sustainability (BEES) group. The group works together to provide and enable opportunities for people to learn within, and about, and enjoy the environment. The Bridgend Outdoor Schools pack, developed in partnership with the BEES group under the 2007-2014 LEADER programme, will be mainstreamed by NRW using the curriculum-linked educational materials in the delivery of its P4 commitment *'We will provide and enable opportunities for people to learn in, and about, and enjoy, the environment'*.

The examples provided here illustrate strategic integration with the NRW priority theme 'Good for People', however, in reality there are clear linkages across all priority themes, which also include Good for Knowledge, Good for Business and Good for Environment.

Renewable Energy

Renewables are another area where the LAG integrates service delivery with NRW activity. For example, any support provided through the LAG for delivering hydro electricity generating schemes are integrated with services provided by NRW from the beginning to ensure that abstraction and discharge licences are sought before the project is developed further. This avoids complex legal difficulties arising and ensures the project is viable. Any project would also be directed to NRW's study on the viability of all the region's rivers for hydro generation schemes.

Through its Admin Body, the LAG is integrated with the commitment of Bridgend County Borough Council to a Green Infrastructure approach. This approach considers biodiversity, landscape character and renewable energy. Working in this way ensures the LAG can support developers to design and implement effective renewable energy projects.

When considering renewable energy, the LAG recognises that it cannot be looked at in isolation from energy efficiency. There are several organisations involved in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors and there is a potential role for the LAG through its LEADER programme to bring all these key players together into a renewable energy and energy efficiency network, and to deliver activities such as workshops with partners to identify the need for new services and the integration of services. This could lead to the development of an energy action plan specifically for the rural area to deliver results for our rural communities, particularly those experiencing energy and fuel poverty.

The types of actions that will be delivered by the LAG would help to achieve the Welsh Government targets for energy outlined in its *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition Delivery Plan 2014*, in terms of communities deriving longer benefit, supporting innovation research and development in areas that offer the greatest potential for long-term benefit for Wales and in support of 'putting in place a 21st Century Energy Infrastructure'. Specifically the LDS will contribute to the following priorities for action:

Deliver Theme - Low Carbon Energy

- Developing the local skills base at all levels

Deliver Theme - Energy Efficiency

- A range of advice and services tailored to support their specific needs, either individually or in groups
- A communications programme that works with people to increase the level of understanding and debate on energy generation and energy efficiency.

Forestry & Woodland

There are a number of opportunities for forestry within Bridgend to support the priorities of NRW and the Woodlands for Wales strategy, as well as local management plans for the area. NRW has mapped forestry against communities

and NRW estate asset that might be of economic benefit at a community level. The land for potential economic forestry has been identified but the LAG recognises that there is no capacity in NRW to take this forward. There is potential through LEADER to work with communities to develop a feasibility study and develop innovative schemes such as a community-led forestry business.

Bridgend County Borough has a number of woodlands, with more of a forest landscape towards the north of the county borough, in the three valleys. Within the three valleys of the uplands the forestry landscapes are owned by either the local authority, NRW or privately owned. Many of the forestry sites are on land reclamation sites and form part reclamation scheme plans, which include management plans and habitat creation schemes, such as the Upper Garw Valley Habitat Strategy and Llynfi Valley Woodland Project.

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) supports the achievement of the outcomes set out in the Woodlands for Wales Strategy and NRW priorities through its Green Infrastructure approach. This support can be exemplified in a number of instances. For example, BCBC is the first county borough in Wales to include a Green Infrastructure Policy in Adopted Local Development Plan which is underpinned by a Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance – A Green Infrastructure Approach (SPG).

In 2011 the Council reviewed its Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). The review identified 174 SINC with approximately half being woodlands. The purpose of this review was to promote SINCS to landowners, provide management recommendations, look at opportunities for joint working and funding opportunities.

The Council has also reviewed its Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) utilising the ecosystem mapping that has been undertaken by the former Countryside Council for Wales as part of a pilot project. Within the LBAP these ecosystem services are given a spatial context by setting them in Landscape Character Areas that were redefined in 2013.

Both the SPG and LBAP help demonstrate the Council's commitment to dynamic land management on a landscape scale. This management also includes active management of habitats, particularly woodlands with input from volunteers. This has led to the establishment of the countryside volunteer network, to coordinate countryside volunteering opportunities, delivered by a number of organisations in Bridgend County. In many instances works are undertaken on private land and has assisted landowners in woodland grant scheme delivery, through tree planting, coppicing and woodland management works.

There is opportunity through the LDS to further meet the priorities of NRW and the Woodlands for Wales Strategy through opportunities for growth in the forestry sector in Bridgend. There are many farmers in Bridgend who have the potential to diversify into forestry production. Any support offered to a farmer or forestry business through the LAG and its activities will be integrated with the specialist services available through Farming Connect and ADAS.

The LDS will research the potential for forestry production in the north of the borough and the uplands areas of Bridgend. The LDS will aim to look at the feasibility of wood for timber and wood for energy over the three valleys, taking into account previous research in each valley and reclamation management plans and look to take a more holistic strategic approach to forestry in the upland area of Bridgend.

The LDS will look at the opportunities for community led forestry initiatives. An opportunity has been identified in the rural valleys areas of the county to maximise the natural woodland resource to support the local economy and create local employment. LEADER funding is being explored to develop a feasibility study, potentially leading to a pilot project. This could include trialling different uses for waste wood and managed trees, looking at the logistical and practical implications of delivering such a service in and out of, and between, the valleys topography and undertaking an options appraisal of different business models that could be adopted and markets accessed should a local entrepreneur wish to start a business based on the results of the study.

It will also explore opportunities for forestry through tourism, use by community and for education. Some examples of usages might include forest schools, dog agility trails, woodland crafts, trails and obstacle courses, or crafts and skills.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The recent enactment of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies (including Natural Resources Wales & local authorities) to consider improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This Act will also mean that, for the first time, public bodies must operate in a sustainable way. This requires public bodies to make sure that when making decisions, they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in the future. The Act sets out 7 goals that seek to target the work of public in a co-ordinated approach. These Goals being:

- A prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A more equal Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities;
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
- A globally responsible Wales.

The above Goals demonstrate the need for cross sector working and is reflected in the emerging legislation that Welsh Government are currently progressing. For instance, the Environment (Wales) Bill includes three key features that will ensure that managing natural resources sustainably will be a core consideration in decision-making.

To this end, BCBC is developing a number of projects that engenders cross sector with a focus given to its green spaces. For example, the Council has run a green

spaces campaign that seeks to promote and encourage people to use and benefit from the County Borough's countryside and green spaces. This campaign has been underpinned by The Nature Keepers project. With the first ones funded via Axis 3 funding RDP 2007-2013, the project comprises a series of sculptures located throughout the county borough, with a supporting narrative and video for each Nature Keeper.

The creation of the Bridgend Natural Neighbourhoods on line tool provides funded through Welsh Government's Planning Improvement is the hub for the above and other initiatives that the Council and other partners are undertaking in the County Borough.

History & Heritage

Bridgend County Borough is a leader and innovator in the field of integrated approaches to history and heritage development. During the 2007-2014 programme, a history and heritage network was established, consisting of approximately 40 voluntary and public sector groups. The network has an annual public conference which is open to the public to raise awareness of the groups plus closed sessions for the groups themselves to network and have Q&A with relevant panellists, for example, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) and many others.

In parallel with this, a History and Heritage Steering Group was created to lead on the integrated and strategic direction of the heritage sector and in particular share information and ideas in relation to project planning. Projects being developed by the local authority are discussed and endorsed through this forum as well as project the groups are leading on, providing the opportunity to share knowledge, resources and skills and bringing opportunities to mainstream approaches across the county borough.

A close working relationship with a number of strategic partners has evolved from this structure with the HLF holding a regular seat at meetings, jointly organising the annual conference and running regular grant surgeries from the RDP offices. Facilitation of the Steering Group is expected to move into the care of GGAT in the near future, mainstreaming it beyond LEADER support.

Local Programmes and Local Authority Service Areas

Another innovative approach to integration that has been adopted by the LEADER programme in Bridgend County Borough, and that will continue into the 2014-2020 programme, is an integrated decision-making panel for the allocation of public funding. The 'Grants Panel' model trialled and adopted by BCBC during the 2007-2014 programme included representation from other funders within the local authority and other key stakeholders from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to advise and make recommendations on how grant funding was allocated. This included representatives including, for example, scheme managers for the Local Investment Fund (LIF), South East Wales Community Economic Development schemes (SEWCED), and others such as Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO), the Police and many more.

This approach ensured that there was no local duplication of funding taking place

and that appropriate decisions were taken in relation to the approval of funding with consideration given to a wide range of factors. By integrating in this way, projects could also be signposted to other more appropriate funders if they were unsuccessful at application.

Other European Funded Programmes & RDP Streams

The RDP in Bridgend County has a history of working closely with the South East Wales Specialist European Team (SET) and will ensure complementarity with ESF and ERDF projects being delivered across South East Wales going forward. This will also provide the opportunity to be flexible and responsive during delivery to pick up a specific rural need and going forward will enable a better understanding of the detail of the emerging back bone ERDF and ESF projects and therefore how the LEADER programme is best able to add value.

In line with the Welsh Chapter of the UK Partnership Agreement, where innovative pilots delivered under LEADER in rural Bridgend are successful, pilots may lead to applications to the ESI funds for further support. Where appropriate, the LAG will be looking to the ESI funds to support opportunities identified by the LDS so not just LEADER adding value but also looking to the ESI funds to support the delivery of the LDS.

At an operation level it is recognised that integration is about the delivery of EU funded services as well as direct funding for mainstreaming of activities. So a rural business seeking to develop a new innovative model of delivery via LEADER support might also require specific technical advice on an aspect of its business. Rather than seeking to offer support across all areas, this strategy will be looking to work alongside initiatives funded by other parts of the RDP and other ESI funds, for example renewable energy advice and facilitation from the successor programme to Ynni'r Fro, and engagement opportunities with the farming sector through the successor to Farming Connect. It will be important to retain an overview of the different projects to ensure it can add value and align its delivery.

Renewable Energy at Community Level integrates with renewable energy priorities in ESF and ERDF, and aligns with the Green Growth section of the Economic Prioritisation Framework (EPF). Both RDP and ERDF continue to be involved in BCBC's Energy Technology Institute (ETI) renewable energy project for community district heat systems, an area where Bridgend County Borough is at the cutting edge within the UK.

The LAG will be raising awareness of, and looking to, the Rural Community Development Fund, emerging ESF/ERDF projects and WG and regional initiatives to respond to issues raised in the SWOT analysis.

The LAG will also look at integration with LAGs in other areas through a number of ways. Co-operation will be explored across themes which align with the LDS of each participating LAG, mainstreaming through the experimentation and trialling of approaches successfully piloted by other LAGs and vice versa; plus collaborative working in more informal ways to share knowledge and develop joint approaches where this is appropriate without the need for co-operation project such as joint branding exercises.

SECTION 2 – FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) intends to meet its financial and compliance based obligations. LAGs need to demonstrate that they have competent financial planning and will comply with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 4 – Management of Operation)

2.1 Management and Administration

(2,500 words)

This Local Development Strategy was developed and endorsed by the Bridgend LAG 2007-2014 and Rural Partnership 2007-2014 through a process of LAG meetings, online correspondence and workshops at which the detail contained in the LDS was refined and agreed.

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the Bridgend Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG is based on the thirds principle of equal representation from the voluntary, public and private sectors. This is described in more detail in the Terms of Reference attached as an appendix to this strategy which relate specifically to delivery during 2014-2020 inclusive.

Proposed members include:

LAG Members

Wiggleys	Private
KCA Marketing	Private
Bridgend College/Future Young Farmers Chair	Private
Farmers Union Wales	Private
Our Welsh Camping & Caravans	Private
Farm Business	Private
Valleys 2 Coast	Public
Wales & West Housing Association	Public
Business in Focus	Public
Ogmore Valley Community Council	Public
Communities First Partnership	Public
Natural Resources Wales	Public
Bridgend County Borough Council	Public
Groundwork South Wales	Voluntary
Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations	Voluntary
Bridgend Tourism Association	Voluntary
Garw Valley History Society	Voluntary
BritGrowers	Voluntary
Llangynwyd Community member	Voluntary

LAG Advisors

WG Rural Programmes Team
BCBC, Regen Funding (SET)
BCBC, Economic Development
BCBC, Countryside, Tourism & RDP
BCBC, Reach RDP Team
BCBC, Legal
BCBC, Physical Regeneration
BCBC, Highways
BCBC, Integrated Partnership Support Team
BCBC, Property
BCBC, Local Enterprise Initiatives & Rural Development
Bridgend Local Food Network
Bridgend's Heritage Network
Countryside Volunteers Network
Bridgend Community Transport Forum
South Wales Police
LIF Scheme Manager
SEWCED Scheme Manager
Communities First

In the Terms of Reference for the LAG, there are two levels of membership: a LAG Member and a LAG Advisor. Only the former has voting rights. In support of the LAG there will be thematic rural networks. Whilst these networks will not have a formal obligation to report to the LAG under the proposed structure they will be able to provide advice to the LAG as this is required. Furthermore, they will facilitate 2-way communication directly with their sector as appropriate during delivery of the programme to ensure a more integrated and effective delivery as illustrated at Fig 10 below.

Any LAG Member or LAG Advisor who attends a LAG meeting will be expected to declare any interests in relation to programme issues and projects put forward for discussion at the start of the meeting. In order to be able to do that, they will seek early advice from the Programme Team, particularly if in any doubt. If for some reason it is not possible, however, for an interest to be declared at the outset of a meeting, or if it becomes clear at a later stage during the meeting that a member has an interest in an item under discussion, then they must declare that interest at the first opportunity.

When declaring an interest, they must specify the nature of the interest, and whether it is personal or prejudicial. The minutes of the meeting must record the fact that a declaration has been made and by whom. They must be silent during the meeting while the matter concerned is under discussion.

LAG Members should not vote on an issue if: -

- they have declared a prejudicial interest;

- they have not been present for the whole of the presentation of and discussion of the item concerned.

LAG Advisors are not able to vote on issues.

The attached Terms of Reference and Member Protocol provide further detail on how the LAG will operate and how it is compliant with the Commission's Regulations 1303/2013 (Commons Provisions Reg.).

The Bridgend LAG is not a legally constituted organization, however the terms of reference for the group will be kept under regular review. The legal responsibilities and formal agreements will be made with Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) as the administrative body. The LAG is made up of both new members for the new programming period plus a majority membership of former Local Action Group and Rural Partnership members who come with extensive experience of delivering the 2007-2014 programme.

New Members of the LAG were recruited through a call for new Members at the reach Celebration Event in July 2014 at which all partner organisations, community organisations and representatives of stakeholder and beneficiary groups involved in delivering the previous programme were invited to attend (with over 100 in attendance). Three new Members were recruited following this event. Members of the existing Rural Partnership and LAG were also given the opportunity to transfer into the new LAG structure with the majority opting to do so. Gaps in Membership, accordance with the minimum 18 required, the equal spread across Public, Private and Voluntary Sector representation required, and gaps in thematic knowledge are to be recruited as the new programme gets underway. This is to be achieved through raising awareness of the vacancies through county-wide networks both physical and online, and through word of mouth, if the take up is insufficient, advertisements will be placed in the local press. All applicants must complete a new Membership Form and have a proposer and seconder on the LAG before a consensus decision is reached as to their appointment or otherwise.

All expenditure relating to the LDS will pass through BCBC's financial monitoring systems and bank accounts. Expenditure will be subject to the usual financial regulations and audit procedures associated with the proper stewardship of public funds. There will be a clear segregation of duty between decision making by the LAG and the administration of payments processed by the programme team. The programme team will be subject to the usual checks and procedures integral to the local authority's financial systems.

BCBC has extensive experience in delivering external and European-funded funding programmes including acting as Lead Body for Axis 3 & Axis 4 of the Rural Development Programme in Bridgend County Borough for the duration of the 2007-2014 programming period.

The LAG intends to adopt a conceive and commission model, building on its successful experience within the current programme for scoping projects that respond to identified need and then allocating resources to those best placed to deliver them. This may range from delivery by individual organisations to delivery via consortia.

The approach will be carried out in accordance with the Welsh Government's requirements under the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2014-2020. In line with the draft guidance, calls for projects will be undertaken throughout the programme where the criteria may be amended in between to address evolving needs or delivery in a transparent manner, including minimum and maximum levels of funding.

Criteria will be publicly available and expressions of interest for project ideas will be welcomed from all sectors of the community on a rolling basis until such a time as the funding priorities or criteria need to be amended. It is anticipated that project ideas are likely to come from the thematic rural networks, partner organisations, community action groups, the lead body or LAG members.

LEADER project officers will provide support to develop expressions of interest that meet the criteria into robust proposals and provide appropriate support to pitch those ideas to the LAG. LAG Members will not be able to vote if there is a conflict of interest. The opportunity to pitch will be at least quarterly and unsuccessful project ideas may be invited to return following the implementation of recommendations.

The LAG will also be able to directly conceive and commission ideas where this is agreed by quorum.

All project ideas taken forward will be subject to procurement to identify and commission the most suitable delivery agent for the work based on value for money, quality and proven ability to deliver. Projects will either be put through procurement as a whole or, alternatively, elements of a project may be procured separately, depending on the circumstances and the capacity of the applicant to manage their own project.

This process is designed to manage the demand for support by being both targeted and flexible in its approach. Officer support will help ensure that projects are as robust as possible before they get to the point of commissioning. Experience has shown that LEADER is more effective where in-depth support, including mentoring, is available throughout the entire process. The Expression of Interest phase is designed to filter out any inappropriate project ideas, for example those which cannot be funded due to State Aid regulations, and maximise the use of officer time where it is most needed.

In line with any amendments to the criteria and/or funding priorities, calls may from time to time be re-branded as a new initiative.

This process has evolved from the tried and tested approaches to the delivery of the Let's Innovate Phase 1 and Phase 2 initiatives delivered between 2011 and 2014. The selection process will be reviewed at least annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

SECTION 3 - DELIVERY

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) aims to transfer its stated objectives into delivery on the ground. The LAG should have a clear plan that links the result, the outputs that deliver the result, what activities will take place to deliver the outputs, how and when those activities will take place, and who will be responsible for delivering them.
Linked to	Sections 3.4 (including intervention logic table), 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

3.1 Description of the strategy and hierarchy of objectives

(2,500 words (narrative) plus up to 10 pages A4 in the form of an Intervention Logic Table (template provided))

This strategy sets out the approach of the Bridgend Local Action Group to addressing the priorities of the rural communities it serves. It builds on the strengths and opportunities offered by its people and places, and through fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, will aim to develop and support rural communities to thrive.

This document is prepared at a time when the economy and jobs are foremost in many people's minds and aims to address this pragmatically, looking at where the assets of the rural County Borough can be maximised with the resources available, and where rural funding can make the biggest impact.

The strategy is founded on creating and maximising opportunities to build solid and sustainable foundations for key rural sectors, such as food, forestry, tourism, heritage and renewable energy, to grow. It recognises that for this to happen, actions must be integrated and priorities aligned.

Central to this is the guardianship of its places and spaces and the preservation and celebration of the area's diverse heritage, looking towards a sustainable approach to all rural development.

LEADER funding provides the opportunity for organic growth from the bottom-up.

Resources will be directed at supporting communities to design and deliver the services they want to see in their communities, ensuring that the right support structures are in place to enable and empower them to do so.

LEADER funding offers the opportunity to support knowledge transfer, networking and learning through collaboration and co-operation with others to achieve a greater outcome.

Resources will therefore be directed towards rural networks, mentoring schemes and collaborative projects with partners both within the County Borough and outside of the area to share knowledge and skills and maximise resources.

LEADER funding brings the potential to pilot new, innovative ideas.

Support will be there to enable businesses and communities to trial new approaches to service delivery, products and processes. Support will also be directed towards the encouragement and piloting of diversification activity into new sectors, such as tourism and renewable energy, whether with farming or other rural businesses.

The vision for our rural communities as we look forward to 2020 is simple, yet ambitious, it is to achieve: **“Self-sustaining, diverse and vibrant rural communities”**.

In order to achieve this vision, the Local Action Group aims to deliver all of its activity in line with the following three strategic objectives:

1. A place to live - Creating self-sustaining rural communities
2. A place to visit - Developing diversified rural enterprises
3. A place to work - Supporting vibrant rural economies

(SO1) Strategic Objective 1: A place to live - Creating self-sustaining rural communities

This objective is rooted in creating rural areas where people feel able to fulfil their own potential and that of their community by developing the confidence and the right skills. It will respond to needs at a grassroots level, supporting innovative efforts to bring back lost services where there are genuine service gaps, sustain existing services and deliver non-statutory services⁸ in different ways.

This approach was successfully implemented during the 2007-2014 LEADER programme and led to the formation of local action groups, renewed enthusiasm for community action and support to prioritise their own needs and find sources of funding for mainstreaming their activities, such as Heritage Lottery Funding or local authority funding.

The approach also has roots in the success of the Pub is the Hub scheme in rural Bridgend which saw service gaps addressed through the vision and commitment of local business owners, this model will be rolled out to include other facilities such as village halls or community centres.

Rural areas will be supported to identify the services, places and spaces that are important to them and will be supported to enhance and access them, in line with planning guidance. A lot of work has already been undertaken under LEADER to increase access to green spaces across the Rural County Borough which will be built on throughout the programme, including for example, more communities and

⁸ *“Councils have statutory responsibilities for many things that affect people’s lives, including, planning and transport, social services and promoting equality and sustainable development. Local government also provides a range of vital non-statutory services, such as leisure and culture and crucially the regeneration of local areas. In addressing these responsibilities, authorities work closely with communities and other stakeholders.”*
<http://www.wlga.gov.uk/local-government-services-3>

schools having the opportunity to use forests for outdoor learning and recreation.

(SO1) Delivery Objectives:

SO1.1: To facilitate the identification and prioritisation of rural community needs and aspirations focused on sustainable futures and innovation in economic rural development.

SO1.2: To implement a pilot suite of innovative projects in rural communities, based on identified needs and aspirations, with the aim of developing sustainable rural services, exploring new ways of providing non-statutory services, and strengthening economic rural development.

SO1.3: To implement a pilot package of rural heritage activities that use an integrated community development approach to research, interpretation, upskilling, upgrading, conservation and co-operation, in order to contribute to rural Bridgend's 'sense of place' and to increase the business and employment potential of the heritage economy.

SO1.4: To implement a pilot package of 'Our Green Spaces' projects, working with community groups, volunteers and agencies to strengthen the potential economic benefit between the area's natural assets and community wellbeing, tourism and environmental sustainability.

(SO2) Strategic Objective 2: A place to visit - Developing diversified rural enterprises

Based on the demand evidenced through earlier LEADER activity, for example the Bridgend Local Food Network (BLFN), and the Let's Innovate commissioning scheme, this objective aims to give businesses the confidence and support they need to try new approaches, reach new markets and maximise their growth potential by integrating vertically and horizontally, working collaboratively with other businesses and across sectors. The BLFN producer network will be extended to look at new and emerging sectors that can add further value to the local producer economy, for example, other land-based products such as timber and crafts sectors.

The largest sector in terms of employment in Bridgend County Borough's rural area is the service sector, including hospitality and tourism. The strategy aims to increase the demand for rural goods and services and in particular open new market opportunities for rural enterprises. Linked to this increased demand will be the need to increase production and capacity for growth.

The strategy is based not only on improving the demand but on improving the products and experiences on offer and on integrating across sectors to bring mutual benefit. The objectives are in line with the Destination Management Plan which was developed in part by the LEADER programme 2007-2014.

This strategic objective will also look at the need to improve awareness of local products and experiences outside of the area and engage in wider and more significant marketing activity, tapping into the opportunities offered by regional approaches, collaborative working and strategic programmes. The LEADER programme has strong links with the South East Wales Local Food Talks (SEWLFT) partnership and has undertaken studies and pilot projects to explore opportunities to

improve awareness of the product offer or rural Bridgend County Borough.

(SO2) Delivery Objectives:

SO2.1: To implement a pilot package of innovative activities that facilitate access to, and demand for, rural products and experiences that link producers with the hospitality sector to contribute to an integrated visitor economy.

SO2.2: To implement joint-marketing initiatives with rural enterprises, communities and partners that promote a coherent offer of rural Bridgend and maximise the potential to tap into business, family, cultural and heritage visitor economy markets.

SO2.3: To facilitate activities that lead to the development of, and sustainability of, a range of visitor accommodation and attractions that exceed customer expectations and cement a perception of rural Bridgend as a 'great place to visit'.

(SO3) Strategic Objective 3: A place to work - Supporting vibrant rural economies

This objective aims to facilitate the development of a rural network that connects businesses and seed entrepreneurs to examine and actively support diversification and innovation opportunities.

It is about supporting equality of opportunity for all rural people and realising the potential of every individual to be enterprising and to make a difference. It will involve being able to find and access satisfying employment, including self-employment, where many of the barriers which relate to isolation, exclusion and poverty are broken down.

This objective is also about energising the local economy through innovation. Creating a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship, offering the right, specialist support where it is needed and providing a test bed for new ideas before they are taken to market. It is about safeguarding communities and future-proofing the economy.

It is also about enabling rural areas to adopt entrepreneurial approaches to become owners and custodians of their services, places and spaces. Opportunities to pilot green economy approaches incorporating natural resources for energy or other commercially focused community enterprises will be identified and piloted.

(SO3) Delivery Objectives:

SO3.1: To facilitate activities that identify the extent and effects of outward commuting and migration from Bridgend's rural communities, and pilot innovative interventions that create opportunities for community-based earning.

SO3.2: To identify options for renewable energy opportunities and work with stakeholders to develop a green economy for rural Bridgend.

SO3.3: To facilitate activities that identify diversification and entrepreneurship options in rural communities, and pilot innovative interventions that create opportunities for non-agricultural sustainable development.

SO3.4: To increase the use of digital technology among rural businesses and

communities to maximise productivity, sales and marketing profile.

Delivering this strategy

This strategy will be delivered with funding from the RDP LEADER programme. This will be complemented by the integration of priorities across other available RDP funding streams and external programmes. (Further information on the integration elements can be found at Section 1.2 on Integration)

The LEADER programme 2014-2020 offers five themes to align activity against:

1. Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
2. Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
3. Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
4. Renewable energy at community level
5. Exploitation of digital technology

The Intervention Logic Table demonstrates how the strategic objectives above translate into actions against each of these five themes.

The Conceive and Commission Approach

Bridgend County Borough's LEADER activity will offer support for rural communities through an innovative 'conceive and commission' approach to innovative pilots and studies to ensure bottom-up approaches to innovation and interventions in line with the themes and objectives outlined in this document.

It is anticipated that this LEADER programme will enable a range of initiatives to be implemented throughout its 6-year delivery period to ensure the maximum benefit to rural communities.

The delivery of support will be overseen by the Local Action Group ensuring activity is implemented in line with the core principles of LEADER. These will be activities such as trialling new ideas and innovative ways of working, mentoring to build capacity from the grass roots and undertaking research and studies to build an evidence base for future interventions and mainstreaming.

A pro-active approach will be taken to creating the opportunities for rural areas to engage in the LEADER project, using a range of engagement tools such as those outlined in the reach Communications Strategy, for example:

- Quarterly newsletters distributed to key locations
- Social media updates (2-3 per week; facebook, YouTube)
- Weekly website updates and blog entries
- Ad-hoc flyers and poster
- Out-of-home poster campaigns
- Local press and media
- Drop-in surgeries
- PR Campaigns
- Face-to-face at community fairs & festivals monthly or more
- Giving presentations to community-based groups and organisations

This includes helping to shape where resources are directed and, where possible,

being involved in key decision making processes, for example, through membership of the Local Action Group or thematic rural networks.

The approach and methodology to the way resources are invested in rural communities will be continually reviewed through formative evaluation and annual review with Welsh Government, and as a minimum, the approach will be refreshed regularly to ensure that changing local needs are addressed. In line with the draft guidance, calls for projects will be undertaken at regular intervals throughout the programme where the criteria may be amended between calls to address evolving needs or delivery in a transparent manner.

Alongside the support available to deliver innovative pilots, there will be the opportunity to commission pre-pilot support through evidence gathering, feasibility studies and specialist mentoring in project design and implementation, ensuring that projects are robust and stand the best chance of success.

The LAG does not intend to restrict who it can work with to deliver this support and will take full account of its commitments to the cross-cutting themes of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming. Provided that the projects work with, and are directly for the benefit of, Bridgend County Borough's rural communities, the emphasis will be on finding the best solutions to local needs and creating the biggest positive impact.

Projects will be commissioned by the reach Local Action Group with the support of a panel of advisors. Strict criteria and a scoring system is in place to deliver the commissioning fund based on the experience and lessons learnt from the Let's Innovate schemes under the 2007-2014 LEADER programme. The criteria to be applied to the assessment and scoring of project ideas and of the delivery agents commissioned to deliver them is based on:

- Developing new ideas, approaches or markets.
- Enabling new businesses, products or services.
- Developing ideas that are new to Bridgend county, the UK or completely original.
- Sustainability, engagement and up-skilling.
- Delivering a transformative impact - not just outputs.

Pilot projects will deliver regular progress updates in the form of, for example, video diaries, podcasts or press articles. With all projects closely monitored on a regular basis, this information will be used to inform others about how things have gone. The LAG will be closely involved in monitoring targets on a regular basis as part of the formative evaluation process, enabling LAG members to keep abreast of targets under the key themes and progress against them providing a greater focus and understanding of the process.

The primary focus for all activity supported will be on developing innovative activity that would not usually be supported by other sources. The resources will be primarily revenue based with a smaller capital element.

A number of the activities commissioned will be delivered in partnership, bringing a

range of skills and expertise to resolving local issues and in many cases, co-financing into the programme, maximising the resources available. Relevant and appropriate partnerships will be sought throughout delivery of the LDS.

Where it is considered appropriate to deliver activity in partnership with another LAG area, different options and models for formal co-operative or informal collaborative working will be explored. This element is described in more detail under the section on Co-operation and Networking.

It is recognised that the LAG will not have the resources or capacity to deliver everything that has been identified in the preparation of this strategy. The Intervention Logic Table that accompanies this Strategy prioritises the activity that will be taken forward by the LAG through its LEADER activity while the section on integration provides further information on how other areas of work identified through the SWOT process will be taken forward through integrating and mainstreaming with other programmes and policy areas.

3.2 Co-Operation and Networking

(1,000 words; up to 500 to be focused on preparatory activities)

Rural development in Bridgend has strong foundations in its thematic networks. The LAG welcomes a focus on working in collaborative and supportive ways during the 2014-2020 programme through the renewed emphasis on co-operation and networking.

It is envisaged that support for rural networks will continue throughout the programme. The value of these networks has been proven through the achievements of the previous programme and the mutual benefits both to the programme and the individuals and businesses on the networks. Rural networks are an integral part of the advice and guidance provided to the LAG.

In addition to networks, LEADER officers will make local connections with other WG policy areas and strategic partner organisations to ensure where possible that activity is integrated and does not duplicate, therefore maximising the impact and value of the LEADER project funding.

There are a number of elements within the LDS that will lend well to working in co-operation or collaboration with others, both within the County Borough and outside with other LAG areas in Wales or elsewhere. These have been identified within the attached Intervention Logic Table and following approval of the LDS, work will begin to formalise working relationships and models of delivery with prospective partners.

The Bridgend LAG has experience of delivering, and acting as Lead Partner for, a successful Inter-Territorial Co-operation (ITC) project during the 2007-2014 programme, Community Foodie. This project worked in cooperation with two other LAGs: the Vale of Glamorgan and Torfaen.

The LAG was also a partner on the Cadwyn Clwyd led co-operation project, Pub is the Hub. Bridgend County Borough met all of its targets in relation to this project

and work now continues to identify further opportunities to support activities of this nature in the 2014-2020 programme, with a view to identifying new sectors such as the delivery of services within community or voluntary sector facilities.

The LAG also recognises the benefits of Trans-National Co-operation (TNC) projects, building on the experience of previously being part of the LAG Connect Mentoring scheme. During the 2007-2014 programme, the LAG worked in partnership with a community in Denmark to learn from their experience of delivering a highly innovative community renewable energy project using hydrogen fuel-cell technology. The partners shared their findings and best practice with communities, including farmers, in rural Bridgend as part of an innovative study to identify the feasibility of establishing a similar scheme in rural Bridgend, which would be the first in Wales.

A number of delivery models will be considered going forward including formal and informal arrangements as appropriate and including collaborative working, shared actions, sharing knowledge and pooling resources, such as, joint approaches to programme evaluation.

Other approaches may involve a regional lead approach to co-operation in order for co-operating LAGS across the region to learn from one LAGs experiences. Areas where this might prove of benefit to Bridgend would include, for example, identifying solutions to rural broadband, solutions to community transport in isolated areas and experiences of implementing childcare schemes and the potential pitfalls of schemes such as these.

The benefits of working in this way could see cost-savings enabling more funding to directly benefit rural communities, in part due to the reduced need to duplicate piloting activity across LAGs and instances where there is no requirement for a formal lead partner requiring additional running costs.

As appropriate co-operation activity that is taken forward will focus on one of the three stages of co-operation:

- **Exchange of experience:** for example, activity relating to the adoption of digital approaches, the study and piloting of small-scale renewable energy projects.
- **Transfer of Practice:** for example, activity relating to food growing initiatives, the establishment of thematic networks, tools and approaches to developing a green infrastructure.
- **Common Action:** for example, activity relating to food marketing, coastal tourism and outdoor recreation.

Whilst the LAG envisages being proactive in its approach to joint working with others, it will look to the Wales Rural Network to lead on the development of opportunities to broker collaborative and co-operative working and networking outside of our LAG area within and outside of Wales. Bridgend is a current member of the WRN Steering Group.

Funding for co-operation projects will come from a range of sources, for example, existing Co-operation budget within the LEADER programme or joint bids to other RDP funds for example the Rural Community Development Fund, or joint bids to other funders, such as Natural resources Wales or the Big Lottery Fund.

Preparatory Activity

A number of synergies exist between the rural areas of Bridgend County Borough and other rural counties. They are based on, for example, the geography and topography of the area, the product offer of each area and the local needs of each area that have been prioritised for rural development. These synergies will provide the basis upon which to build co-operative projects.

The identification of potential co-operation projects is an ongoing process which began during the preparation of this strategy and will continue throughout its delivery, recognising that circumstances evolve.

The selection of partners for co-operative working will be based on a range of factors including:

- Relevant synergies with the area
- Alignment of the relevant aims and objectives across each LDS
- The previous experience of the prospective partner where this applies, for example, if we are particularly looking for someone to learn from
- The approach taken by the partner area in the design and delivery of its work and the synergies with our approach.

In preparation to deliver co-operation projects, the following steps will be taken:

- Identification through the development of the strategy of areas of work which lend to co-operative action. This will be through a local understanding of what the LAG sees as having co-operation potential and linking this to other areas with similar proposed interventions.
- Discussion at networking events with other RDP officers to develop ideas and identify prospective partners. These meetings will include but, not exclusively, the South Wales RDP Officers meetings, the combined North and South RDP Officers meetings, SEWDER RDP Task & Finish Group, regional engagement networks e.g. SE Wales Food Talks group, tourism working groups, etc.
- Meetings with RDP officers from the LAG areas identified as potential partners to scope projects and ensure alignment with the LDS of each area and to discuss delivery models. Discussions will cover whether it would be advantageous to adopt a formal model such as ITC or TNC or whether more informal collaborative approaches would be more beneficial and cost-effective i.e. less resource heavy.
- Preparatory work to identify potential transnational partners to be brokered via the Wales Rural Network and explored further through electronic

communications with prospective partners and where appropriate through attendance at ENRD networking events.

- Preparation of project detail including performance indicators, budgets, the allocation of existing resources and the need for any new/additional resource. Develop funding applications if additional resource is required from the RCDF or other funder as appropriate.

3.3 Description of Innovation

(1,000 words – to be linked to the actions described in Section 3.1 above and referring to the bullet point tick headings in Section 3.9 of the LDS guidance document)

With a keen focus on economic development, sustainable development and creating opportunities for people living in our rural communities, the strategy for delivering LEADER in Bridgend throughout 2014-2020 has innovation at its heart.

LEADER as a programme is uniquely placed to focus on finding new ways of working, of approaching things from a different perspective and of helping to take the burden of risk away from vulnerable small enterprises and community groups who want to deliver things differently.

Rural Bridgend is fortunate to have a range of innovative businesses and a steadily growing base of new entrepreneurs. Forward thinking strategic partners that the LAG has worked with to date on a range of innovative projects include Bridgend College and Sony UK. The relationships built offer the potential for future strategic advice and guidance as well as further joint ventures as opportunities arise.

Innovation happens when something new is tried and changes the way things are done as a result. The LAG will be working hard to continue fostering a culture of trying new approaches within rural communities and enterprises by supporting them every step of the way.

Innovation will cut across the whole of the strategy and will build on the lessons learned from the previous programme. That programme had a focus on delivering sustainable, engaging and upskilling projects and those delivering a transformative impact. These principles will still apply as the new strategy goes forward.

The primary mechanisms for delivering innovation will be:

- a) Mentoring schemes for new innovators
- b) Integration with other programmes to facilitate the delivery of innovative projects and link into their advisory services where relevant
- c) Commissioning projects that have the potential to bring new solutions to local needs where no other suitable funding is available
- d) Supporting the mainstreaming of projects beyond LEADER support.

Examples of the types of interventions envisaged in the new programme are provided below.

a) Mentoring schemes for new innovators

Mentoring for new innovators will enable specialist advice and support to be brokered where an idea is beyond the scope of support available directly from the rural development team or other available advisory services therefore ensuring there is no duplication. It will teach communities and budding entrepreneurs how to deliver projects in a professional way, will inform them of any regulatory requirements, trends or financial implications involved within the area of work being piloted. The LEADER mentors will also act as a critical friend to support experimentation.

b) Integration with other programmes to facilitate the delivery of innovative projects and link into their advisory services where relevant

Support will be available to those leading projects who do not have the expertise or capacity to design projects or develop a ready solution to their needs. This approach will allow them to think more broadly and become leaders in innovation. Where relevant, links will be made with other organisations, programmes and policy areas to add value to projects through integration and to build collaboration between different actors and sectors. This will provide an opportunity to integrate with key Welsh Government policies and initiatives.

Collaborative working and integration will also have a focus outside of Wales, looking to create working partnerships with other EU countries to network, share best practice and deliver joint projects as has been the case in the 2007-2014 programme.

c) Commissioning projects that have the potential to bring new solutions to local needs where no other suitable funding is available

LEADER funding will enable the piloting of innovative ideas, products and prototypes, provided that they do not affect the commercial market and are at a pre-commercial stage. It will also support research activities which will help to build an evidence base for future interventions and mainstreaming of activities in rural areas. It will work with partners and communities to conceive and commission innovative solutions in response to issues and needs. This innovative approach will link the needs of an area and will draw in new approaches and methods to address those needs.

The programme will offer funding to networks or co-operatives and organisations with the potential to provide non-statutory services to the community. There are a number of community facilities such as village halls or underused buildings that could be set-up to provide additional, much needed, services to the community, where a genuine service gap has been identified. For example, post office provision from within a village hall. This will follow a similar model to the Pub is the Hub scheme which has previously been facilitated and supported successfully in rural Bridgend.

The fund will have the core aims of:

- Addressing social needs accomplished through developing new ideas, approaches or markets,
- Enabling new businesses, products or services that are new to Bridgend county, the UK or completely original.

The Local Action Group will determine whether or not to commission ideas based on criteria such as:

- Levels of innovation
- Extent to which they will build the capacity of rural communities
- Identified support received
- Stakeholder engagement
- Proposals for disseminating the results
- Impact on delivering the Local Development Strategy including sustainability

d) Supporting the mainstreaming of projects beyond LEADER support

It is envisaged that in the spirit of facilitating the mainstreaming of projects supported under LEADER that appropriate support will be provided to steer projects towards sustainability through the creation of a new businesses or facilitating support from a strategic or business partnership, for example a sponsor. To this end, the LEADER project will aim to play a part in business development, growth and potential job creation and support enterprises to become market leaders through innovation, adding value to the local economy.

A number of projects trialled under the 2007- 2014 LEADER programme have the potential to be mainstreamed during delivery of this strategy.

Formative evaluation will provide ongoing opportunities to identify mainstreaming partners at different stages of the programme. This may include co-operation activities to mainstream elements of projects with RDP partners.

3.4 Action Plan

This section is to be provided as a unified document with the Intervention Logic at Section 3.1 above. The 'Who' and 'When' elements required by the Commission have been added to the Intervention Logic table (can be indicative where exact details are not known). Please also show in the relevant columns where activities are expected to contribute to Cross-Cutting Themes, Welsh Language and supporting the Uplands.

3.5 Promotional Activity

(1,000 words)

The promotional activity for the Local Development Strategy will be delivered in line with the Communications Strategy devised and delivered by the LAG under the programme brand reach. This Communications will be periodically reviewed and refreshed as circumstances change on an ongoing basis.

This section of the LDS has structured responses in line with the guidance provided at the LDS development stage. For more complete information and further context, the Communications Strategy is included as an appendix.

Advertising and promoting opportunities / benefits that the project is offering to target participants and / or sectors

The target audiences for the Bridgend County Borough rural development programme include:

- Local Residents
- Local Groups
- Private sector
- Public Sector
- Voluntary Sector

How reach communicates with these audiences will be different. The following table breaks down each target audience and explains which tools will be used and when they are appropriate.

Who are the target audiences?	Which tools do we use and how frequently?
<p>Local residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly newsletters distributed to key locations • Social media updates (2-3 per week)(facebook, YouTube) • Weekly website updates • Ad-hoc flyers and poster • Out-of-home poster campaigns • Local press and media • Drop-in surgeries • PR Campaigns • Face-to-face at community fairs & festivals monthly or more
<p>Local groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents associations • Community groups • Special interest and hobby groups • Reach-supported action planning groups • Local networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering presentations to their meetings • Attendance at their fairs, workshops and conferences • Newsletters • Weekly website updates • Email • Networks <p>Each of these networks have regular meetings, events, email distributions, e-newsletters, as well as a digital presence with their respective websites and also social media pages. These networks allow for effectively communicating the required messages with ease and effectiveness.</p>
<p>Private sector</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pubs • Tourism attractions • Accommodation providers • Farmers • Food producers • Craftspeople • Micro-enterprises • Business start-ups • Local networks e.g. Bridgend Business Forum, Bridgend Tourism Association, Bridgend Farmers Market group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach newsletters • Reach website updates • Reach social media feeds twitter & facebook, LinkedIn • Local network events • Local network newsletters, emails distribution, blogs & social media channels. • Press releases to local media • Advertorials in local press
<p>Public sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Councils • Local Authorities • Welsh Government • Government Agencies e.g. NRW • Regional and local partnerships e.g. LSB • LIFE centres & libraries • BCBC community focused teams (e.g. Communities First, Love2Walk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email distribution to clerks of Community Councils • Presentations to community councils • Intranet, notice boards & payslips • Quarterly meetings with Welsh Government • Monthly regeneration managers meetings • Quarterly updates with Heads of Service and Group Manager • Posters in life centre and libraries
<p>Voluntary sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umbrella bodies i.e. BAVO, WCVA • Local organisations such as Development Trusts • Regional not-for-profit organisations e.g. Groundwork • Charities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most relevant voluntary sector organisations are members of the Bridgend Rural Partnership • Invite other voluntary sector organisations to become members of the partnerships

Working with identified stakeholders to promote the programme

Our identified stakeholders are:

- Funding bodies
- Elected officials
- Local press and media
- Visitors
- Internal Colleagues

The mechanism for promoting the programme and its projects to the following

groups is as follows:

<p>Funding bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU • Welsh Government • BCBC • Third sector funding bodies • Charities • Private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings with Welsh Government • Monthly Regeneration managers meetings • Quarterly meetings with Heads of Service and Group Manager • Website Updates
<p>Elected officials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Council Members • Community Council Members • Youth Council Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Email distribution • Delivery of presentations
<p>Local press and media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local press such as the Glamorgan Gazette and Gem • Local radio such as Bridge FM • Local press such as Seaside News • Regional press such as the Western Mail • Social media influencers e.g. bloggers • Specialist & trade press such as Western Mail Farming or Business supplements, walking magazines, food magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular press releases – when newsworthy • Relationship building with journalists – sending regular diary markers and personalised emails • Regular content (column) for a local or specialist press publication – quarterly/monthly • Media pack on the website – key background information and images for news stories
<p>Visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure visitors • Business tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Information at visitor attractions, TIPs and accommodation providers • Bespoke campaigns, i.e. heritage, church and chapels • Face-to-face contact at visitor-focused events
<p>Internal colleagues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach team • BCBC colleagues • RDP colleagues 	<p>Weekly team planning sessions Intranet, notice board, emails distribution Quarterly meetings with SW RDP Officers.</p>

Publicising the results and impact of the programme

An appraisal of activity will take place on a regular basis, through ongoing formative evaluation and annual review with Welsh Government, the results of which will be publicised via:

- Reach Website
- Social Media and blogs
- Press releases to local media
- Presentations at network events
- Newsletters sent to network, thematic and geographic
- Local Action Group
- Video and Audio content on DVD's and You Tube
- Celebration events
- Display boards at reach organised and 'piggybacked' events

Disseminating best practice

The networks that the LAG has developed and / or supported provide a perfect opportunity to disseminate best practice to individuals which have a specific interest in similar activities.

Face to face dissemination at:

- Rural networks and key partnerships
- Celebration events
- Organised and 'piggybacked' events

Producing literature for:

- Programme website
- Social Media and blogs
- Press releases to local media
- Newsletters sent to networks, thematic and geographic
- Video and Audio content on DVD's and You Tube
- Display boards at self-organised and 'piggybacked' events

This information will be sent to all previously identified stakeholders and targeted participants.

Ensuring full acknowledgement of the funding from the European Union is clearly displayed including type of media utilised

The use of the EU, LEADER and WG logos will be used for each appropriate opportunity (logos on stationary, leaflets and websites etc.) for both activity delivered by the LAG and its team and for all funding recipients. It is mandated that reach will not approve any payments / invoices unless the required logos are included.

In order to ensure the logos are used correctly, brand guidelines have been produced and are issued to beneficiaries. The advices states 'all [reach] communications must carry the set of three EU, LEADER and WG logos on a white background'; further sizing and spacing advice is given.

'Flying the EU flag' during the week that includes 9 May

In the run up to the 9th May, the LAG will contact the local press and media; providing media releases and interview opportunities with the aim to showcase how European Funding has benefited the local area and local projects. Other activity will include:

- News items on the website
- Social media items
- Provide news items for the organisation intranet and website

If we have the opportunity to 'piggy back' on a local event, we will attend to show case various projects.

In addition, we will contact all our beneficiaries of funding and support, explaining the aims of the day and asking them to support the day, making a number of suggestions such as:

- Social media posts
- Updates on the website (illustrating how European funding has benefited them)
- Special continental breakfast with flags for customers, tourists, business partners etc.

Ensuring that participants and/or enterprises are clearly aware of the funding received from the EU

Participants are made aware on inception that the rural development programme is an EU funded programme and the assistance attained is from the EU.

This is reinforced by the requirement that any promotional materials, websites etc are only approved for funding if the relevant logos are in places.

In addition, the participants are required to place a plaque, supplied, in an appropriate position stating how the relevant project was funded.

Reach will discuss any proposed launches / press releases with RDP communication staff and the Wales Rural Networks during the quarterly meetings or via interim communication as required.

SECTION 4 – MANAGEMENT OF OPERATION

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group and its elected Administrative Body has the capacity and resources necessary to successfully deliver on the planned results, output indicators and activities.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 2 – Financial & Compliance)

4.1 Management and Administration

(2,500 words)

Administrative Body

The partner selected by the Bridgend LAG to act as Administrative Body for the 2014-2020 Programme is Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), which was also the Lead Body under the 2007-2014 programme. BCBC is a Member of the LAG representing the Public Sector. The administrative function will be carried out primarily by an administrative team employed within the Regeneration & Development Department of Bridgend County Borough Council with further support from Corporate Finance, Specialist European Team, Human Resources, Internal Audit, Legal & Property assisting in this process.

There is a Control Plan in place with a number of these supporting functions playing a part in that Plan. BCBC staff delivering the LDS have in place the necessary controls to ensure a separation of duties in handling financial transactions and key decisions relating to these. Staff are also employed based on their skills and experience and any gaps in skills and knowledge are identified through formal appraisal reviews twice per year, in addition to regular supervisory 1-2-1 meetings with line managers, with those needs addressed as soon as is practicable.

Monthly meetings are held between staff with responsibility for the Administrative functions, including RDP project managers employed by the Authority, to regularly monitor progress against all performance targets, including financial. Where appropriate, colleagues from Corporate Finance or other teams within the Authority will be in attendance to discuss and resolve matters requiring their attention in relation to the delivery of the Rural Development Programme in Bridgend.

In addition to the Control Plan, BCBC has a number of policies and protocols in place both to protect and enhance the programme, its strategy and beneficiaries, including for example, procurement protocols, equal opportunities and sustainable development.

Through its role as secretariat for the LAG, the Administrative Body will seek to ensure that all decisions are recorded appropriately, that financial and target monitoring reports are presented to the LAG as required and that appropriate recommendations are made as needed and in line with the advice of LAG Advisors. The Administrative Body shall also ensure that all reports and financial claims are presented to the Welsh Government as required.

The LAG has decided BCBC will be the only body acting in an administrative capacity for the Bridgend LAG. Its Administrative functions will be funded under the Running Costs and Animation budgets under the new programme.

Discussions have been held with neighbouring lead bodies to consider a range of options for delivering the LDS under shared running costs models. Following discussions, going ahead as a single administrative body was considered the most appropriate and cost-effective model for the Bridgend County Borough LAG.

With population figures above 50,000 the LAG feels that it is justified in operating as a single LAG with a single administrative body. The option of joint running costs works well for those LAG areas that are either new or very small and therefore cannot justify a separate LAG or admin body. The options open to Bridgend County Borough were only opportunities to deliver joint running costs with other significantly sized, well established programmes. From discussions with neighbouring lead bodies, it was concluded that delivering a lead body function across two such programmes would incur additional administrative costs, not reduced, and would put both lead bodies at risk with one effectively policing the other and its third party agents. This also brings with it the risk of putting pressure on relations between neighbouring areas which could reduce the likelihood of collaborative and co-operative approaches to programme activity on the ground, something which is currently very good.

The opportunity for joint-working and achieving meaningful cost-savings have been discussed with the Vale of Glamorgan, in particular where thematic synergies have been identified. This might involve jointly developing projects and pooling resources in order to achieve economies of scale. It might also involve a regional lead for a particular theme for others to learn from, reducing the need to have similar officers in each county and reducing the number of similar projects that go ahead across the region. One example of where this could work might be using the SEWDER model.

A team of two staff will be employed by BCBC on behalf of the LAG to manage day-to-day operational delivery of the strategy. The team will provide all administration under the guidance of the LAG and all necessary training will be provided to enable them to carry out their duties commensurate with European Commission Regulations. The officers include a Rural Development Programme Manager (30hpw) and a Rural Monitoring & Resources Co-ordinator (37hpw). These roles existed and worked well under the previous programme and will be in a position to deliver against the Running Costs and Animation functions of the LAG. 10% of the Rural Development Programme Manager's time will be spent on Running Costs functions enabling them to focus the rest of their time Animating the LAG and Local Development Strategy. The Rural Resource & Monitoring Officer will spend more of their time (73%) on Running Costs functions, supporting Animation activity for 27% of their time. By dividing both roles across both functions, it enables a separation of duty within the team to undertake duties such as preparing claims and authorising payments.

Within the Implementation and Co-operation budgets, there are 3FTE Rural Programme Co-ordinators. These officers are tasked with managing the delivery of projects funded through the Implementation and Co-operation projects with 10% of

their time allocated to Co-operation activity in line with budgetary considerations. The main function of these co-ordinators is to act as facilitators to help with the process of project development prior to application for LEADER funding and to act as contract managers with successful tenderers once projects have been commissioned.

The 5 posts identified, make up the local delivery team known as **Reach**. It was not considered necessary to recruit additional administrative support as had been the case for part of the previous programme given the overall size of the Reach team at only five officers and the way the programme has been designed with primarily a contract management model, as opposed to direct delivery, reducing the administrative burden on staff.

Training needs analysis will be undertaken with these staff members and the newly formed LAG to understand all skills gaps in relation to the delivery of the new programme. It is expected that the staff team will be recruited based on them having the relevant skills to enable them to carry out their main duties from their qualifications and past experience, for example financial management and governance procedures, however as a minimum, training will be initially provided under the following themes to which LAG members will also be invited to attend:

- Induction to the programme and all of its delivery functions,
- Introduction to LEADER,
- Procurement and contract management,
- Media and communications,
- Representation (what is expected of a LAG member).

A key strength of rural development in Bridgend County Borough is in the quality of the rural networks that underpin some of the advice provided to the LAG and offer routes for dissemination and mainstreaming. It is anticipated that further networks will evolve during programme delivery based on similar models to those of the Bridgend Local Food Network which has representatives from local private businesses and the Bridgend's Heritage Network which has representatives of local history and heritage groups, both locally- and regionally-based.

Thematic rural networks will be co-ordinated by the team providing facilitation and secretariat functions until such time that the group can operate independently or can be mainstreamed.

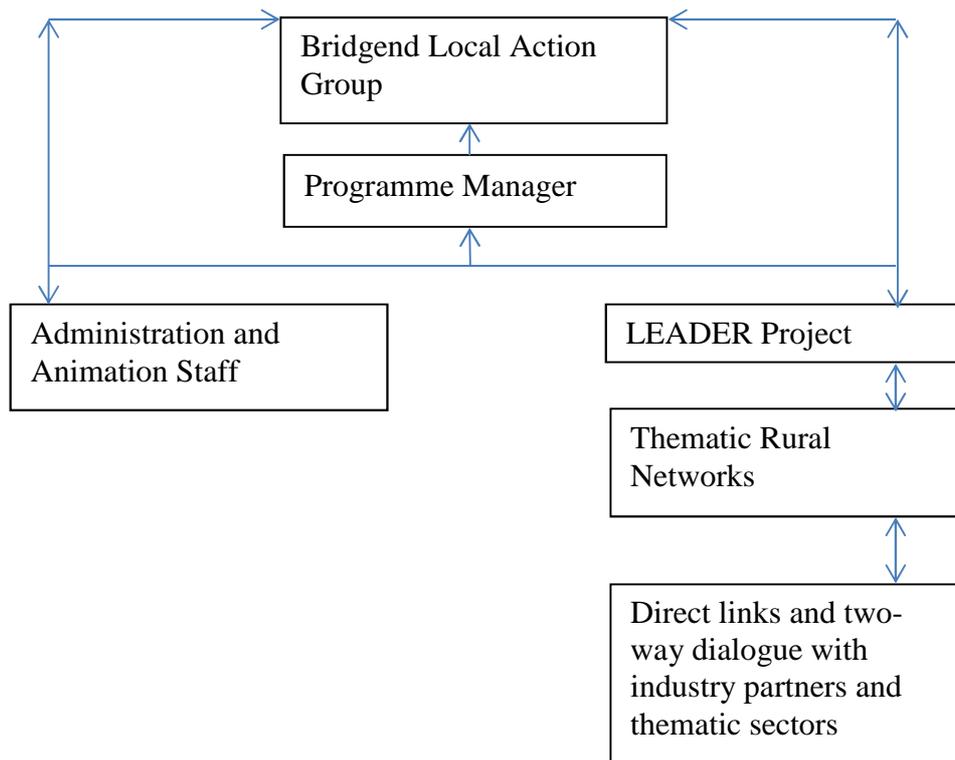
The local structure for delivering the Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 is as follows:

- Bridgend Local Action Group will oversee the delivery of the Local development Strategy, consisting of LAG Members and LAG Advisors.
- Thematic rural networks will support the taking forward of thematic areas of work and developing opportunities for future working. They will provide an advisory function to the LAG.
- The administrative body role will be carried out primarily by an administrative team employed within the Regeneration & Development Department of Bridgend County Borough Council.
- Animation of the LAG and the territory will be carried out under the animation

function of the management team.

The proposed reporting structure in relation to the delivery of the Local Development Strategy is as follows:

Reporting and dialogue structure



The main functions of the management team are listed below.

Administration

- Strategic lead for the Local Action Group.
- Overseeing delivery of the Local Development Strategy and all of its activities.
- Rural proofing, advocacy and policy development at a strategic level.
- Overall financial management of the Local Development Strategy.
- Performance management, data gathering and monitoring the impact of the Local Development Strategy.
- Providing strategic assistance in project development.
- Processing claims to Welsh Government and payments to delivery agents.
- Providing administrative support to Bridgend Local Action Group

Animation

- Providing secretariat support to the Local Action Group

- Facilitating capacity building, networking, preparing applications where no other providers exist.
- Implementation of rural development activities.
- Stimulating a local development process
- Informing the public about opportunities for project funding at public meetings and events, through leaflets and publications, online and via LAG members
- Encouraging other local actors to consider new investments or other projects
- Facilitating exchange between stakeholders to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries with a view to developing projects and preparing applications.

The framework for monitoring the performance of the forward work programme in meeting the objectives of the Local Development Strategy will be based on a Logical Framework (Logframe) approach – a standard evaluation framework which is now widely used as best practice in the context of LEADER-based initiatives. The principles behind the structure are straightforward, and the main purpose of the structure is to ensure that a monitoring and evaluation system covers all key issues and activities in a thorough manner.

The framework distinguishes between:

- Outputs that are under the control of project delivery bodies and the Local Action Group.
- Specific objectives relating to the implementation of the outputs, and recognition that other indicators may be based on inherently unquantifiable information.
- Overall objectives of the programme.

Key performance indicators will be established and data will be collated through a quarterly monitoring procedure based upon the PPIMS monitoring system in line with requirements of the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2014 – 2020.

A delivery plan will clearly detail the performance indicators, who is responsible for achieving those, and the responsibilities of delivery agents, the management team and the reach Local Action Group for monitoring, review and evaluation.

The plan will address the requirements of the Welsh Government and European Commission for the effective reporting of the implementation of the programme. The delivery plan will establish the basis of quarterly reports, which will be completed by the management team, and will be used to inform evaluation.

The management team will be responsible for monitoring the progress of all projects and activities supported under the Local Development Strategy, keeping records of activities, expenditure and outputs, and reporting aggregate output data from all activities as required by Welsh Government

The Local Action Group will ensure that acceptable arrangements are established to ensure that projects are performing well.

Monitoring of funded activities will seek to ensure that:

- The intended outputs and other benefits are being delivered to time and in a

cost effective way.

- Payments can be related to performance.
- The Welsh Government, the Local Action Group, the management team and delivery agents can respond to the performance of funded activities.
- Value-for-money assessments of programme activities can be made.
- The basis for evaluation is consistent across projects and initiatives.

The Local Action Group will employ project monitoring as a management tool and not simply a way of meeting the information needs of funders. Monitoring will comprise 3 elements:

(i) Reports and information received from the delivery agents.

Delivery agents must keep records of their activities, expenditure and outputs with project information reported to the management team accurately and on time. The management team will establish a format for quarterly reporting activities and outputs in accordance with the Welsh Government's requirements under the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2014-2020.

Delivery agents will also be asked to collect qualitative data on outputs and outcomes which will assist in project monitoring and evaluation and will contribute to the evaluation of the overall programme. This will include user satisfaction surveys during the life of a project and other generic qualitative assessments relating to the target actions of projects.

(ii) Verification by the management team

The management team will arrange to undertake the physical verification of approved projects. The purpose of physical monitoring is to verify that management systems are in place, audit trails are established and claimed outputs and activities have been achieved.

The management team will provide clear guidance to delivery agents on audit trails required to support expenditure and outputs.

The management team will visit delivery agents to confirm that management systems are in place during the first quarter of the approved project's life. The management team will also undertake a rolling programme of visits for audit purposes where this is appropriate.

All projects will be subject to formative evaluation. The scope will be commensurate with the size and complexity of the project. The management team will use an evaluation pro-forma to record and report final evaluation.

(iii) Decision process by the Local Action Group (to intervene or not)

Intervention at an early stage is important if things appear to be going wrong and where there are opportunities to introduce flexibility to accommodate innovation, such as those highlighted through formative evaluation. The management team will provide the Local Action Group with monitoring information on the progress of individual projects. It is the responsibility of the Local Action Group to decide what action to take following receipt of monitoring information.

SECTION 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

Description	Explain how the proposed actions and expenditure outlined in the Local Development Strategy represent the best use of EU funds. Explain how the costs included are reasonable, such as the cost and number of staff required to deliver the proposed activities.
Linked to	Section 3.4 and 4.0 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 Details of Section 3.4 have already been provided in Section 3 of this template (Intervention Logic)

5.1 Financial Delivery Profiles

Please complete the delivery profile templates provided.

Please note that you are asked to provide annual profiles at this stage in the process. You will be asked to input detailed quarterly profiles into PPIMS at a later date.

- ❖ Running Costs and Animation Costs should not exceed 25% of the total RDP funds (minus preparatory costs)
- ❖ Running Costs, Animation Costs and Preparatory Costs can be 100% funded through the RDP
- ❖ The LEADER implementation costs must include a minimum of 20% match funding
- ❖ Capital expenditure should not exceed 5% of overall implementation expenditure
- ❖ Sources of match funding should be identified, including the type (i.e. cash or in-kind)
- ❖ Please state if you are likely to opt for simplified costs (further guidance will be issued as soon as available)
- ❖ If a LAG does not propose to combine costs with other LAGs a robust justification is required
- ❖ Full rationales (including explanation of assumptions) must be provided for all costs in order demonstrate reasonableness of costs
- ❖ 10% flexibility will be allowed at Cost Heading 'Category' level not 'Sub Category' (see delivery profile template for further detail)

SECTION 6 – INDICATORS & OUTCOMES

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group intends to deliver the result and output indicators identified and all associated targets.
Linked to	Section 4.1 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

6.1 Monitoring and Results

Adding Value to Local Identity and Natural and Cultural Resources

Outputs

We expect to deliver approximately 9 projects under this theme. Through this work we expect to provide assistance to 3 business and work with 15 communities. We have set a target of 1 job created within this theme.

Results

In supporting people to live independently for longer, the projects will address isolation and ensure that all people are able to experience a full and rich cultural life and have a support network around them, reducing their dependence on social care and integrating into community life. These actions will be key in areas of uplands, where supporting the Welsh language will also be of relevance in reducing isolation.

Projects will conserve and enhance local sense of place and cultural spaces through heritage in considered and well-managed ways with sustainability encouraged through community management of activity. It will address social exclusion by recognising that a sense of place encompasses more than the stereotype of an area's past and is about the people in the here and now living and working in those communities, whatever their circumstances and roots.

These actions will lead to the sustainable development of the county's communities through direct action and awareness raising. Projects will identify added value to natural resources by identifying energy solutions afforded by them. Energy and fuel costs are among the biggest expenses for people living in rural areas causing further poverty and social isolation. These actions will directly support activity in the uplands areas where there is a wide expanse of largely untapped natural resource and potential and will support a number of the cross cutting themes bringing opportunities for volunteering and social engagement.

Impacts

- Sustainable rural communities
- Integrated and supportive communities

Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains

Outputs

We intend to deliver approximately 8 projects within this theme including supporting

5 farm holdings, 10 businesses and 5 communities while also creating 1 job.

Results

These actions will target sustainable development by providing opportunities to promote and market local produce, addressing food miles and mass production techniques of heavily processed food. They will also contribute to a sustainable local economy by developing cluster approaches and increased demand for local goods, whether food or non-food products. In so doing this will help to alleviate rural poverty and support more isolated businesses and enterprising individuals to reach the wider marketplace. These projects will support a sustainable rural economy through integrating key sectors and encouraging repeat demand for products and experiences and offer further opportunity to promote and market local produce.

The actions will provide opportunities to promote and market local produce, and provide opportunities for all producers however small, or whoever they are, to benefit from a regional profile, provided they have a product offer of the right calibre.

This activity will support a sustainable rural economy through helping communities and businesses to diversify into tourism, this will look to address social exclusion and tackling poverty by providing new opportunities to pursue enterprising initiatives and find new ways of earning income and provide opportunities to work or volunteer within a community enterprise.

These actions will connect businesses and entrepreneurs with each other to adopt more collaborative and supportive ways of working. These actions aim to address the issues faced by individuals and small business as they attempt to diversify and enter new markets. The tailored (non-duplicating) actions will meet the needs of those who require specialist advice, for example, under-represented groups within the community or those looking to diversify into more ground-breaking innovations of which little is known.

Impacts

- Better integrated visitor economy
- A co-ordinated regional visitor and food offer
- Strong visitor accommodation offer

Exploring New Ways of Providing Non-Statutory Services

Outputs

We aim to deliver approximately 9 projects within this theme which will include supporting 2 businesses, 9 communities and creating 2 jobs.

Results

These projects will result in more people being able to live active lives within the local economy with satisfying employment, addressing also the need to move away from family and friends in order to find work more easily which can directly contribute to increased feelings of isolation and exclusion.

This activity will support a sustainable rural economy through helping communities and businesses to diversify into community-led service delivery. It will provide new

opportunities to pursue enterprising initiatives and find new ways of earning income and work or volunteer within a community facility. It will also equip people of all backgrounds with the capacity and confidence to go on to develop further projects in future. In upland areas this work will support quality of life through improved service delivery where it is needed and creating connected rural communities.

Impacts

- Genuine gaps in service provision are filled
- Reduced demand on statutory services
- Services are community designed and led

Renewable Energy at Community Level

Outputs

We aim to deliver approximately 5 projects within this theme which will include supporting 2 businesses and 4 communities.

Results

These activities will result in the adoption and encouragement of a green infrastructure approach to development and the exploration of renewable energy solutions to meeting local needs. In turn these actions will begin to address rural poverty and a more sustainable economy, future proofing rural communities both economically and environmentally.

Impacts

- Future-proofed rural economies and communities

Exploitation of Digital Technology

Outputs

We aim to deliver approximately 5 projects within this theme which include working with 2 businesses and 3 communities.

Results

These actions will enable businesses to become digital adopters and result in a business sector that is more confident and able to engage with digital approaches. It will support sustainable development through reducing the need to travel and through providing virtual services.

Projects will also enable members of the community to become better able and confident in using digital technology where they are currently excluded from this for a variety of reasons, be they demographic, financial, attitudinal or other barriers. By encouraging take up of new communications methods and access to networks such as Welsh language groups, it will result in reduced isolation and further support social inclusion.

Impacts

- Well connected and inclusive rural communities

- A rural business sector that is confident and well connected.

Co-operation

Outputs

We aim to deliver 4 projects under this theme including working with 3 other LAGs. We will aim to deliver 3 inter-territorial projects and 1 trans-national. These will also include supporting 10 businesses and 10 communities.

Results

We anticipate delivering co-operation projects that will result in co-ordinated approaches to activity on the ground. They will be delivering across the 5 themes above and will aim to achieve those sorts of results and more.

Some of the key results we anticipate include food producers and tourism businesses becoming enabled to work with each other across boundaries and not restricted to the 'false' boundary of a local authority area and the structures associated with those borders.

We anticipate a coherent product offer being developed and promoted in partnership including outdoor activities, coastal attractions and food.

We also anticipate a key result of this work being the ability to learn about renewable energy and digital technology at a faster pace by learning from the experience of others, pooling resources and achieving economies of scale.

Impacts

- Regional profile
- Co-ordinated regional activity
- Cost-savings
- Shared learning

Please also complete the Performance Indicator table provided (within the delivery profile template) and the intervention logic table at Section 3.1.

6.2 Evaluation Plan

This Section should include the following as a minimum:

- ❖ Please specify your proposals for evaluating performance against the LDS
- ❖ Provide details of the methodology you propose to use to evaluate the benefits of the LEADER activity
- ❖ Details of baseline data
- ❖ Provide an explanation and justification of the chosen evaluation methods both during the life of the operations or activity (formative) and at the end of the operations or activity (summative)

Evaluation

A formative evaluation process will be adopted for the delivery of the programme to enable ongoing evaluation from the beginning and enable early adoption of new innovative approaches and make changes in line with recommendations where these are identified and appropriate. An evaluation partner will be identified at an early stage of programme implementation to enable this process. The process will involve evaluating individual projects or project outputs such as a toolkit or service to understand its success as a project and also its success in contributing to the wider aims of the LDS. By evaluating on a project basis throughout the programme it will be possible to inform future interventions and try new approaches where there has been less success. It is not currently anticipated that there will be a full programme evaluation at the mid-term as this will be an ongoing process and the LDS will be subject to annual review to determine whether it is meeting local needs and demand.

Based on the final evaluation of the 2007-2014 programme and further work to collate the relevant statistics, baseline data will be established very early in the programme. This will be on a project by project basis and baseline details will be required as a part of the project application process to inform the current picture and understand needs. Baseline information will be drawn from a range of appropriate and relevant sources including, for example, ward-level data, census data and ONS statistics. In addition, and where information is not available, surveys will be undertaken at the local level to determine current status. It is this current status that will be measurable following project delivery and in the longer term to determine whether there has been improvement, This comes with the caveat that it is not always possible to attribute any success or improvement directly to the project activity.

Baseline data will be collated during the development phase of all projects and wherever possible, prior to their being commissioned by the LAG. The main exception to this will be projects such as research studies that are specifically funded to identify the key issues and data around a particular topic, such as the causes and frequency of rural poverty where an output of the project itself will be baseline data.

A final evaluation will take place by an independent consultant, procured to carry out a full programme evaluation. The evaluation will assess against the LDS strategic aims and objectives to assess their impact on Rural Bridgend. Evaluation on individual projects will be carried out throughout the programme period with an evaluation of the programme as a whole undertaken at programme end. The final evaluation will use sample questionnaires, beneficiary interviews and project case studies and will be used to measure the longer term outcomes of projects including, and in particular, those delivered earlier in the programme.

A final evaluation will analyse:

- Overall achievements against the strategic objectives and priorities of the Local Development Strategy.
- Actual outputs against set targets.
- An evaluation of the position at the end of the period compared to the original baseline position.

- The implications of the results for future programmes or policy, and recommendations.
- Best practice.

These procedures will help the LAG to meet the overall aims and objectives of the Local Development Strategy, by:

- Providing a baseline for monitoring qualitative and quantitative activities, results and impacts from projects and demonstrating where the integrated approach is efficient and effective and encouraging innovation, added value and providing the right environment for local governance on decision-making;
- At a strategic level the outputs will be reported to the Local Action Group to show fit with strategic aims and objectives of the LDS.
- The delivery of projects and the need to report quarterly outputs will also provide evidence to respective communities on how far they are progressing.

The need to continuously evaluate throughout the business plan process so that achievements can be celebrated and lesson learnt is important to developing networks and sharing knowledge within and across communities. There is also a need to evaluate whether the strategic objectives fit with current needs and through research and other evidence whether the LDS needs to be realigned and directed in differing ways at each annual review period.

Monitoring Plan

For projects with a 1-3 year lifespan, project progress monitoring will be conducted on a quarterly basis and will track the project's achievements against its objectives. This will provide the opportunity to raise any project performance issues to the LAG for review and further action. Each project will be evaluated fully at project end to ascertain lessons learnt and create case studies for dissemination and publication. Project budgets will include a budget specifically for an independent evaluation to be carried out. Findings from these evaluations will be reported to the WG and reported through the LAG's website.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the LDS overall will be conducted as part of the Annual Review.

If necessary the LAG may instruct the Lead Body to conduct a mid-term internal evaluation of the programme. This will look at reviewing and evaluating internal project monitoring processes, a review of the Thriving Rural Communities fund delivery model; in particular its performance, accessibility, to help identify barriers to accessing the scheme.

All activity that is procured through the LAGs LEADER funding scheme will be expected to undertake its own evaluation:

a) The LAG will assess and approve project applications which are able to competently demonstrate LDS alignment and provide evidence of need for the project. The evidence should include baseline data that can be measured and

evaluated against.

b) At project approval stage a monitoring timeline will be established to review the project's performance against its targets throughout delivery. Following the monitoring intervals, project progress will be reported to the LAG.

c) The project should include a budget for independent evaluation at project end.

Evaluation Timeline

August - December 2015: Programme launch, awareness raising and early implementation.

December 2015: Annual review of the LDS and early progress monitoring.

January to June 2016: Evaluation partner brought on board to begin formative ongoing evaluation of key elements of programme delivery and to advise on baselining data for effective evaluation of project achievements. To be implemented in conjunction with WG activity concurrently providing baseline data at the local authority level and in considering options for undertaking evaluation at the regional level.

June 2016 -December 2020: Evaluation takes place on completion of individual projects funded through the scheme, either by the main evaluation partner under a framework agreement to ensure consistency or by a specialist as required on the project to be procured separately.

December 2016: Annual Review of the LDS including monitoring performance against strategy delivery and LEADER themes.

December 2017: Annual Review of the LDS and consideration is given to a more extensive mid-term review and a re-baselining of data.

December 2018: Annual Review of the LDS including monitoring performance against strategy delivery and LEADER themes.

December 2019: Annual Review of the LDS including monitoring performance against strategy delivery and LEADER themes.

April to September 2020: Final Evaluation of the LDS at the programme level.

SECTION 7 – SUITABILITY OF INVESTMENT

Description	Explain the need and demand for the Local Action Group and the actions identified in the Local Development Strategy and whether this demand is already being met through existing provision. Explain how the Local Action Group will be able to successfully deliver the proposed activity.
Linked to	Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

7.1 A description of the community involvement process in the development of the strategy

(1,000 words plus a list of consultee groups and organisations)

This section outlines the approach taken to community engagement in the development of the LDS. The process involved a wide range of engagement tools and an extensive sample of consultees. The process began during the delivery of the 2007-2014 LEADER programme which featured intensive working with all rural wards in Bridgend to identify local needs through local tailored consultation, action planning and capacity building with the support of LEADER officers dedicated to particular areas or themes of work.

Tools of engagement included:

- Questionnaires: paper and online (Survey Monkey, Snap).
- Facilitating dialogue via social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).
- Newsletter and website.
- Targeted PR and press activity.
- Local facilitated consultation and mapping exercises with local groups.
- Engaging with hard to reach groups through techniques such as engaging with pictures and digital storytelling.
- The establishment of thematic networks to facilitate dialogue and mapping exercises with special interest groups.

The target audiences, key messages and specific tools and methods of engagement can be found in the attached Communications Strategy devised by the rural development programme team, known as **reach**. A list of those consulted is provided in the table below.

The phases of engagement with different stakeholders in the shaping of the LDS were as follows:

Phase 1: Mapping & Needs Analysis

2011-2014 Working with communities of interest and geographical areas to identify local needs and priorities, levels of capacity and support required to be able to take projects forward. This provided an awareness of the needs of each rural ward, recognising that these evolve over time, and identified where there were groups and individuals with the capacity to take projects forward at that time and potentially in

the next programme and where there may be gaps.

Phase 2: SWOT Analysis and Diagnosis of the Area

Once final guidance was made available from Welsh Government and the European Union, the detailed diagnosis of the area including a comprehensive SWOT analysis against the 5 LEADER Themes was undertaken. This was undertaken through intensive consultation with a range of thematic networks and thematic reference groups connected with the 5 LEADER Themes. A public event was also held with approximately 90 representatives in attendance and invited to contribute to the SWOT analysis.

It is recognised that not all potential user groups have been consulted with directly during this stage however close integration and partnership working is envisaged in areas where other departments or organisations have the greater awareness of a particular sector, e.g. children and young people or the elderly.

Phase 3: Forming the Strategy

The next phase in the engagement process was undertaken by the Local Action Group in order to prioritise the outcomes from the SWOT Analysis and diagnosis of the area in line with the LEADER themes, LEADER principles and WG guidance and develop a draft suite of strategic objectives. This phase also included defining a long list of delivery objectives and some indicative actions outlining how those objectives would be achieved. This was all prepared ready for wider consultation in a workshop setting.

Phase 4: Refining the Strategy

The final phase in strategy development was undertaken through extensive and intensive review. In the first instance, the strategy was scrutinised during two stakeholder workshops with key stakeholders. The first workshop was with representatives from the Local Action Group, Rural Partnership and other community-based organisations with a stake in the programme and included over twenty representatives. This workshop was aimed at proofing the strategy against the needs of community-based organisations and the communities they represent and further developing the strategic objectives, delivery objectives and actions in line with those needs. The second stakeholder workshop was with managers working across other programmes and service areas that will run in parallel with the RDP to ensure that integration will be achieved and that there is no risk of duplication.

The second stage of scrutiny was undertaken through external review through both a professional consultancy and through peer review by a neighbouring LAG area. These final stages helped to ensure robustness of the LDS and that all elements of the guidance had been considered. Prior to its submission to Welsh Government, the final scrutiny was undertaken by Bridgend County Borough Council at its full Cabinet meeting September 2014.

The Bridgend Rural Partnership and Local Action Group for the 2007-2014 programme oversaw the whole of the engagement process in the development of the strategy. A new LAG for the 2014-2020 programme was developed in parallel with it in readiness for the implementation of a new programme from January 2015, however, as it was not formally in place as the strategy was emerging, additional

members with the skills and expertise needed to align to the new LEADER themes were co-opted onto the LAG as an interim measure and invited to join the new LAG in due course. This ensured that all of the available LEADER themes were given due consideration and consultation prior to the strategy being agreed and new LAG being in place.

The key stakeholders that specifically took forward the consultation on the SWOT analysis were the members of the rural networks established by the LAG during the 2007-2014 LEADER programme. It was their collective and accumulative knowledge and expertise that shaped this analysis. In addition, through working in partnership with key rural stakeholders across public, private and voluntary sectors in the delivery of programme activity and follow-up meetings to scope potential future activity, a further body of evidence was put in place to understand local needs and direct the future programme.

Following the successful submission of an Expression of Interest to operate as a LAG and submit an LDS, and the subsequent invitation to do so in March 2014, the timeline for the process and activities was as follows:

April-June 2014

- Review of existing research, consultation and evaluations undertaken by the 2007-2014 programme with the rural community through local community questionnaires (approximately 300 respondents), action planning and mapping exercises, innovative pilots and thematic research.

July 2014

- Community Councils and Elected Members informed of the process and invited to contribute to the LDS process.
- Public evening event held to raise awareness of the current programme's achievements and lessons learnt (attended by c. 100 people from rural Bridgend and partner organisations) including opportunities to feed into the consultation process and recruit new members to the LAG.
- Facilitated consultation sessions held at a wide range of thematic network meetings, including, Bridgend Local Food Network, Bridgend's Heritage Network, Bridgend Countryside Volunteers Network to develop input into the SWOT, plus a rural needs survey undertaken at community and rural events and discussions held with other service areas.
- A thematic SWOT analysis and community needs analysis developed and discussed by the LAG & Partnership to form an early outline strategy and determine priority aims and objectives.

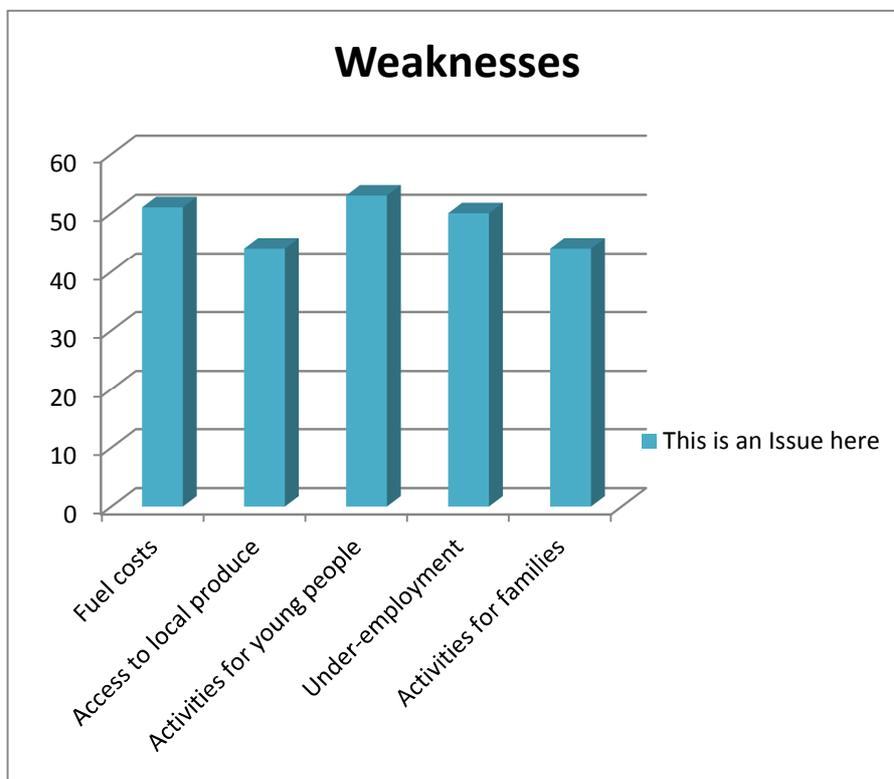
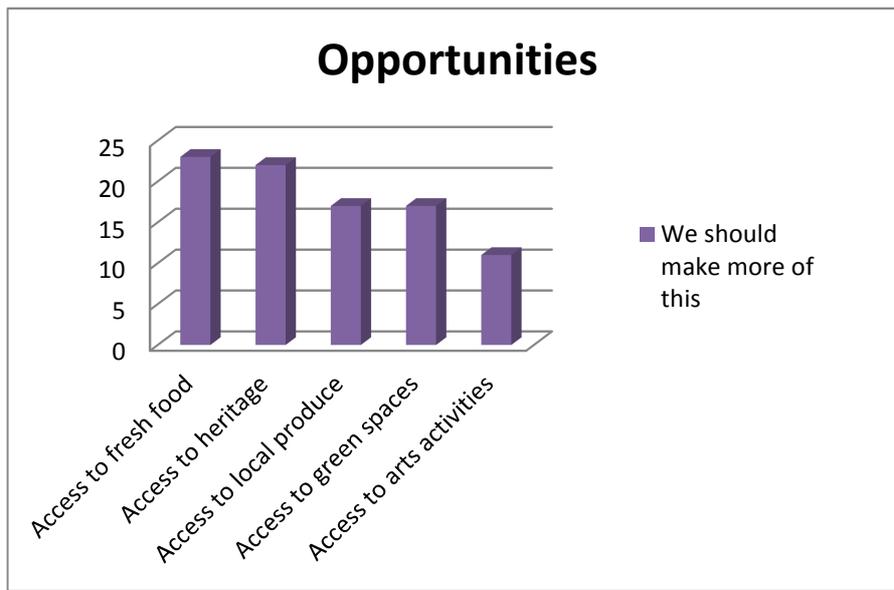
August 2014

- Facilitated stakeholder event held with partner organisations representing the local community and members of the LAG and Partnership to look at the priorities identified and develop the planned actions.
- Facilitated stakeholder meeting held with colleagues delivering across other regeneration and community programmes to ensure strategic and regional fit

and integration.

- External peer review and professional scrutiny undertaken plus scrutiny by BCBC Cabinet.

Analysis of the responses to the questionnaires, based on the key identified weaknesses and the main opportunities that communities would like to see taken forward, the following top five priorities came to light in relation to each one:



The Communications Strategy developed by reach for the current programme has

been revised for the delivery of the new programme in order to continue with ongoing communication and engagement with all target audiences and is included as an appendix.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with local residents during the business plan 2 period of the last programme including a wide range of local prioritisation exercises, development plans and community action plans and consultation to get community views on specific themes or areas of work. The consultations that had already gone were used to inform the SWOT analysis and each step of the strategy and it is integral to the strategy and the approach to allocating funding that local residents are engaged and represented in the decision making for funding interventions. No project will be funded without support from the wider community. The full list of those consulted is included in the table below.

Following the launch of the funding scheme under this LDS, widespread awareness raising and engagement has started and will continue throughout to enable equal access and fair allocation of funding based on local needs and aspirations. This includes working with local groups such as community associations, representative groups such as learning disabilities forum or community transport forum; elected representatives such as community councils and partner organisations such as those representing the elderly, housing, energy etc. to ensure maximum engagement and full transparency and awareness of the opportunities available.

Consultation with these groups will continue to inform the direction of the LAG, any future amendments to the strategy, such as an increased demand for any particular theme and will inform which interventions go forward for support.

Consultation	Group Consulted	Date	Venue
Scrutiny	Bridgend County Borough Council Full Cabinet	September 2014	Bridgend County Borough Council Offices
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 4: Refining Strategy	Vale of Glamorgan Council NCompass Consultants	August 2014	Peer Review Professional Review
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 4: Refining the Strategy	Cadwyn Clwyd (Pub is the Hub) Garw Valley Heritage Society Capital Region Tourism Natural Resources Wales Valleys2Coast Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations Private sector (LAG member) Evanstown Community (& Britgrowers) Bridgend College Groundwork Bridgend Tourism Association Bridgend Countryside Volunteers Private farmer & NFU (private sector) Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust Farming Connect Bridgend County Borough Council Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales Ty Tanglwyst Dairy (private sector)	August 2014	Prince of Wales Inn, Kenfig
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 4: Refining the Strategy	Bridgend County Borough scheme managers – various policy and service areas.	August 2014	Bridgend Civic Offices
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 3: Developing the Strategy	Bridgend Rural Partnership and Local Action Group	July 2014	New House Inn, Cornelly
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 2: SWOT Analysis & Diagnosis of the Area	90 attendees including partner organisations, grant beneficiaries, and potential community groups and individuals to work with. (Reach celebration event)	July 2014	Lakeside Venue, Glynogwr
LDS 2014-2020 Phase 2: SWOT Analysis & Diagnosis of the Area	Bridgend Local Action Group and Rural Partnership Bridgend Tourism Association (BTA) Bridgend's Heritage Network Bridgend Local Food Network Bridgend Countryside Volunteer Network Green Economy/Renewable Energy stakeholder group: BCBC Planning, BCBC Sustainability, BCBC Economic Development, BCBC Local Enterprise Initiatives Additional meetings/workshops with BCBC colleagues including Workways, SEWCED, SET, Transport, Communities First, Sustainable Development Laleston Church Fete Bridgend Show	July 2014 July 2014 July 2014 July 2014 June 2014 July 2014 Jun-August 2014 June 2014 July 2014	New House Inn and additional by email. Trecco Bay Holiday Park xxxxxx By email Kenfig National Nature Reserve Bridgend Civic Offices Bridgend Civic Offices Blandy Hall, Laleston Bridgend College Grounds, Pencoed

Phase 1: Community Mapping & Needs Analysis			
Bridgend Outdoor Schools Project Consultation	BCBC Learning Communities.	March 2014	BCBC Sunnyside Offices
Glastir Consultation	Submitting a joint response to Glastir Consultation from reach Green Spaces and BCBC Countryside	March 2014	Bridgend Civic Centre
Bridgend Outdoor Schools Project Consultation	All 61 Schools in Bridgend were sent a questionnaire with follow up phone calls. There were 28 completed responses.	April 2014	Schools across Bridgend
Generating Sustainable Futures Project Consultation.	Bridgend Farmers on the farming Connect mailing list. Consulted by a questionnaire sent to farmers and a special Farming Connect & reach event called Future Farm Energy Event.	April 2014	Lakeside Farm Park, Ogmore Valley.
Countryside Events and Volunteering Consultation	Visitors attending 'An Evening of Moths & Mammals' organised by Bridgend Countryside Volunteering Network.	May 2014	Bryngarw Country Park
Bridgend Outdoor Schools Project Consultation	Families attending the Bridgend Outdoor Schools Fun-day. Families trialled the proposed activities and gave their feedback .	May 2014	Kenfig National Nature Reserve
Bridgend Outdoor Schools Project Consultation	Teachers attending the Bridgend Environmental Education & Sustainability (BEES) group's Conference on Education for Sustainable development & Global Citizenship (ESDGC).	July 2014	Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen, Ynysawdre.
Local Food Supply Chain	Bridgend Local food Network, local retailers and hospitality providers	April 2014	Bridgend College Pencoed
Supporting local consultation activity in relation to axis 3 funding application	Tondu Wesley Centre Coytrahen Community Association Hope Church Community Centre Llangynwyd Community Association Gilead Community Hall Reach Grants Panel including South Wales Police, Bridgend Lions and OFCOM rep Bryngarw rangers Cefn Cribbwr Athletic Club Garw Valley Health and Fitness Centre Evanstown Growers Friends of Pencoed Comprehensive Cefn Cribbwr Heritage Action Group Parc Slip - Wildlife Centre Manager	June 14 February 14 April 14 May 14 January 14 June 14 June 14 Feb 14 July 14 June 14 May 14 July 14 June 14	
Churches and Chapels survey	Survey of local religious (or formerly religious) buildings to understand use, condition and potential.	July-August 2014	Various
Welsh Government Sustainability Bill	Bridgend Environment Working Group	February 2013	Bryngarw Country Park Visitor Centre
Local Services Board's Single Integrated Partnership Plan.	Bridgend Environment Working Group	February 2013	Bryngarw Country Park Visitor Centre
Consultation for Bryngarw Country	Visitors attending the BushWaka bush-craft festival.	April 2013	Bryngarw Country Park

Park Keepers Project			
Evaluation of Love2Walk Festival.	Love2Walk Walk Leaders	April 2013	Bryngarw Country Park Visitor Centre
Consultation for Local Nature Reserve Improvements.	Brackla Community Council	June 2013	Oak Tree Surgery Brackla
Consultation for Local Nature Reserve Improvements.	Bridgend Town Council	July 2013	Bridgend Town Council Chambers
Review of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)	Mapping exercise on partner organisations priorities for the review of the LBAP, with Bridgend Biodiversity Partnership.	August 2013	Coity Walia Commons Biodiversity Project Office, Bryncethin
Visitor Survey	Visitors attending the DuneTreka Countryside Event	August 2013	Kenfig National Nature Reserve
Consultation to map themes for Digital Interpretation project.	Bridgend's Heritage Network were invited to give their views and form the themes to be developed for the Digital Bridgend Project.	March 2013	Caeffatri Pub, Castle View
Reach Events Evaluation.	Serving visitors and community members attending the launch of Darren Fawr Mountain Bike trails.	April 2013	Parc Calon Lan, Blaengarw
Ynysawdre Action Plan For Elderly Residents. Six Month Review	Mapping exercise with Ynysawdre Elderly Residents.	May 2013	Ynysawdre Village Hall
Golf mapping exercise	Golf clubs within the rural area, in conjunction with those outside the area: Pyle & Kenfig, Coed y Mwstwr, Bridgend Golf Complex, Royal Porthcawl, Maesteg.	2013	Various
Community Questionnaire of improvement of Coytrahen Community Centre	Residents consulted by questionnaire being distributed to all houses in the village by the Community Centre Association.	February 2012	Coytrahen Village
Community Questionnaire - Ynysawdre Action Plan for Elderly Residents	Residents over 50 years old in Ynysawdre. Consultation Event and Elderly residents Association distributing the questionnaire, to family, friends and neighbours.	February 2012	Ynysawdre Leisure Centre
Consultation for Ynysawdre Action Plan for Elderly Residents	Age Concern Cymru, local residents, Ynysawre Elderly Residents Association.	May 2012	Age Concern Cymru Offices Pontypridd
Action Planning with Coytrahen History Group	Coytrahen History Group had a mapping exercise and produced a history timeline of the village to identify projects for their Action Plan.	May 2012	Coytrahen Community Centre
Ogmore Valley Community Council's Washeries Project.	The consultation was open for response from residents of Ogmore Valley to find out local opinion on suggestions for improving the old colliery washeries site in Ogmore Vale. The results were then used to support grant funding applications and feed into a feasibility study which highlighted further potential projects for the regeneration of the Washeries site.	March – May 2012	Various sites across the Ogmore Valley (Nantymoel, Ogmore Vale, Pantyrwel/Lewistown and Blackmill).
Conservation Area Appraisal	Public consultation in community centres and pubs.	June -November 2012	Berwen Centre, Nant-y-Moel The Corner House Pub, Llangynwyd Tondy Methodist Church Gilead Hall, Coity Ancient Briton Pub, Newton Llangeinor Arms Pub, Llangeinor

			Chapel Barn Business Units, Merthyr Mawr Laleston Community Hall.
Ynysawdre Action Plan for Elderly Residents.	Mapping exercise with Ynysawdre Elderly Residents, BCBC Transport, Age Concern, reach and BAVO.	June 2012	Ynysawdre Village Hall.
Consultation on Common Agricultural Policy reform and RDP going forward in Bridgend.	Local Action Group and RDP Partnership	November 2012	Waterton Centre
Consultation for Bridgend's Heritage website.	At the Bridgend Heritage steering group meeting an idea form was circulated to members to gauge ideas for developing the Heritage website.	November 2012	Coytrahe Community Centre
Bridgend's Heritage Network	At the first 'This is YOUR Heritage' event a Q&A session was held discussing how the community, local authority and national bodies can all work together for the benefit of preserving our past. The debate explored why the heritage sector should work together and how local groups and partner organisations can access the right resources to take forward their ideas and help decide what the future looks like for Bridgend's heritage. Bridgend's Heritage Network was then formed.	January 2012	Bethlehem Life Centre, Cefn Cribbwr.
Bridgend Local Food Network	A number of meetings to discuss and identify priority needs for local food producers, opportunities for joint working, action planning plus discussion on public sector procurement.	February 2012 May 2012 June 2012	Heronston Hotel Ty Tanglwyst Dairy Cerddin Brewery Cwmfelin
Local Development Plan Consultation	Public consultations in community centres.	July, August 2011	Garw Valley Leisure Centre Blaengarw Workingmen's Hall Ynysawdre Leisure Centre Ogmore Valley Life Centre Pencoed Welfare Hall
Consultation on Plans for St. Stephen's Church, Llangynwyd	Public consultation at the Christmas Fayre with Llangynwyd Residents Association.	November 2011	Llangynwyd Primary School
Consultation for Coytrahe Village Action Planning	Public consultation at Coytrahe Christmas Fayre. Mapping exercise using ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future.	December 2011	Coytrahe Community Centre.
Action Planning meeting for Coytrahe Village	Coytrahe Action Planning Group made up of residents, the Community Hall Association and Community Council.	December 2011	Coytrahe Community Centre.
Rural Food Steering Group	Action Plan Progress – indication of future developments	June 2010 September 2010	Bryngarw House

7.2 SWOT Analysis to show development needs and potential of the proposed area

(No word limit – table format)

Please provide a SWOT analysis in a table format based on the model of the SWOT in the RDP consultation document:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/rdp-2014-2020-next-steps-consultation/?lang=en>

The table below provides an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in relation to delivering rural development activity within Bridgend County Borough. It was developed through a long process of community consultation as described in Section 2 above and underpins the vision, strategy and action plan for the area in the 2014-2020 programme.

The Local Action group for rural Bridgend will undertake a review of this SWOT analysis mid-2016 in light of the current refugee crisis.

New LEADER Theme	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	The Heritage Network and Steering group are a key strength of the sector in Bridgend. As well as the annual heritage event for networking and engaging with the public. Advice from the Heritage Network has been essential in developing local interpretation projects through the Local Authority. The network, website and newsletter has helped in developing confidence and ability of local historical groups to think beyond their local area / interest and encouraged an approach to sharing funding information, delivering projects and learning about other heritage groups' ideas and sharing best practice and has raised	Capacity and cash flow issues for small heritage groups and history societies to plan and deliver projects including making funding applications. Little is known of the arts and crafts sector in the context of rural Bridgend as there are no craft centres, there are providers able to offer traditional rural skills, particularly outdoor skills, but there are other special interest groups that could be developed to appeal to the visitor market as well as provide further opportunity for local people to actively engage in their heritage. There is a lack of visible physical focal points or	There is a strong opportunity for a collaborative project building on the strength of the heritage network and addressing some of the weaknesses of the heritage sector and heritage tourism economy. The Digital Bridgend App will provide an opportunity to provide a unified and coherent heritage offer through digital means addressing the lack of visible heritage connected to the people and stories of rural Bridgend. HLF start-up funding could enable the network as a group to get involved in more strategic / thematic projects, something that has commenced but needs consolidating, for example, engaging local communities to get involved with characterisation studies in	Loss of the heritage network, and the support provided to it, could result in a lot of the heritage of the County Borough remaining undiscovered and undocumented for future generations. Other risks include the loss of individual groups acting as sounding boards for ideas and a forum for discussion- it would be difficult to maintain this interaction if there was not a central reference point. Individual groups might be affected without the Heritage Network and support for

	<p>awareness of heritage resource and volunteer time invested in rural Bridgend.</p> <p>The tourism product of Bridgend county borough is diverse with an attractive restored landscape, two blue flag beaches, excellent surfing, outdoor pursuits, nature reserves, a wealth of biodiversity, strong and distinct cultural heritage, with traditional valleys, an important part of Welsh and local identity, with some evidence of built and industrial heritage including ironworks, pitheads, railways, castles, churches & chapels. Part of the rural area is on the Wales Coast Path and cycling routes, including the Celtic trail are a big draw, as well as the country parks and world class golf offer.</p> <p>There are good volunteer networks right across the heritage, tourism, food and green spaces sectors in Bridgend. They have benefitted from the health & wellbeing benefits and social inclusion and skills training offered by these networks. Through joint working – varied expertise is available, for example the existing strong networking hub between countryside providers promoting the countryside offer, awareness raising of partners & projects and enhancing sense of place and pride in community through green spaces</p>	<p>museums in the rural area such as surviving physical and built heritage.</p> <p>The tourism offer is seasonal and often weather dependent with a lack of things to do in poor weather. The upland area in particular has a harsher environment and climate. In places there are weak public transport links with dependence on personal transport. There is a lack of iconic or exceptional attractions so Bridgend is often overshadowed by other places. There is a shrinking serviced accommodation sector with varying quality and variable customer service with a high turnover of staff.</p> <p>There is a perceived lack of resources (mentoring, etc) and low capacity to deliver projects. There is also a perception within certain organisations that green space is not always seen as a major opportunity in delivering environmental, economic and social gain. Additionally there is a perceived negative perception amongst some people for anti-social behaviour. Other weaknesses in relation to natural resources include a lack of interpretation, apathy at a local</p>	<p>their local area, capacity building and training including ambassador training or playing a significant role in the preparation of buildings of local importance lists which will in turn assist with fulfilling the policies of the local development plan.</p> <p>There are opportunities for tourism businesses to become better acquainted with the food and drink product in rural Bridgend and explore opportunities for making links with the food sector, for example, food safaris, trips to learn about food production and processing, cooking and tasting. There are also opportunities to develop a tourism product around places of workshop building on the churches and chapels study underway in 2014. For example, sourcing funding for infrastructure, facilitating 'open churches', developing networks, coordinating interpretation, funding interpretation (in a variety of forms), study tours etc.</p> <p>Green spaces provide venues for exercise and sporting activities and offer mental health and wellbeing benefits from spending time in the natural environment. RDP projects to develop green space can complement schemes such as those of NRW and Health Boards. Better integration could provide a stronger 'voice', through bigger events and better co-ordination, but also through for example, co-ordinated working with schools there is an opportunity to promote countryside careers. There is a further opportunity through disseminating policy / strategy</p>	<p>projects especially links with other groups - the annual Heritage event is of utmost importance to this.</p> <p>Threats include competition from stronger products in other places and competing with modern lifestyles. Plus increases in climatic extremes put further pressure on an already fragile tourism offer.</p> <p>An immediate threat to using natural resources for economic and community benefit is the conflicts that can arise between user groups, for example, off-roading, balancing the needs of farming and nature conservation. There is also an uncertain future for funding and a perceived political short-termism. Other threats might include a lack of knowledge, time and capacity, or indifference to</p>
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	activity particularly when managed for amenity / public use.	level and a limited number of sites.	and progressing and mainstreaming the green infrastructure approach.	taking forward activities. The poor management of sites could also bring Health & Safety risks and exacerbate invasive species threatening the area.
Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	<p>Rural Bridgend has a good range of local producers, with no major gaps, and many are artisan unique food products. Even so they remain competitive on price. There is also a broad scale of business size, from a single person to 10+ with a good age range of forward thinking passionate producers, both younger and more experienced. There is a willingness to work together, as an established producer network and contribute to sustainable local production and enhance the environmental benefits of locally produced goods. Links have been developed with Bridgend College, educating the younger generation/improving sector skills development.</p> <p>The area has an engaged Destination Partnership including the local authority and Bridgend Tourism Association. Good networks and communications have led to a diverse events calendar, widespread use of</p>	<p>There is a gap in selling skills and finding new clients due to a lack of market knowledge or information, particularly among some small businesses. Small scale or limited volumes restrict the ability to satisfy larger retailers. This will require co-operation between producers across a larger area of South Wales, however there is a lack of a distribution network to satisfy requirements for retailers, wholesalers, food service and the hospitality trade. This is exacerbated by the seasonality of certain produce. There is a lack of support from public sector buyers which also restricts local producers from accessing major contracts. In addition, there is a lack of food appreciation and food culture locally and very few restaurants sourcing local produce.</p> <p>Rural Bridgend is not always presented as coherent destination. The national and international profile for tourism is low, however international events such as the British Senior Open in</p>	<p>A medium term development project integrating the local food supply chain of BCB and adjoining South Wales RDP areas identified market sector needs, food service/hospitality, retail and wholesale and strengthening ties to the tourism sector. This would benefit from an organised co-operative & champion to drive the sector forward. B2B development will help to improve skills and strengthen links with the tourism sector and increasing profile within the hospitality sector. Linking local clusters (RDP areas) will help to provide continuity/volume of supply as will uptake by local public sector employers & schools. Engaging with schools to educate the consumers of the future including free school visits to meet local producers – to learn, see, taste, local produce will begin to foster a culture of pride in local produce from a young age and there is potential for developing apprenticeships with local food producers in association with Bridgend College potentially leading to job creation. Better marketing skills, particularly social media will support growth.</p> <p>There are opportunities to commission research studies or provide support to a network of businesses to begin to build a more coherent destination, with a product offers that aligns with strategy but also meets local needs and</p>	<p>Low quality ratings achieved by food establishments, such as food hygiene ratings coupled with a lack of monitoring of cheap produce supplied to public sector can lead to low confidence in the public about fresh local food. There is a perception that local is expensive within the hospitality sector which may be a barrier to engagement in future, also a risk with Public sector buyers. Producer objectives differ by size and ambition of business and there is always a threat of growth in supermarket competition. Lack of appreciation of seasonality and the sway towards convenience over local outlets, plus a lack of cooking skills to prepare fresh food could undermine any work to build the sector.</p> <p>In terms of investment, environmental and planning considerations can be unattractive to businesses. The likelihood of further Cutbacks in local authority</p>

	<p>digital technologies, including traditional websites, mobile apps and social media and good quality walking brochures and BridgendBites.com promotional materials. The offer is quirky and different, provided by warm and friendly people and an enthusiastic workforce, there is generally a sense that the customer base is loyal, with repeat business from a large catchment area, close to two major cities.</p> <p>Experience from earlier RDP programmes have evidenced that direct interaction with micro-enterprise owners and individuals at grass-roots level can encourage entrepreneurship, investment and job creation and can help to encourage investment in digital technologies to maximise potential. Working with small enterprises can address community needs, and provide non-statutory services within geographically marginalised communities</p>	<p>2014 have provided the County Borough as a whole with an excellent platform. Provision of tourism information is weak since the recent loss of the tourist information centres.</p> <p>Very modest marketing budget available for tourism locally. Lack of investment in product, for example, trails need further / better signage, and gaps in networks for cycling, walking and bridleways need to be addressed.</p> <p>The availability of funding for this sector continues to be a weakness.</p>	<p>aspirations about how the natural and cultural resource should be used in this way. Examples might include: Nature discovery, Tough mudders, Extreme Fitness, Live on a working farm experience, or Extreme survival.</p> <p>Further opportunities will be around funding, mentoring, marketing, study visits, publicity, familiarisation visits. Regional working for example, promoting the mountain biking offer (linking to Cognition), 4WD and horse riding routes or exploring a regional sense of place.</p> <p>There are opportunities to build on established networks with the potential to create business partnerships and short supply-chains, this can include identifying gaps in rural service provision and encouraging entrepreneurship in these areas. There is a key opportunity to work with the Enterprise Facilitator of the upcoming Sirolli project to add value to the Enterprise Facilitation scheme.</p>	<p>funding also pose risks to the tourism product – plus risks for destination management waste management, litter etc. In addition, technology moves quickly and can be outdated. Internet and mobile technology / connections prevent modern dynamic interpretation.</p> <p>Future funding availability at the local level could be a risk to future support provision. If provision of support to micro-enterprises moves to central administration, for example, it could add unnecessary levels of bureaucracy for applicants and lose local feel, empathy, experience and skills that have been developed.</p>
<p>Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services</p>	<p>There is an extensive local bank of facilities, services and contacts within the community sector – political, social, cultural, statutory, voluntary and private that have been involved in the development of community projects. Through their experience, the capacity of a number of local action groups is now greatly enhanced enabling delivery of any future projects which bring services back into the community.</p>	<p>There continues to be a lack of capacity in community groups across the board to apply for funding which has also been identified by other funders e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund who have provided a designated officer to provide project support due to lack of applications from Bridgend for HLF and Welsh Church Act Fund. This includes a lack of capacity in community groups to structure and run projects. As community</p>	<p>Work with stakeholders and existing network of groups and venues including projects that have been funded in the 2007-2014 programme to look at providing services within the community. There are also opportunities to work with stakeholders to deliver a range of non-statutory local services where they are not currently available through using digital technology e.g. using libraries and community venues to provide video conferencing, skype, face time etc., for</p>	<p>Projects are rarely viable with just one funding source. A potential lack of project leaders and volunteers. Ever decreasing resources in terms of assistance with project management, bids etc. Not being able to secure funding to support projects will be a barrier to delivery as will not recognising the ongoing need to assess the changing requirements of the</p>

	<p>Bridgend is well connected by road and rail to Wales and the rest of the UK. The proximity of the Cardiff international airport means that international travellers to and from Bridgend do not have to travel far for flights. Bridgend lies along the National Cycle Network and has strong partnership arrangements with Sustrans and neighbouring local authorities.</p> <p>Innovative approaches to service delivery within rural Bridgend have led to strong links created with Bridgend College, local schools, local community, farming community, Farming Connect, Pub is the Hub, internal departments and statutory work e.g. Green Infrastructure and Natural Resources Wales. This has also included strong cooperative</p>	<p>venue management groups are usually volunteers, sometimes there is a failure to understand that it is a business and needs to be run as a business that addresses community needs.</p> <p>Inter-valley road and railway links are very weak, only one of the three valley areas is served by the railway. There are also inadequate public transport services at certain times of the day. Funding for transport infrastructure investment has been too centralised in recent years.</p> <p>Difficult to engage inter-departmentally when projects required their involvement. Apathy amongst the private sector more broadly towards the 'test lab' element of working within LEADER due to the focus on research and the need to monitor and evaluate outcomes.</p>	<p>face to face consultation e.g. Citizens' Advice Bureaux . Opportunities exist to facilitate work with internal departments and external organisation to identify and facilitate Community Asset transfer of BCBC owned buildings and property. Support could provide assistance to communities to work together and look at setting up enterprises and social enterprises within community venues. And supporting them to implement a Welsh Language Policy and procedures and implement environmental policies and procedures. Projects could provide local services and activities that address rural poverty issues e.g. childcare provision, local transport.</p> <p>Due to the isolation of some rural areas there are opportunities to create options for better access and transport. A return to the development of Local Transport Plans by local authorities will focus transport investment on local transport issues. The new Active Travel Act 2014 provides statutory backing for the identification, mapping and development of active travel routes. Co-ordination and partnership with other sectors will facilitate integration of plans and expenditure.</p> <p>There are opportunities to focus more on the community and voluntary sector to enable ongoing investment in the county through innovative approaches to service delivery including mentoring and support to structure projects, secure funding and run projects. There are also opportunities to explore methods of ongoing support to groups and organisations to ensure sustainable</p>	<p>local community.</p> <p>Budgetary constraints and the proliferation of different plans and strategies with differing timescales and priorities can be a barrier to effective service development and delivery.</p> <p>Any new LEDAER schemes will need to ensure that they do not duplicate any other available support. The capacity of individuals and organisations to deliver truly innovative pilots and to deliver them within the spirit of the LEADER 'test lab' approach is a potential threat to the success of LEADER</p>
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	<p>working such as with the Pub is the Hub programme and the Future Farm Energy Project which has partnered up with IRD in Denmark to share project experiences on hydrogen fuel cells.</p> <p>The Bridgend Employer Liaison Partnership (BELP) is well supported in Bridgend County Borough with over 60 member agencies and 250 staff form those agencies on the database. BELP has regular meetings and 3 geographical sub group meetings and T&F groups so planning and tackling difficult problems is common place, e.g. recently a jobclub for Pontycymmer operated by 3 providers was designed. Partnership working is strong with high incidence of joint delivery. BELP had 40 Weekly Workclubs covering the 3 main settlements in Bridgend which supported 251 people (minimum) into Work during 2013-14. Despite having different targets and client groups BELP jobclubs are good at referring to other agencies and helping clients that are not strictly eligible for their service</p>	<p>Many BELP members have different targets and client groups so service at the 40 jobclubs is not uniform. Jobclubs need to have high attendance so that staff attending the jobclubs can maximise their time to reach targets, they don't operate in sparsely populated wards which is a weakness where transport is expensive and job seekers cannot be reimbursed for attending a job club. The people living outside the main conurbations are not receiving the same service from BELP. While % of job seekers is high in a ward, above the Bridgend and national averages, the actual numbers are low and are therefore a deterrent to designing a Workclub in that ward. BELP Work in the mid cluster (Ogmore, Garw and the valley</p>	<p>projects and continue to meet the needs of local communities through mainstreaming. There is an opportunity to establish a sustainable network of community venues using existing projects as models or case studies. Venues and services could be further promoted through social media. Future work could build upon the community engagement element of the Green Infrastructure project through future investment in innovation and renewable energy schemes and further development of the Food Supply Chain in Bridgend, access to IT, for example, engaging older people in technology, and shared facilities for local community ICT.</p> <p>Working through BELP new delivery can be easily planned and established good practice followed. Nomis data points to issues in sparsely populated wards, that is a high percentage of residents out of work or with low skills suggesting that a service can be developed to tackle this issue that perhaps needs to have different criteria from the normal Job Clubs. There are also opportunities to work with stakeholders to provide work experience/placements and training in community venues, for example, Community Apprentice Training Schemes employing apprentice community development workers. There is also an opportunity for young people to enter the farming industry by looking at job creation through farm diversification.</p>	<p>programmes.</p> <p>Many project operated by BELP members are short term funded so Workclub service is vulnerable. Where a workclub is established in a sparsely populated area, such as Evanstown, it is difficult to sustain as client through put does not give the provider the numbers they need to justify their continued provision. Unless the jobless is sparsely populated areas with high jobless % are supported the poverty will get worse in these areas. Less people in employment in an area effects other service delivery, e.g. shops and transport.</p>
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		floor) is less defined.		
Renewable energy at Community level	<p>Bridgend County Borough has plenty of high exposed land for wind generation and available rural land for large solar installations. The gradient of land in the Borough also creates a large hydraulic head for other Hydro projects. Agricultural households are looking to diversify from traditional agricultural activities.</p> <p>The local authority is committed to adopting a Green Infrastructure approach which includes promoting renewable energy development. The Local development Plan (LDP) promotes renewable energy development and recognises the role that BCBC has in meeting renewable energy targets contained in UK and Welsh energy targets and the local authority's Sustainability Team are already working on renewables projects. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been produced which considers the impact of wind and solar development on the landscape and provides design guidance to minimise any impact. The partnership developed for the SSH Programme brings together DNO's, universities, RSL's, Welsh Government and private sector businesses which could be used to develop schemes within Bridgend. Work already carried out on identifying suitable hydro-power</p>	<p>There is a poor infrastructure in terms of energy grid that will not support large scale energy generation. Wind energy projects can generate controversy and unpopular public opinion. Bridgend misses out on the tidal opportunities available to neighbouring areas such as Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.</p> <p>Lack of funding for the capital investment needed to install renewables projects and a lack of data available concerning properties (domestic and non-domestic) within Bridgend.</p>	<p>The LAG has previously commissioned a feasibility study for creating a hydrogen fuel system in rural Bridgend, that can be built on and be used to address the issues of over energy production and weakness in the energy grid in rural Bridgend.</p> <p>A growing group of manufacturers, assemblers and installers in the local area present an opportunity to identify partners for renewable energy schemes and could lead to cheaper equipment through increased scale of production.</p> <p>BCBC Links with the SPECIFIC Project in Port Talbot, an energy producing steel coatings between Swansea University and TATA Steel presents an opportunity to explore innovative approaches to renewable energy schemes. There are opportunities to further the local authority's work with the SEREN project to identify suitable sites in the County Borough for utilisation of heat from mine water. Work has already been carried out as part of the SSH Programme bid to identify funding sources (EU, WG and private sector) and these could be utilised to potentially fund schemes.</p>	<p>Energy leaving the communities that it is generated in and not benefiting those communities. Changes in Government subsidies (FIT, RHI). The complexity of signing up to Government schemes can put off small businesses and community groups.</p>

	schemes in Bridgend on BCBC owned land. High-level feasibility work already carried out on the suitability of DHN within Bridgend.			
Exploitation of digital technology	Several heritage interpretation pilot projects have been delivered using a range of digital platforms. Digital Bridgend is an ambitious and leading-edge project combining heritage interpretation with video, photography, gps locating, geo-tagging, gaming and heritage trails within one app. Tourism projects currently use digital app technology and tourism information is provided using a range of online and social media tools.	<p>There is a poor and inconsistent wi-fi coverage and broadband speeds across the rural county borough. It is anticipated that approximately 10-15% of Bridgend County Borough will not have access to Superfast Broadband, the current scheme that offers support to improve speeds only apply to areas where the cabinets are being enabled. In this case, rural tourism and farm businesses will be badly affected. Research undertaken through the Digital Bridgend project found a lack of awareness of the benefits of adopting digital approaches and a lack of skills and knowledge amongst heritage groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital interpretation • The use of apps • Mobiles and tablets • Examples from other places • Augmented reality <p>Low skills levels/apathy within farming households to adopt digital technology practices.</p>	There are opportunities for awareness raising and capacity building activity around the benefits and uses of digital technology approaches. Innovative schemes to trial new technologies and engage new sectors of the rural community with the digital agenda including linking in with other funding schemes to plug gaps in provision of training and skills development will provide opportunities to further the adoption of digital technology. To address other weaknesses there are options to explore shared services, community facilities and local wi-fi projects to boost coverage. There are opportunities for working with schools by engaging through digital technology.	Gaps in the provision of superfast broadband coverage following its roll-out will be a barrier to the adoption of digital approaches as well as the risk of technology moving on too fast for projects to keep up.

SECTION 8 – CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group will maximise its contribution towards the Cross Cutting themes of Equal Opportunities, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty.
Linked to	Sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

8.1 Cross-Cutting Themes

(1,500 words)

There are three themes that cut across the whole of the LDS and its action plan, these are:

- Equal Opportunities & Gender Mainstreaming
- Sustainable Development
- Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion

In addition, full consideration is given to the Action Plan for a Bilingual Nation A Living Language: A Language for Living Welsh language in order to promote and facilitate its use throughout all programme activity.

In delivering this strategy, some general principles will apply as well as some more specific interventions which are envisaged against the delivery of the LEADER themes. These are all outlined within this section of the LDS and further demonstrated in terms of their alignment to the Delivery Objectives and specific actions within the Intervention Logic Table.

Equal Opportunities & Gender Mainstreaming: general principles

All activity delivered or commissioned by the LEADER programme will be implemented and delivered within the delivery organisation's equal opportunities policy and/or augmented by Bridgend County Borough Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

All projects will be promoted in a manner that is accessible to all that are participating in education, employment and training regardless of their disability, gender, or race and with regard to the bilingual nature of Wales and a monitoring tool will be developed to ensure that this is the case.

In the case of capacity building and partnership activity, all projects will be inclusive with barriers to participation identified at the pre-design stage and ways of engagement carefully prepared.

People participating in training will be asked whether they have specific or individual needs that need to be accommodated to ensure their active participation and achievement of qualifications.

Physical works, whether new build or refurbishment will need to comply with

statutory directives on accessibility (Disability Discrimination Act) and will need to demonstrate physical and or associated material are accessible in terms of disability, gender, race and will need to reflect the bilingual nature of Wales in terms of communication and promotional material.

Example of Priority Interventions Include:

SO3 - A Place to Work

[SO3.1] Providing opportunities to find meaningful work easily accessible to home for people of all abilities and backgrounds. Also tackling poverty and social exclusion, addressing the need to move away from family and friends in order to find work more easily which can directly contribute to increased feelings of isolation and exclusion and for those with dependants, losing the opportunity for family to help with taking care of those dependants.

SO1 - A Place to Live

[SO1.1] Through local community support, empowering individuals to voice their needs and support each other to address them. In supporting people to live independently for longer, the aim is to address isolation and ensure that all people are able to experience a full and rich cultural life and have a support network around them, reducing their dependence on social care and integrating into community life.

Sustainable Development: general principles

All activity delivered or commissioned by the LEADER programme will aim to ensure the sustainable management of environmental resources as part of improving the economic prosperity of Rural Bridgend. Proposals will be implemented and delivered within the delivery organisation's sustainable development policy and/or augmented by Bridgend County Borough Council's Sustainable Development Policy which states that:

Bridgend County Borough Council will pursue, through effective partnership Working, a sustainable future for the County Borough and beyond by:

- Considering the global and long-term impacts as well as the local and short term impacts of its decisions and actions.
- Continually striving to improve its own sustainability performance, thereby leading by example.
- Building the following sustainable development policy objectives into all its policies, services, and partnerships: natural resources and environmental management; climate change mitigation and adaptation; sustainable transport; sustainable procurement; sustainable food and fairtrade; community well-being; natural, urban and rural environment; sustainable economic development; and education and participation.

Bridgend County Borough Council is also a network partner of Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales which will offer further opportunities to integrate sustainable development actions with partners across Wales.

Delivery of the LDS will work towards the following set of objectives that promote the principles of sustainability.

- Application and maximisation of local assets in developing new economic products.
- An assessment of the most sustainable way of delivering and implementing physical projects in relation to sourcing local materials, resources and use of renewable energy.
- Promotion and awareness raising of the benefits of acting sustainably.
- Directly trying to influence consumer choice and habits specifically in relation to local procurement and purchasing.
- The promotion and use of ICT, community transport and shared distribution to ensure an integrated approach to communication and local transport.
- Creating an environment for people to work towards shared goals and agendas, thereby creating sustainable communities that are strong, healthy and confident when taking decisions and implementing change.

By embracing sustainability principles projects can demonstrate the unique qualities of using such products and processes which adds value to raw products and local skills and ultimately presents rural Bridgend as a high quality environment that encourages sustainable investment, promotes sustainable tourism and well-being and move away from grant dependence in the longer term.

Examples of Priority Interventions include:

SO1 - A Place to Work

[SO3.2] These activities will support sustainable development through the adoption and encouragement of a green infrastructure approach to development and the exploration of renewable energy solutions to meeting local needs. In turn these actions will begin to address rural poverty and a more sustainable economy, future proofing rural communities both economically and environmentally.

SO2 - A Place to Visit

[SO2.1] Providing opportunities to promote, market and use local produce, addressing food miles and mass production techniques of heavily processed food. They also aim to deliver a sustainable local economy by developing cluster approaches and increased demand for local goods, whether food or non-food products.

[SO2.2] Supporting equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming, through inclusive opportunities to engage with the products and experiences on offer in rural Bridgend.

[SO2.2] Providing equal opportunities for producers, small businesses, heritage sites, etc, however small, or whoever they are, to benefit from a regional profile, provided they have a product offer of the right calibre that aligns with Destination Management objectives.

SO1 - A Place to Live

[SO1.2] Supporting a sustainable rural economy through helping communities and businesses to diversify into community-led service delivery. This will look to address social exclusion and tackling poverty by providing new opportunities to pursue

enterprising initiatives and find new ways of earning income and provide opportunities to work or volunteer within a community facility.

[SO1.3] by conserving and enhancing the local sense of place and cultural spaces through heritage in considered and well-managed ways with sustainability encouraged through community management of activity.

[SO1.4] Building sustainable rural communities direct action and awareness raising.

Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion: general principles

Activity delivered or commissioned by the LEADER programme will aim to ensure that wherever possible steps will be taken to begin addressing the rural poverty agenda and break down the barriers that create social exclusion through working closely with relevant public, third and private sector partner organisations and local authority departments.

Poverty will be recognised and tackled from a range of perspectives, including preventing poverty through addressing worklessness and access to economic opportunities through jobs, training, qualifications, childcare, transport, etc., but, importantly, will also look at those already in work who are experiencing in-work poverty. This is recognised as a major issue for Wales nationally and highlights the importance of looking at new ways to address these issues and to understand fully the factors at play.

In line with *'Building Resilient Communities Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2015'*, the priority will be to support a strong economy which generates sustainable employment opportunities which are accessible to all. The LDS recognises that there are limitations to the number of direct jobs that can be created through LEADER funding so the emphasis will be on creating the right environment for job opportunities to grow and improving individuals' likelihood of finding and securing work such as through improved skills levels and exploring self-employment routes.

The strategy will also aim to ensure that opportunities are maximised to support people of all ages to identify ways of improving their economic wellbeing, not only through finding work but by thinking innovatively and entrepreneurially at a range of ways of earning an income through non-traditional routes, particularly those experiencing social exclusion, whatever the reason might be.

The Tackling Poverty Action Plan

Poverty can exist in many forms, some of which are not easily recognisable and this can be especially true of rural poverty where individuals may be less likely to recognise their own poverty. It is anticipated that further and more detailed research and working with key partners, including support from the Welsh Government, will provide more detail on the key causes of rural poverty in order to better identify the specific target groups. In the first instance, key target groups will include low-income households, households with dependent children, low-skilled workers and geographically isolated economic groups. Interventions will align with the new

commitments in the *'Building Resilient Communities Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2015'*, specifically:

In-work Poverty

The documents highlights that there are now more households living in poverty where someone is working, than not. This may be due to part time or zero hours contracts, low wages or a range of other factors.

In many rural communities in Bridgend, young parents who have gone out to work, have until recently looked to grandparents to look after their children. However in an economic climate where people are working longer and the 'grandparent generation' is no longer available to help, anecdotally, there's a growing trend towards parents turning to great-grandparents to help out, and increasingly experience more barriers to going out to work where no other family members are available to help. The increasing costs of childcare, particularly for those experiencing in-work poverty, are also increasingly prohibitive.

The interventions that the LAG has identified to begin addressing these problems include:

- Supporting second earners in the household into work, for example, supporting mothers back into work after having children through innovative community-based schemes.
- Supporting individuals to develop their skills and improve their chances of increasing their income.
- Providing advisory services, where those services are inaccessible due to rurality, to support families and individuals with debt advice and managing their household budgets.

The Rural Community Development Fund will also be an opportunity to explore options for improving and increasing the childcare services within our rural communities.

Out of Work Poverty

'Building Resilient Communities Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2015' outlines the need to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform, particularly for low income households.

The LDS recognises that there are many schemes and initiatives in existence to support people from welfare into work. The LDS will seek to add value to existing programmes through supporting practical piloting activity, research. The current key priority objective of the LDS is to ensure a strong local economy with opportunities to create jobs and create 'a place to work' and foster a more entrepreneurial culture. The risk of a new venture being a failure at the same time as benefits being cut will be a key barrier affecting those on welfare to start up in business, therefore interventions will be explored to support the pre-commercial trialling of business ventures which will not impact on benefit entitlements, building on the successes and lessons learnt of other similar schemes.

The prohibitive costs of setting up in business will also be a key consideration and will make links with the agenda for digital inclusion, supporting more entrepreneurs to venture into online businesses as an alternative.

Food Poverty

Food poverty is strongly linked to the work of the LAG around the local food economy. Bridgend County Borough has led on the formation of a regional network of partners with separate yet complementary agendas with food running through each one and includes public health, waste, community growing, other LAGs and many more sectors. Specific interventions will be developed through this network and will be directed towards opportunities for collaboration and co-operation funding and exploring opportunities under the Sustainable Food Cities initiative.

At the local level, food poverty will be addressed in ways that best meet the local need with projects and services taken forward for piloting through LEADER funding. These will include for example, models of community shops enabling residents on low income to purchase food at greatly reduced costs sourced, for example, from supermarket stock surpluses or allotment and community growing gluts of produce. A further example of a community scheme might be peripatetic luncheon clubs, or community meal delivery services, helping to make community venues more sustainable and supporting a wide range of people in the community. Interventions will also include advice and guidance in relation to reducing food waste and the efficiencies of preparing more food in the home.

Fuel/Energy Poverty

Understanding fully the extent of fuel poverty in Bridgend's rural communities will take further research and evidence gathering, however, there are some notable examples that are known at this time. The cost of fuel is higher in more remote locations such as up along the valley roads. This makes car driving much more prohibitive when coupled with the longer distances that residents in these areas need to travel to access services and employment, educational or training opportunities.

The rising cost of heating is becoming of increasing concern both in the domestic setting and in the case of community buildings such as village or church halls. There are some key linkages here with the priority interventions of the LDS for energy efficiency and renewable energy, with the mapping and plugging gaps in the provision of advisory services and in exploring more sustainable renewable and cost effective solutions. Some examples of key interventions that can help to address fuel poverty include the feasibility of community renewable energy schemes, the potential for group buying of energy and supporting the feasibility and pre-commercial trialling of district heating schemes, and providing advice to help residents understand the meaning and significance of the kilowatt rating of an electrical appliance and its impact on running costs.

Priority interventions for tackling poverty

In line with the Tackling Poverty Action Plan for Wales, this strategy recognises the need to seek and integrate opportunities to prevent, improve and mitigate the impacts of poverty in rural communities. However, the following actions will be undertaken which are explicitly targeted at tackling poverty and are prioritised in line with the strategic objectives.

Immediate Priorities - Aligned to SO3 A Place to Work -Supporting Vibrant Rural Economies

- [SO3.3] Pilot projects and/or feasibility studies to undertake the pre-commercial trialling of innovative new micro and social enterprises within the community. The intervention will aim to maximise the skills and potential of all members of the community without prejudice, and regardless of age or ability and will include looking at options for childcare in parallel with the service.
- [SO3.4] Pilot projects and/or feasibility studies that enable low income households to access essential digital services and improve the chances of householders living in poverty, experiencing in-work poverty or fuel poverty of being able to access work opportunities and information about them. This intervention will include working with key partners such as libraries, community and village halls and schools within the community to enable access for all and will include looking at options for childcare in parallel with the service.
- [SO3.2] Pilot projects and the delivery of non-statutory services to provide advice and information on energy efficiency and reducing the cost of energy, fuel poverty and debt, and to explore more sustainable options such as community renewable energy, such as a 'Green Doctor' advisory service for community buildings.

Priority 2: Short to Medium Term - Aligned to SO2 A Place to Visit - Developing Diversified Rural Enterprises

- [SO2.1] Pilot projects and/or feasibility studies to undertake the pre-commercial trialling of innovative new micro and social enterprises that maximise the opportunities for local products and crafts using local skills. The intervention will aim to maximise the skills and potential of all members of the community without prejudice, and regardless of age or ability and will include looking at options for childcare in parallel with the service.

Priority 3: Medium Term - Aligned to SO1 A Place to Live - Creating Self-sustaining Rural Communities

- [SO1.1] With the support of the monitoring and evaluation team at Welsh Government, to conduct a baseline research study identifying the main types of rural poverty experienced in rural Bridgend County Borough, some key underlying causes and priority target groups. A key output of this work will be the development of measurable baseline information. This has the potential to be a co-operation activity with other LAG areas, in particular those in the south east Wales and valleys regions;
- [SO1.2] Pilot projects and/or feasibility studies to trial the delivery of innovative non-statutory services that support vulnerable and older people in rural poverty and/or social isolation to live independently for longer and feel supported to stay in their own homes. This will include the delivery of pop-up

mobile services, for example, post office, debt advice, mobile cinemas right in the heart of the community using sustainable delivery models, shared facilities, etc.;

- [SO1.4] Pilot projects to support people with physical and mental health conditions to improve their health, increase social inclusion and their likelihood of returning to economic activity through the use of the outdoor space.

Ensuring Delivery of the Cross-cutting Themes

Information will be included in guidance for applicants which outline the requirements of the LAG in the integration of the cross cutting themes. This information will explain the way in which themes will be considered in the assessment of project proposals.

A checklist will be developed for each cross cutting theme and used in scoring projects. They will assess the proposed activity on the basis of how they will integrate the cross-cutting themes and the extent to which projects propose to address them.

A different member of the staff team will be named as a responsible officer for the implementation of each of the cross cutting themes, with support from a named champion on the LAG. They will have responsibility for making recommendations to project proposers on how they might improve their contribution to the cross-cutting themes prior to submitting their proposal and can advise the LAG on key recommendations if required once projects are scored.

As a part of the process for all cross cutting themes, the Welsh language and other specific criteria used in the assessment of proposals by the LAG, specific conditions and recommendations will form a core part of project approval and there will be an expectation that these recommendations are actioned prior to or during early project delivery, as appropriate.

Cross cutting theme considerations will form a part of ongoing monitoring of all funded projects and will be included alongside other key considerations on standard monitoring report templates in order to track progress and enable the early identification of issues or under performance.

Welsh Language

The Welsh speaking community within rural Bridgend County Borough makes up approximately 10% of the population. In order to support this community, the LAG will support the strategic priorities of the Welsh Language Commission through ***A Living Language, A Language for Living: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*** and the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance ***Grants, Loans and Sponsorship: Welsh Language Considerations***.

The latter of these two documents relates specifically to general principles to be

followed when awarding grants. The Strategy for delivering local rural development funding in Bridgend County Borough does not include the awarding of any third party grants, however, the process for selecting interventions for commissioning by the LAG includes an open call for applications and follows a scoring process which closely mirrors a grant application process. Therefore the general principles outlined in relation to the scoring and selection of projects in that guidance will be adopted as best practice:

- That the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language within that activity, and
- That the Welsh language is promoted and facilitated in the context of that activity.

Information will be included in guidance for applicants which outline the requirements of the LAG in the use of the Welsh language. This information will explain the way in which Welsh language will be considered in the assessment of project proposals.

A checklist will be developed for use in scoring projects in order to assess the intended use of the Welsh language within the proposed activity. This will include assessing the way in which the Welsh language will be used and the anticipated extent of use of the language.

A Welsh language champion will be identified on the LAG alongside a member of the staff team named as the responsible officer for the implementation of Welsh language policy. These persons will have joint responsibility for making recommendations to the LAG on the scores to be awarded to each proposal received. The names of the officer and LAG Champion will be maintained by the Administrative Body.

As a part of the process, specific conditions and recommendations in relation to the use of the Welsh language will form a core part of project approval and there will be an expectation that these recommendations are actioned prior to or during project delivery, as appropriate.

Welsh language considerations will form a part of ongoing monitoring of all funded projects and will be included alongside other key considerations on standard monitoring report templates in order to track progress and enable the early identification of issues and under performance.

Projects that are commissioned will be implemented and delivered within Bridgend County Borough Council's Welsh Language Policy and aligned to the new Welsh Language Standards which come into force in 2016.

[Awaiting further guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner on the requirement for tendering organisations to comply with the new Welsh Language Standards in order to be eligible for receiving public funds.]

Priority Interventions for Addressing Welsh Language Considerations

SO2 - A Place to Visit

[SO2.2] Activities which package, enhance or highlight the specific Welsh language experiences already existing within the rural County Borough.

SO1 - A place to live

[SO1.3] Actions that will provide support to the Welsh language through understanding the place and its offer and working to celebrate these areas and what makes them distinct.

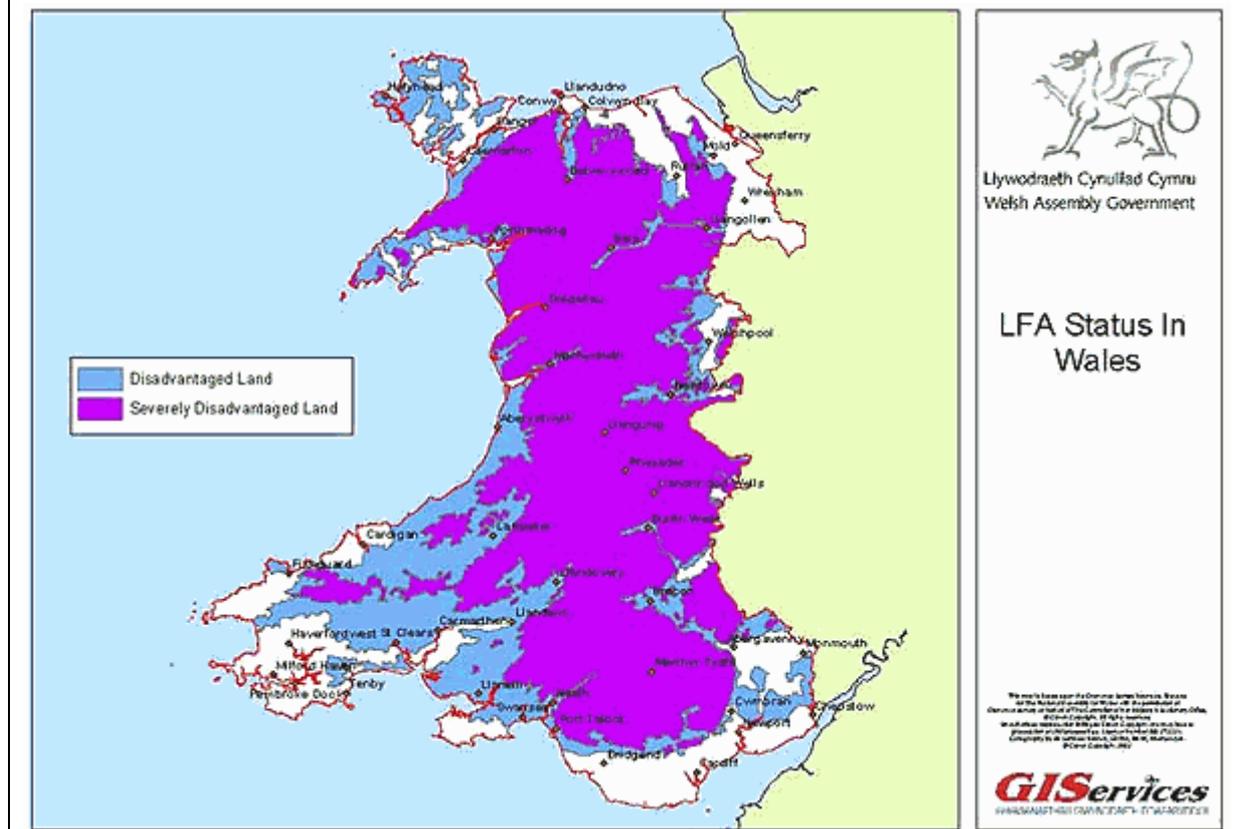
8.2 Supporting the Uplands

(1,000 words)

The boundary of the Uplands in Wales is taken to be the Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA) of the designated Less Favoured Area (LFA). The majority of land in Wales lies within the Less Favoured Area (LFA) with 28% categorised as Disadvantaged Area (DA) and 72% as Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA). However, the Welsh Government Report 'Unlocking the Potential of the Uplands' in 2012 noted that *"consideration has also been given to the market towns that act as service hubs around this area"*.

The LFA area of Bridgend County Borough lies north of the M4 in the Llynfi, Garw and Ogmore valleys. The land is a combination of improved upland, forestry and open-mountain rough grazing with mainly upland beef and sheep farms. Fig. 9 shows the LFA, DA and SDA area across Wales.

Fig. 9 The Less Favoured Area of Wales



While lamb and beef prices have been fairly buoyant in recent years the single farm payment still makes up a substantial part of total farm incomes. The opportunities for diversifying primary production are limited due to the topography and geography of the area. Therefore non-agricultural diversification provides an opportunity to boost farm incomes. The farming industry makes an invaluable contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural cohesion of rural Bridgend.

The communities in the valleys today grew significantly during the industrial revolution and the surge in coal mining. That industry has now gone leaving the towns and villages as primarily residential areas with the majority of workers commuting to the local urban centres and further afield to work. The local economy is largely land-based/agricultural with small industrial business units having replaced the traditional heavy industry of the past.

To enable sustainability in the Uplands, there is a need to integrate and involve communities. This is particularly in the developing sectors of tourism, capitalising on the landscape and local visitor attractions, and the growing importance of local foods to create a visitor sense of place and short supply chains (as seen in many other areas of Europe e.g. Scotland and France). This creates potential for small to medium enterprises in both land based sectors and tourism with a number of potential opportunities identified in the Bridgend Destination Management Plan⁹.

As well as utilising the assets of land for primary production and diversified enterprises it is vital that the rural upland communities are provided with adequate rural transport and communications to enable longer term economic and community development within those upland areas. Opportunities will be explored as they become apparent, although these are not immediately prioritised at this stage.

The importance of the Uplands to Bridgend County Borough

- The uplands in Bridgend County Borough have a number of potential benefits based on their geography and topography:
- Potential sites for renewable energy from forestry, hydro and wind
- Supporting the supply chain development of food, local produce and food tourism.
- A landscape that is an iconic element of the Wales Tourism offer
- A place for outdoor recreation – open access footpaths for walking/rambling, bike trails, woodlands, which can all contribute to the tourism, wellbeing, health and rural economies.
- Forestry and land, the uplands have a huge flood prevention value which RDP could look at.

Intervention logic:

- Tackle social and digital isolation. Also make the uplands attractive and

⁹ Bridgend Destination Management Plan 2013-2017 and the Bridgend DMP Action Plan 2013-2015

accessible to business to locate there mainly through being digitally accessible.

- Tourism- Raise the profile of the uplands for tourism
- Promote and trial tourism opportunities
- Link it and utilise Visit Wales themed years
- Art/ photography potential in the valleys
- Top rock climbing area identified by a national rock climbing website in Blackmill (The Dimbath) Eira sending details.

Priority Interventions for the Uplands

The interventions envisaged under the LEADER themes can go some way towards addressing all three Strategic Objectives of the LDS. However, at this time, Strategic Objective 3 is the priority development area for the Uplands.

The LDS will research the potential for forestry production in the north of the borough and the uplands areas specifically within the upper valleys areas of Bridgend. The LDS will look at the feasibility of wood for timber and wood for energy over the three valleys, taking into account previous research in each valley and reclamation management plans and will look to take a more holistic strategic approach to forestry.

Uplands Priority 1: Immediate Actions: Aligned to ‘SO3 A Place to Work: Supporting Vibrant Rural Economies’

The production and use of wood and timber products to support the local economy will be explored through forestry opportunities for energy, both community led and commercial schemes and through looking at wood for timber production, with a focus on pre-commercial trialling via LEADER funding, and opportunities for micro or social enterprise development.

- [SO3.2] Cross-valley and local area feasibility studies building on previous research to determine and map the assets, resources and potential uses of forestry within those areas, e.g. timber, wooden products, renewable energy, fuel, tourism experiences.
- [SO3.3] Where appropriate, pre-commercial piloting of forestry potential resulting in the development of business plans and enterprise models (social enterprise/micro-enterprise)

Uplands Priority 2: Intermediate Actions: Aligned to ‘SO2. A Place to Visit: Developing Diversified Rural Enterprises’

The LDS will explore opportunities for maximising the forestry assets of the county borough through the priorities outlined in the Destination Management Plan. Opportunities for tourism connected to woodlands and timber products will be explored, in the first instance, extending the local food producers network to include all land-based goods.

- [SO2.1] Work with the extended local producer network and the Bridgend Tourism Association to integrate land based goods with tourism and hospitality sectors and to develop concepts and pilots for innovative tourism experiences and packages connected with the upland area and its assets, such as the potential for woodland, hillside or airborne sports and activities.

Uplands Priority 3: Longer Term Actions: Aligned to ‘SO.1 A Place to Live: Creating self-sustaining rural communities’

The LDS will explore opportunities for maximising the forestry assets of the county borough for use by local communities and learning and skills partners. Opportunities to strengthen the potential economic benefit between the areas’ natural assets and community wellbeing, tourism and environmental sustainability will lead to more communities having the opportunity to use forests for outdoor learning and recreation.

- [SO1.4] Build on the outcomes of the feasibility studies undertaken across the valleys to explore opportunities for community-led projects which maximise the assets of the rural uplands.

In addition to these targeted actions, there are a wide range of interventions proposed in the intervention logic table under each theme which whilst they may not be specific projects to target the uplands area, will have the potential to benefit the uplands and those living or working in the area.

SECTION 9 – LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Description	Explain the potential of the Local Action Group to continue the proposed activity beyond the lifetime of the Programme.
Linked to	Section 5.0 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

9.1 Mainstreaming Plan

The evaluation process for this LDS will take a formative approach with ongoing evaluations at specific points in delivery, such as on completion of specific interventions.

A mainstreaming plan will fall in line with this evaluation process offering the opportunity to reflect on the levels of success being achieved throughout delivery and the appropriateness of maximising mainstreaming opportunities.

All projects will be developed from the outset with clear proposed continuation or exit strategies. In the majority of cases this exit strategy will identify how the intervention will be taken forward as a mainstream service or product at the end of LEADER funding. There will also be instances of where a project is trialled under LEADER with the express intention of moving into another funding programme post-trial.

Where appropriate, a number of funding streams will be identified and support will be given to the delivery agents or community-based organisations that have been delivering the LEADER activity to facilitate them to move on to the next stage. Some examples of funding streams include:

- Domestic programmes supported by the Welsh Government, UK Government or Local Authorities.
- Other investment funds (e.g. Big Lottery).
- Private and bank finance, including from specialist lenders (e.g. Triodos).
- Other EU funds, both domestic and those run by the EU.

Some further detail is provided under the section on integration in terms of alignment with other funding providers.

A range of feasibility studies, pilot projects and trials will be taken forward in order to 'test the market' for new activity, whether commercial or otherwise, and a part of this testing and feasibility will be to identify mainstream funding sources, delivery agents and a customer or client base for the activity, not only underpinning mainstreaming but also better ensuring sustainability for the project.

Options for mainstreaming will include:

- Setting up a social enterprise to take forward an activity that has undergone feasibility and pre-commercial trialling through integrating with the services and support available through, for example, the Wales Co-operative Centre and Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations;

- Supporting a new business start-up (micro-enterprise) to take forward an activity that has undergone feasibility and pre-commercial trialling through integrating with the services and business support available through, for example, Sirolli programme or Business in Focus. The activity might have been trialled or piloted through LEADER support and then a business created or supported using existing sources of support from elsewhere in order to mainstream that activity as a commercial venture. For example, work with a third sector group to trial a free pilot bike loan scheme then through integrating support programmes, signpost them to Business Wales or the Wales Co-operative Centre to take the scheme forward as a social enterprise. Integration is a key part of this LEADER programme.
- Working with one of the partners on the project to source or identify sustainable continuation funding for the project, such as an organisation's core funding which could be used to embed a new way of working, or through supporting the organisation to mainstream the activity where no funding would be necessary;
- Seeking new partners to take forward LEADER actions as mainstream activities through disseminating the results of the activity and the benefits, for example, advocating a toolkit which can be embedded and integrated into usual working practices across a rural sector, key industry, or profession;
- Transferring activity to another funding programme where appropriate and most likely where this was the express intention from the outset as a way of integrating funding programmes to best effect.

Approach to Dissemination

Information about successful activity will be disseminated to potential partners. These partners will include other LAGs, delivery partners including locally-based organisations and other policy and service areas within the local authority.

Projects supported through the 'conceive and commission' funding will deliver regular progress updates in the form of, for example, video diaries, podcasts or press articles. With all projects closely monitored on a regular basis, this information will be used to inform others about how things have gone as they happen. This will be the first stage in disseminating information about LEADER pilots and studies. In addition, as detailed in the section on promotional activity, as activity is appraised as part of the cyclical evaluation process, the results will be publicised widely using all of the tools available to the LAG for example:

- Reach Website
- Social Media and blogs
- Press releases to local media
- Presentations at network events
- Newsletters sent to networks - thematic and geographic
- Local Action Group
- Video and Audio content on DVD's and You Tube
- Celebration events
- Display boards at reach organised and 'piggy-backed' events

Face to face dissemination at:

- Rural networks and key partnerships
- Celebration events
- Organised and 'piggybacked' events

Producing literature for:

- Programme website
- Social Media and blogs
- Press releases to local media
- Newsletters sent to networks, thematic and geographic
- Video and Audio content on DVD's and You Tube
- Display boards at self-organised and 'piggybacked' events

Importantly, the networks that the LAG has developed, and new ones that may be developed as the need arises in the new programme, provide an ideal opportunity to disseminate best practice to individuals and groups that have a specific interest in similar activities.

In the same way, the Wales Rural Network will provide this channel on a national level. Other local and regional fora such as the Community Transport Forum will offer the same opportunity to disseminate information to those who already have an interest in sharing best practice.

Relevant targeted information will be sent to stakeholders and beneficiary groups.

Dissemination Plan

Stage 1: Pre-project

Information of projects approved will be uploaded to the reach website to enable anyone with an interest to ask for further information, be involved in the project or simply to learn about the opportunities to track progress, such as the relevant links to social media or blog profiles.

Stage 2: During project delivery

During the delivery of projects, information will be disseminated at key milestones to include, the challenges as they are overcome, progress and information on how to learn more or become involved in the activity. As well as disseminating information, this is intended as an interactive dialogue with the opportunity for wider engagement and for those with an interest to ask questions of the project managers.

The media used will be social media, the reach website, potentially project delivery partners' websites, local press and media to invite further engagement and regular updates through reach publications including newsletters. It is also intended that projects will regularly record short video snippets to bring the project activity to life which will also be disseminated via social media.

Stage 3: On completion

On completion of the activity, dissemination activity will aim to outline the results and

the lessons learnt from the process of delivering the intervention and to support the transfer of knowledge between organisations, sectors or industries.

The media used will be varied and will include as a minimum a report which will be made publicly available online and circulated at information dissemination events such as programme celebration events or project specific seminars.

Case studies will be developed of all 40 projects funded through the programme, with the level of detail and scope of the case study relevant to the scale of the project. These case studies will be developed into online content, published in newsletters such as Gwlad and circulated via the Wales Rural Network.

Mentoring will be offered as a part of the knowledge transfer process where applicable in order to transfer knowledge and disseminate lessons learnt directly from one project to another.

SECTION 10 – DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I am acting with the authority of the Local Action Group and certify to the best of my knowledge and belief the information provided in this Local Development Strategy application and supporting documentation are true and correct and the application for financial assistance is for the minimum required to enable the project to proceed.

I undertake to notify the Welsh Government in advance of carrying out any changes to the nature of this project.

I also confirm that I am not aware of any reason why the project may not proceed and that the commitments and activities can be achieved within the timescales indicated.

Local Action Group (LAG) Representative

Signed:	
Name:	
Chair/Deputy Chair LAG:	
Date:	

Administrative Body Representative

Signed:	
Name:	
Position in Administrative Body:	
Date:	

A signed hard copy of the Local Development Strategy must be received at the address below no later than 30 September 2014

Scheme Management Unit, Welsh Government, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. SY23 3UR

Please submit an electronic copy to: LEADER2014-2020@wales.gsi.gov.uk