

LEADER IN SOUTH EAST WALES

Delivering local led strategies
and funding for rural areas



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

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MISSION STATEMENT

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The LEADER programme has played an essential role in the continued growth, **cohesion and prosperity of rural communities across Wales** over the past decade, helping us to deliver national impact and achieve international objectives.

The impact of locally based teams who focus solely on the development of local communities has been **invaluable to ensure the development of residents and businesses** alike to align with regional agendas.

The rural development teams on the ground have been a vital resource in **supporting communities to identify their own priorities and deliver ongoing results**. This, in turn, has supported the Welsh Government to deliver its own priorities for a more prosperous Wales, in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The LEADER objectives and way of working align closely with the **Well-Being of Future Generations Act in Wales**, which aims to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

While LEADER has had a positive impact over the past decade, it's possible we may not see the full, long-term value of the programme for many years. In many cases, **LEADER is the catalyst for change which enables further growth and development** for these communities and delivers even greater impact in the long-term.

The emphasis on locally led community development has been crucial to the sustained and progressive prosperity of our rural Welsh communities.

WHAT IS LEADER IN WALES?

"The LEADER model has empowered and enabled communities to have a say in how European and Welsh Government funding is allocated at the grass-roots level, on projects which are prioritised locally by community champions and front-line experts, basing decisions on local knowledge and need."

Bridgend LAG Chair Cllr Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration.

LEADER is a local development method focusing on rural areas, which designs and delivers local strategies and oversees the allocation of funding to community projects. **In total there are 18 Local Action Groups in Wales** which are made up of public, private and voluntary members and coordinated by the Welsh Government. Depending on the location, these Local Action Groups are either supported by the Local Authority or by established local enterprise agencies.

LEADER allows the flexibility of tailored support to each individual area, with no 'one size fits all' approach. **Wales was one of the first nations to embrace LEADER, and now has a legacy of almost three decades of expertise from which to draw.**

LEADER HAS 7 FEATURES



1

AN AREA-BASED STRATEGY.

Centred on local strengths, distinctiveness and opportunities as well as the social and physical assets within rural communities.



2

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH.

Communities set their own priorities and are supported by a team to develop projects that will meet their objectives.



3

LOCAL ACTION GROUPS.

Strategies are developed and delivered on the ground, with partnerships consisting of public, private and third sector members.



4

INNOVATION.

The flexibility for communities to test new ideas and approaches based around the assets and opportunities within their communities.



5

INTEGRATION.

Bringing people together to work jointly on community projects and share their knowledge, experience and ideas.



6

NETWORKS.

Sharing success and learnings with other communities and building on pilot projects.



7

COOPERATION.

Individual projects are encouraged to work together across regions and countries.

LEADER AND THE FUTURE OF WALES

LEADER is closely aligned with the aims of both the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Taking Wales Forward 2016 – 2021.



ROLE OF LAGS

"The success of the LEADER programme in the Vale of Glamorgan is due to a dedicated Local Action Group who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from a variety of sectors to the table, and how they integrate so well with the delivery team who do a great job of implementing the programme. The team are well respected and recognised in the area and regarded as the first port of call for all issues relating to the rural community, and are championed as local facilitators and ambassadors for rural affairs. Without the LEADER programme, we would have been missing a valuable resource in our community which has been vital in bringing people together to tackle challenges and create locally led solutions."

Carolyn Mckenzie – LAG Chair – Vale of Glamorgan.

Managing each LEADER area is a local action group (LAG), which comprises a cross section of representatives from its rural wards including public, private and voluntary members. Using a partnership approach, the LAG's role is to design a local development strategy (LDS) for their area and make decisions regarding its implementation throughout the duration of the programme, ensuring that all activity relates to the LDS.

LAGs offer an invaluable insight into the communities they represent. As well as directing the work of the LEADER team, they co-design and appraise new initiatives. This community-led local development approach has proved a successful model over successive years since 2004, ensuring a programme of development which is driven and managed by the communities it represents.

WELSH GOVERNMENT'S FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL INVESTMENT IN WALES

The Welsh Government's Framework acknowledges the value of a LEADER-style approach to community-led local development which incorporates the principles of:

- A local, area-based approach
- Partnership participatory approaches and co-production
- Integrated multi-sector strategies
- Innovation
- Networking and co-operation

The Framework highlights the impact community-led local development has in building capacity in local areas by increasing social capital and networks, building local governance, and enhancing the delivery of outcomes.

Local Authorities are recognised as having a central role in developing and delivering the necessary interventions that aid economic recovery and renewal of local communities. Many Local Authorities already have Rural teams delivering LEADER and other RDP programmes with the local knowledge and expertise necessary to support rural communities and in-depth understanding of the barriers and challenges they encounter.

The LEADER programme is currently delivered across all rural wards in Wales. The Framework envisages take up of any new community-led local development model to be on a pan-Wales basis, possibly extending support to non-rural areas.

Chair of the Vale of Usk Local Action Group (LAG) Pamela Mason says:

"LEADER is a key catalyst for local community development in the Vale of Usk. A significant proportion of the rural population in the Vale of Usk suffer from poverty and various other forms of associated deprivation, including poor health and poor diet and lack of accessibility to essential and non-essential services. LEADER helps to address issues caused by rural deprivation, stimulating economic growth, with the potential for better incomes and new job creation, as well as better social contact across the Vale of Usk LAG area".



THE IMPACT OF LEADER

As showcased throughout this brochure, LEADER has and continues to deliver a wide reaching and varied approach to community led local development.

The value of LEADER however is not just in the many direct projects and communities it supports, but also in its role as a significant catalyst for further regeneration and innovation.

Here in the South East of Wales, our 6 Local Action Groups and their LEADER programmes received £12,383,343 of funding to deliver projects in our communities through the current RDP Programme period 2013-2020.

Again, within the South East of Wales these LEADER teams and projects have been responsible for leveraging an additional £30,094,487 of funding from various sources, demonstrating the substantial value of having locally based and knowledgeable personnel working in partnership with others on

a range of programmes based on local and regional identified needs. This includes over £5.2million additional funding secured through the Rural Community Development Fund and over £3million in co-operation supply chain funding.

The success of local area-based teams in securing 139% of additional funding is intrinsically linked with the expertise and knowledge to overcome challenges and embrace opportunities present locally and supporting vibrant, viable and resilient rural communities.

Without LEADER funding providing the foundation to rural and peri-rural development support, rural communities across our LAG areas would have received less targeted investment aligned to their situation and the approach should be used as an effective way to deliver meaningful regeneration and resilience across Wales.



	Bridgend	Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent	Monmouthshire & Newport	Merthyr & RCT	Torfaen	Vale of Glamorgan	Total
Total Projects delivered/pilot activities undertaken/supported	45	62	87	98	34	84	410
Number of feasibility studies	40	6	14	2	10	26	98
Number of networks established	6	5	66	21	3	8	109
Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects	0	4	2	2	0	0	8
Number of community hubs	23	2	8	14	3	2	52
Number of information dissemination actions	160	77	234	171	17	250	909
Number of stakeholders engaged	318	187	2500	218	68	450	3741
Number of businesses engaged		81	3			170	254
Number of participants supported	1730	765	1450	3437	122	6500	14004
Jobs created	0	2	5	5	0	0	12
Numbers engaged during Covid	5400	19	500	800	34	108	6861

For contact details and further information, please visit:
[Wales Rural Network | Business Wales](#)

WHY DO WE THINK THE LEADER APPROACH WORKS?

1

It supports innovation, allowing communities to test new ideas and approaches to development.

2

It embraces a flexible and agile approach with the ability to react quickly across sectors.

3

It allows local people to deliver the projects themselves or works in partnership with them to do so.

4

It recognises distinctiveness, celebrating local culture, food, history and natural resources.

CASE STUDIES

	COMMUNITY	14
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GARW YOUTH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12-17, BRIDGEND



Garw Youth Hub is a welcoming and inclusive environment for young people aged 12-17 to meet and socialise. The Hub offers a range of sporting activities and training to increase skills and opportunities, as well as helping to build confidence and improve wellbeing.

Garw Valley has higher than average youth unemployment and child poverty, but no youth provision for people aged 12 and over, so a local charity spoke to young people to find out what they wanted in a Youth Hub and developed the pilot project, which is fully funded by LEADER and part-managed by the Bridgend LEADER team.

At the Hub, young people can access information, activities and training in an informal and relaxed atmosphere where there is no adult or peer pressure. It works with the police, fire service, lifeguards and sexual health advisers, enabling them to engage with the young people in an informal way.

In the short-term, young people who come to the Hub have improved in confidence and self-esteem, as well as social interaction and their overall wellbeing. Both antisocial behaviour and loneliness amongst young people in the area have decreased, and these young people now have access to the skills they need to boost their employment prospects.

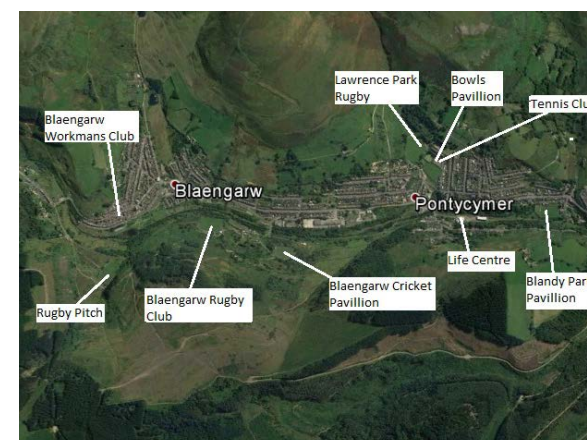
Long-term, thanks to support from LEADER, young people from this deprived area will have a sustainable, age-specific Youth Hub providing them with social, sporting and training opportunities all of which contribute to a better quality of life.

Through accessing the Youth Hub and the opportunities it provides, over time young people will be more informed and gain skills which will contribute to improved confidence and better long-term employability prospects.



TAF BARGOED CATCHMENT, RURAL ACTION CWM TAF

The Taf Bargoed catchment aimed to engage the community with its local rivers, whilst providing an opportunity to learn about the importance of healthy rivers and the biodiversity within them. Delivered by the South East Wales Rivers Trust with support from LEADER, this project centred on delivering skills, engagement and training within communities, as well as organising accredited river restoration courses for volunteers and working with local schools to boost learning.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SPORTS HUBS, BRIDGEND

Garw Valley Senior Boys & Girls Club was looking to work with other local sports clubs to explore the possibility of sharing facilities. Working with the club, the Bridgend LEADER team brought other stakeholders to the table, including sports governing bodies, and commissioned a project to look at the feasibility of establishing sustainable sport-based community hubs in the Garw valley. The project will lead to further applications for funding to develop and pilot any new hubs and their shared management approaches.



COMMUNITY MAPPING, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

Communities in St Athan, Wenvoe and Rhoose wanted to pilot new ways of community mapping. LEADER brought communities together to focus on the positives in the area, whilst providing solutions to any problems. Communities secured funding from external bodies and the project produced a toolkit which was widely used throughout the Vale and has been adopted as a consultation tool within the council. A new project phase, creating tools to help communities map their needs in response to COVID-19, is underway.



RESTORATION OF LLANYRAFON MANOR, TORFAEN

Llanyrafon Manor was a derelict Grade II listed building located in a flood zone in Torfaen. Despite having fallen into a state of disrepair, there was potential to bring the site - and its history - back to life.

After a series of public meetings in 2007, the Llanyrafon Manor Community Group (LMCG) was established to prevent the decline of the manor. With the support of LEADER, the group was able to pursue initiatives to highlight the significance of the manor through recreational and learning opportunities aimed at improving local understanding of the manor's architectural, historical, environmental and ecological value.

LEADER methods and rural development plan staff helped the local community to secure a significant turning point for Llanyrafon Manor. They addressed the challenges faced in bringing the manor back to life and secured enough funding to restore the site and develop a two-year activity programme which would help to embed its heritage into the local community.

The LEADER approach helped to create links between local people, delivering social and economic benefits whilst engaging the local community in the whole project, from the initial concept to construction.

★ LEGACY OF THE PROJECT

Local producers continue to showcase their produce in a monthly rural craft market held at the manor, and the community has benefited from its heritage being brought back to life through regular markets, festivals and events.

It's been seven years since the restoration and Llanyrafon Manor still holds a strong sense of place. People travel from near and far to experience and learn about its heritage and culture.

8 full time jobs created

47 marketing and promotional events held

6 projects aimed at environmental enhancement or sustainability

5,000+ people benefitting from improved services in the area



OGMORE HERITAGE TRAIL, BRIDGEND

A local history group approached LEADER after they identified the need for a heritage hub. LEADER provided £14,500 towards the project, with additional funding provided by Heritage Lottery Fund. This was set up in an existing community venue and provides a range of skills-based training for the community, including digital skills. A heritage trail was also established, featuring 12 exhibitions along the route with information, photos and audio about the surrounding area. Bike racks, a bike repair station and bike pump have also been installed at the hub to promote cycling and wellbeing.



THE SEVERN TUNNEL CENTRE, VALE OF USK

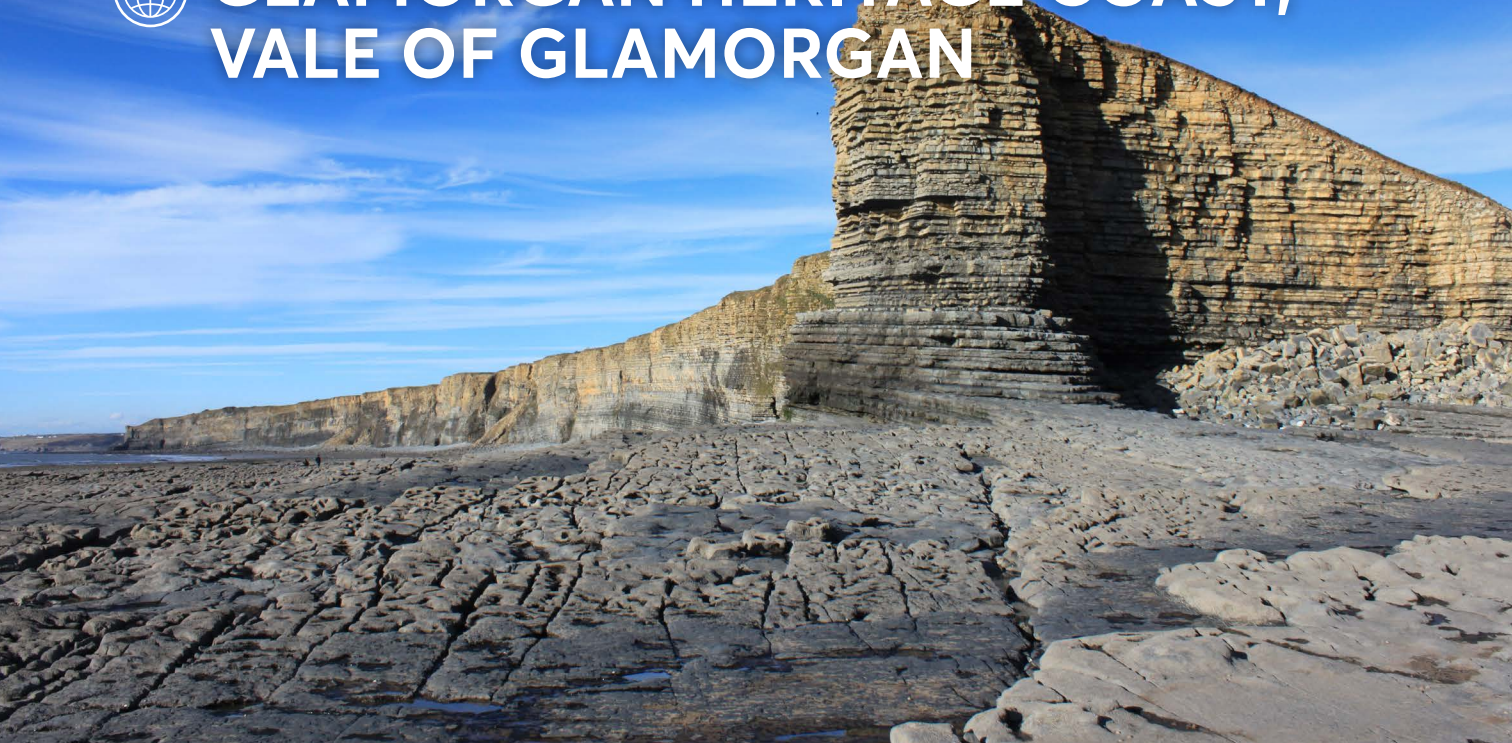
LEADER supplied vital funding towards redecorating an exhibition centre on the history of the Severn Railway Tunnel, and new toilets which are open daily for walkers, particularly for the coastal path. A digitalised audio-visual display was developed in the exhibition area to communicate the history of the area and the town which grew as a result of the tunnel. The centre continues to attract visitors to enjoy lessons on the culture and heritage of the area.

TIPical VALLEYS, RURAL ACTION CWM TAF

A two year project, TIPical Valleys aimed to bring people from local communities together with specialists and encourage them to work together to take part in talks, surveys, activities and experiences which embrace and promote the value of mineral spoil localities such as tips. As the project progressed, communities were encouraged to form interest groups around mineral spoil sites and work with the project to change the perception of rural tips.



GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST, VALE OF GLAMORGAN



There was a widespread aspiration to make more of the vast opportunities offered by the Glamorgan Heritage Coast to contribute to rural economic development. Support and funding from LEADER helped to establish a framework through which these rural economic opportunities can be explored and pursued. Although every project is different, each has contributed to a growing realisation of the potential of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast which is fast becoming a 'slow tourism' destination.

Glamorgan Heritage Coast Sense of Place activities: LEADER provided help and funding to visitor-facing organisations to develop their 'sense of place' through a series of small-scale events, to support visitors' understanding and appreciation of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast area.

Coastal camping pilot project: This was a trial to assist and support landowners on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast to trial low-key, sustainable camping on their land for a limited period of time.

Facilitated through Creative Rural Communities, it involved five different farmers and landowners in a trial in 2012, with two further farmers also involved in marketing the trial.

Coastal activities pilot project: which enabled six new activity providers to trial offering their activity to visitors to the area from July-September in 2014. This trial was a success, with five providers still in operation.

Glamorgan Heritage Coast interpretation project: This was an interpretation strategy which led to the development of various augmented reality apps and activity packs, as well as public art gateway features through a Coastal Communities funded project.

Adventure Activities Feasibility Study and Showcase Event: This study identified and showcased appropriate adventure activities along the coastline, as well as providing a detailed action plan for their development.

BRIDGEND'S WELSH PLACE NAMES PROJECT BOOK, BRIDGEND

This project was commissioned with support from LEADER to undertake workshops for children, young people and adults to develop a reference book on the history and heritage of Bridgend through its place names. Residents learned the Welsh words which make up those place names and can now tell the story of their street, town, school or village. The booklet is still available, both in print and electronically.



SENSE OF PLACE, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

This project was developed to communicate all the Vale has to offer through the promotion of food, heritage, language, the great outdoors, arts, crafts and culture. A 'sense of place' event was held at St Donat's Arts Centre in May 2013. More than 50 local businesses, organisations and individuals attended with talks from speakers ranging from brewers to lighthouse keepers. A month-long arts exhibition showcasing the work of more than 50 local artists was also held.

VALE FILM FESTIVAL, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

LEADER supported the creation of this festival, which took place in September and October 2019 and featured a variety of pop-up events. These included a short film competition with a final shortlist of six films and a bespoke VR experience created for the festival by BAFTA winner Stuart Rideout. He attended two venues with his experience "The Laughing Heart", and screened short films created for the climate coalition. Many events were sold out and received positive feedback.



BO PEEP, CWM A MYNYDD

Farming has remained one of the least digitally transformed industries. A reliance on EU subsidies, which will likely change following Brexit, raises some considerable concerns around the future of farming in Wales. There is a need to explore ways to improve farm efficiency, energy use and sustainability for environmental and financial outcomes.

The Cwm a Mynydd LEADER Rural Development Programme team is exploring the potential of this locally to pilot precision data gathering tools that record soil temperature, wind speed, moisture content, rainfall and stock movements, and can eventually be created at an affordable price, with flexibility to suit a variety of on farm applications.

The project is being developed in collaboration with a private sector contractor and Aberystwyth University. It centres on a flexible, online platform that collates information gathered from bespoke sensors, either across a single farm or over many different farms, and multiple data sources. The platform allows flexibility in the choice of sensors that individual farmers adopt. The sensors monitor soil or air temperature to aid grass production and stock movements at remote farm locations or can provide environmental data to flag an increased likelihood of pest occurrence.

The system is adaptable enough to change the data inputs without requiring changes to the main infrastructure and will allow communication over a number of common platforms, such as RFID, LORA and GPS.

The project has already generated a system which transfers data between animals and static sensors in fields to a central server stored 'on farm'. This is then uploaded to the Cloud via a Wi-Fi hotspot. The system has been developed to be low cost and will eventually be autonomous, only presenting a 'call to action' to busy farmers when something urgent needs to be brought to their attention.

£10,000 was secured via the Cwm a Mynydd LEADER Implementation Fund for this pilot project. There is a wide range of potential applications which could be tailored to meet the needs of individual farms, addressing threats, adapting to change and helping make the most of new opportunities.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Research Partner engaged | 3 Micro climate sensor arrays deployed |
| 1 Industry Partner | 1 Prototype digital relay system created |



CONSERVATION GRAZING FARMING, TORFAEN

LEADER funding helped Torfaen County Borough Council, Gwent Wildlife Trust and local farmers to undertake a conservation grazing study to identify suitable sites for grazing within Torfaen's rural wards, as well as engaging with farmers to identify barriers to conservation grazing. As a result, site-specific proposals were made, all of which were fully costed, and work is currently underway to fully implement the plan.



CWM A MYNYDD AGRICULTURAL NETWORK, CWM A MYNYDD

Through implementing the principles of LEADER, this project brought together farmers and those associated with the agricultural industry, to discuss topics affecting the industry and share best practice. The local rural crimes officer regularly attends the network, as does the local representative from Farming Connect and Farmers Union Wales. The members have helped to steer the Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development LEADER Programme to support and develop projects in partnership with its members.

CAERPHILLY AGROCEUTICALS, CWM A MYNYDD

This project, through LEADER support, brought together farmers and pharmaceutical professionals to trial the planting of daffodils on a number of farms across Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. The harvested daffodils are tested for galanthamine, a substance which shows promise in the management of brain diseases like Alzheimer's. The next stage will focus on the commercial aspects of the plant as a crop, with a view to negotiating prices to supply pharmaceutical demand, and potentially building resilience and diversity into upland hill farms.



⚡ MAES YR ONN FARM, CWM A MYNYDD



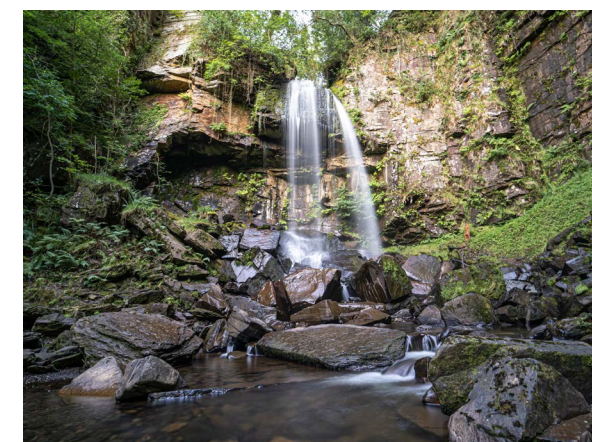
For over 30 years, the Davies family has run an award-winning farm of South Wales mountain sheep that thrive on the hillside pastures in the Caerphilly County. The job presented challenges for Mr Davies, who had to travel seven miles, twice a day, to tend to his livestock over poor mountain roads. This journey was made more difficult during the winter when the farm can be made inaccessible due to heavy snowfall, which also posed a concern for the welfare of the livestock. The Cwm a Mynydd LEADER programme supported the Davies family and Maes yr Onn Farm, by working with SSE and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to develop an entirely sustainable two-storey farmhouse, which has been hailed as an exemplar of sustainable building excellence. The development enabled further expansion of the business and better management of the farm and its livestock, in a design which is sensitive to the environment and climatic condition of its environment.

The LEADER programme helped bring together the project stakeholders to facilitate, develop and deliver the project. LEADER also linked with Farming Connect over a series of days to showcase an example of a working, off-grid, upland hill farm to other farmers.

The project was an excellent opportunity to test a combination of renewable energy technologies and gain valuable insight into the impact of living and running a small business sustainably in a rural location. The farm's electricity, heat and water generation and consumption were monitored for three years under the Exemplar Programme run by Constructing Excellence Wales, and the project has been used to demonstrate off-grid living without losing any quality of life.

⚡ HYDRO ENERGY, CWM A MYNYDD

LEADER funded a study to identify opportunities for hydro-electric generation from streams and rivers in Caerphilly County Borough. A shortlist was compiled along with further surveys of the preferred sites, of which three were progressed for more in-depth study. This initiative involved engagement between LEADER project staff, landowners and consultants, to explore schemes in Pontllanfraith, and on agricultural land at Nant y Twyn and Nant Twynharris. Landowners were provided with recommendations on how to progress the schemes.



⚡ RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSPORT, BRIDGEND

The Sustainable Wales Community Energy Group applied for funding to take advantage of an electric vehicle charging point to power a dedicated community vehicle. The feasibility of likely transport routes needed to be explored for the rural wards surrounding Porthcawl, with viable travel routes linking to the new Health Centre currently being built in the rural ward of Newton. LEADER fully funded this study and provided recommendations for a pilot project.

⚡ COMMUNITY ENERGY CONFERENCE, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

LEADER helped to fund this event, which took place in April 2018 at St Donats Arts Centre. 45 people attended from across the Vale of Glamorgan and surrounding counties, representing private, public and voluntary sectors. Four speakers from key energy companies in the area, gave an overview of their experiences of developing and implementing community energy projects across south Wales. A workshop was also held to explore the participants' aspirations for their communities.



GOCONNECT, CWM A MYNYDD

A 12-week programme was devised and delivered with support from LEADER, to help tackle youth unemployment in the rural wards of Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent, by giving young people the transferable skills needed to get into work.

The project delivered two initial enterprise courses held in the rural communities of Rhymney and Tredomen, with a follow-up enterprise course delivered in the Innovation Centre for Excellence in Caerphilly.

The project was delivered in a 'Plan it, Build it, Sell it' approach in each community, with each of the learners developing and testing their own business ideas. The aim was to give young people the confidence and reassurance to take the next steps to becoming entrepreneurial.

The project involved a consortium of businesses and entrepreneurs. Learners were taken through each stage of the process and provided with real insights, experiences and learning opportunities, to help them identify their aspirations and empower them with the skills and confidence to set up a real micro-business.

As a result of the project, young people are now getting involved in training courses that they didn't previously realise were available to them.

GoConnect developed a new training programme in gaming and cybersecurity, to give young, excluded people their first step towards major industries that need more workers locally.

In addition, through a close relationship with the Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme, the project has connected young people with other rural businesses in the wider rural development project network, helping them to prototype apps or build websites, and be more collaborative and resilient in times of economic uncertainty.

2 jobs safeguarded	1 job created
2 youth enterprises developed	32 young people engaged with project
4 young people gained full-time employment	4 young people gained part-time employment
8 young people progressed into further education	



WELSH-SPEAKING TOURISM AMBASSADORS, BRIDGEND

Working with the Bridgend Tourism Association and the Bridgend County Borough Council Destination Management Officer, LEADER helped fund a team of Welsh-speaking Bridgend tourism ambassadors. The project coincided with the Urdd Eisteddfod in Pencoed in May 2017, to provide a Welsh welcome to visitors. Ambassadors undertook research to inform future rural tourism projects for the Welsh-speaking family market. Training was free, with a two-day workshop exploring the treasures of the region.



HILL FARM TRAINING SCHEME, TORFAEN

This ongoing project teaches conservationists and enthusiasts about the work of hill farmers and aims to close the gap between farmers producing food and experts who focus on the environment. LEADER funded a business plan, marketing and course materials to enable this project to become financially self-sufficient, building bridges between land managers, nature conservation professionals and farmers, whilst supporting farm incomes. All training events are held on-site to allow farmers to benefit from day-to-day support.

TABLET LOAN SCHEME, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

This created an opportunity for local people to loan tablets from rural libraries, to boost digital skills and access in the community. LEADER helped fund training for library staff and ran a launch event at Llantwit Major Library in October 2019. This project grew significantly in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic as demand for digital connectivity grew exponentially. The LEADER team worked with project leads to secure additional funding and resources for the project, to reach residents across multiple communities.



BRIDGEND CRAFT COLLECTIVE, BRIDGEND

In November 2016, a specialist in craft markets was appointed, to look at ways of developing the skilled crafts sector locally, and maximising the economic potential for high-quality, locally made crafts in the area. They also assessed the ways in which taking part in crafts can help to decrease social isolation and increase wellbeing in the elderly and socially isolated, including those who are housebound.

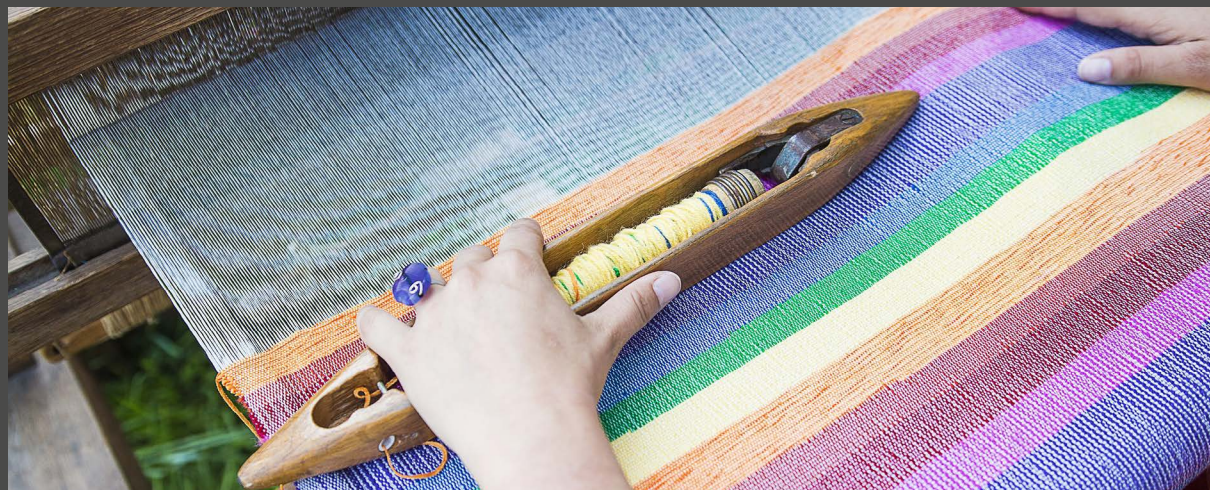
The consultation took place over six months with crafters and stakeholder organisations. The outcome was a development plan which recommended a calendar of events across the county borough, to increase opportunities for business networking and sales, while also boosting skills, addressing issues such as social isolation, and boosting morale and wellbeing in the area. The first craft event, named 'Made in Penybont' was held in February 2017, and was incredibly successful.

Bridgend Local Action Group went on to develop a pilot project, with the aim of identifying and developing a financially sustainable business model that would support the network's activities, hubs and training – either through linking with existing businesses or organisations or establishing a new business or social enterprise.

The project aimed to improve economic potential and increase skills in the area, while also decreasing social isolation and improving well-being. As well as supporting the creation of a craft network, the project looked to establish opportunities for training and mentoring, mini craft hubs and an income strategy for the network.

Bridgend Craft Collective was established and is now recognised by crafters across the county. It has continued to be driven by the local craft businesses who now meet regularly, with room for further growth within the community.

243 craft businesses supported	73 socially isolated people attended craft hubs
118 people trained in traditional crafts	125 training demonstrations held
173 people increased their crafting skills	63 stakeholder organisations involved



GLAMORGAN SMALLHOLDERS, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

Despite being perceived by some as 'hobby farmers', smallholders must meet many of the same regulations as large farmers, without the same support network. LEADER helped establish the Glamorgan Smallholders network, where 20-25 smallholders regularly attend support meetings. This project has helped lessen isolation amongst the smallholder community and improved the effectiveness of their operations. This group was well placed for support during the pandemic and applied for additional LEADER funding for a pilot to share and administer essential medication when vets were closed.



MEET THE BUYER, CWM A MYNYDD

Cwm a Mynydd commissioned and hosted a series of events, funded by LEADER and supported by a LEADER officer, to bring together small-scale quality producers and introduce them to potential customers in the hospitality and service industries. One meeting saw local beer and cider producers carry out a tasting event at a pub. This led to a brewery and cider farm visit, which resulted in local cider and ale being stocked at local hotels and bars.

COWBRIDGE FOOD COLLECTIVE, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

The Cowbridge Food Collective provides a 'click and collect' farmers market through which Vale residents can pre-order and purchase food from local producers, and collect during a weekly meet at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. The collective attracts around 30-40 shoppers each week, buying from an average of 23 different producers. Orders can be made every week between Sunday and Tuesday and collected on Thursday evenings at Arthur John's Carpark.



BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT, MONMOUTHSHIRE



Monmouthshire is notorious for poor broadband infrastructure, with 8,000 homes and businesses reporting poor broadband (20% of total), with speeds typically ranging between 1 and 10Mb/s. For context, 95% of Wales has access to 30mb/s speeds due to the Welsh Government Superfast Cymru initiative.

LEADER helped to seek new opportunities to address the broadband issues within the Vale of Usk. The local action group supported an innovative project to trial a new broadband technology, which would enable rural communities to enjoy the same digital connectivity as urban areas.

This technology, known as Television "white space", was trialled in one area of Monmouthshire. The total investment in this project was £15,500 with £12,400 of this amount coming from Welsh Government Rural Communities.

Following the successful pilot, a comprehensive report was produced as the basis for a capital grant of £150,000 from the Rural Communities Development Fund (RCDF). Match funding was provided by the successful Sell2Wales bidder by way of the installation costs. This grant allowed 400 homes and businesses to have access to broadband download speeds of greater than 30mb/s.

September 2019 saw the project secure a further £150,000 grant from the RCDF capital fund, enabling a further 500 premises to connect to the extended wireless network. This work was completed in 2020.

INDEPENDENT LIVING, MONMOUTHSHIRE

This project, with help from LEADER, is trialling two elements to support vulnerable people living alone. The first element installs 'Internet of Things' (IoT) sensors in the home, while the second aims to combat loneliness and social exclusion by installing voice activated devices in homes. Initially, individuals were recommended by the Community Meals service in Monmouthshire, who identified more than 100 people who considered themselves to be lonely.

The LEADER project helped in securing Digital Transformation funding to widen the project across the greater Gwent area to trial five different digital devices. Each of the local authorities in Gwent have been allocated a different digital device to trial. In total, 50 devices are being installed in homes across Gwent, each one will measure effects on combatting loneliness and social exclusion as well as living safer at home for longer.



DIGITAL COMMUNITY VENUES, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

LEADER helped to develop pilots for online booking systems in community venues across the Vale. Llantwit Major Town Council and Llandow Village Hall are the two pilot venues. All the venues in Llantwit Major are now available to book online and have seen quite a significant increase in their bookings for the town hall which was previously underutilised. Llandow Village Hall has found the online calendar useful for customers to check whether the hall is available.



RURAL CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, MONMOUTHSHIRE

As part of its 5G rollout, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport launched a programme called 5G Rural Connected Communities, to trial faster speeds in rural areas. Applications were considered from all areas of the UK. The expression of interest which was submitted with the support of LEADER has been approved and is one of only four in the UK to be selected for interview. Monmouthshire was selected from the four bidders to lead the project, which has started and will be completed in March 2022.

COMMONS MANAGEMENT PLAN, TORFAEN

The Torfaen LEADER Programme has a designated land management officer, who ensures farmers and landowners are engaged to develop new ways of working together. The officer has closely engaged with local farmers and commoners to identify the need for support and sustainable working in Torfaen.

Two studies were commissioned to develop Commons Management Plans, which have brought together the priority areas for sustainable development, with the support of volunteers and community groups who are keen to learn new skills and create adaptable land management techniques, as well as farmers.

Plans are in place to trial different habitat management techniques in different areas, which will benefit hill farmers and provide educational opportunities. There is also an ongoing programme to repair dry stone walls and restore bogs, as well as identify pond creation opportunities to improve stock management, enhance habitats and deter off-roaders.

The project is also aiming to examine what has been done to address local landscape crime management, and produce further recommendations for natural or artificial barriers, communication and monitoring.

A sustainable plan will ensure that all involved can use the common in the future, whether for land use, biodiversity, leisure and tourism. This will pave a way for future generations.

The key to this project's success has been having a designated officer who is skilled in engagement techniques, with a knowledge of land management. LEADER support has given this officer the time needed to build trust with the farmers.

- ★ Increased bio-diversity
- ★ Increased understanding of land management
- ★ An adaptable plan that can be used for generations to come, creating a regional centre for rural innovation, best practice and skills training



BEES PROJECT, CWM A MYNYDD, VALE OF USK AND RURAL ACTION CWM TAF

This LEADER-funded project brought together beekeepers from across South East Wales to share knowledge and experience, as well as 'buddying' new beekeepers with existing beekeepers to upskill and mentor them. A series of workshops, identified following the LEADER approach, provided specialist knowledge on bee husbandry and queen rearing to reduce the reliance on imported queen bees and sustain local bee populations. The project also delivered 19 workshops to schools to discuss the ecological role of honeybees in our environment.



KENFIG NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE, BRIDGEND

Bridgend Countryside Volunteering Network and Natural Resources Wales commissioned a three-year project to develop the sensitive and strategic management of the Kenfig National Nature Reserve site. Improved signage and bins were installed, helping visitors to be more responsible during their visit, and educational materials developed for schools and universities to help them get the most out of their visit. Long-term, the hope is that visitors will have a better understanding of the importance of environmental conservation, not just in KNNR but across Bridgend.

COMMONS VISION, TORFAEN

This project will examine and describe more broadly the limits to such approaches on commons, and set out ways of maximising the effectiveness of such measures in terms of ease of access to graziers' associations, of rewarding active management by individual graziers and of meeting the demand for public goods. The key to the success to date is based on grassroots engagement with the farmers and commoners, who have been key in developing the project from the outset.



REGIONAL FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS PROJECT (AGORA)

This was a collaborative project involving eight Local Action Groups and covering eleven local authorities. The aim was to maximise the potential of the local supply chain, enabling the entire region to progress towards a shorter supply chain for local land-based products.

A LEADER-funded study was commissioned to gain a solid understanding of how to achieve this goal as a region. Research was undertaken in all eight local authority government areas to better understand the priorities for each group over the next three years and how best to work together collaboratively. The study informed a significant application for funding to the Welsh Government's Co-operation & Supply Chains Development Scheme, which was successful, and Menter a Busnes was appointed to deliver a follow-up project across the region.

The follow-up project primarily engaged small producer businesses to encourage and support them to grow in capacity and confidence, in order to extend their production, ambition and market scope. It also acted as a first step on the ladder for those producers who were not yet ready for existing routes of support, such as branding and marketing, or were unable to find or access alternative routes to market for a range of reasons.

It centred on maximising economies of scale, enabling those who cannot currently, to meet the demands of key buyers for locally produced, land-based and artisan goods, such as visitor-facing retail and tourism businesses. The project also aimed to stimulate demand for these goods, by working with buyers and consumers to help them understand the viability of such routes to market.

A total of 274 producers were supported through the project, with 11 networks established to support the local supply chain to grow and thrive.

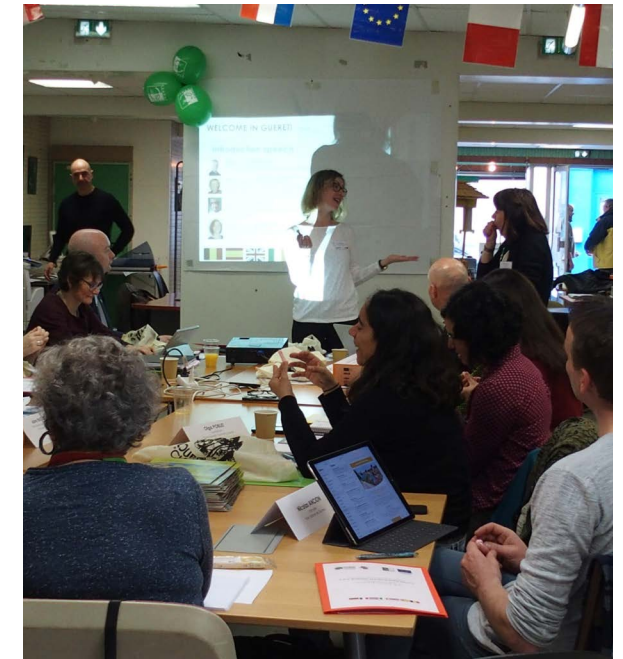
11 networks established	2 funding bids submitted
6 action plans for future funding bids developed	7 mapping exercises across the regions to inform future support
274 producers supported	305 stakeholders engaged
2 business information booklets produced	



COLABORA, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

This is a transnational project with EU members from the UK, France, Germany, Catalonia, Latvia and Ireland, in which members explore and share understandings of the development and management of co-working spaces. The aim is to evaluate the economic benefits of creating co-working spaces in rural areas and to gain a greater understanding of best practice, in terms of both setting up and running these spaces.

In November 2019, representatives were supported through funding from LEADER, to visit the Leipziger Muldenland LAG in Germany, to exchange ideas and experiences for developing co-working spaces. The visit included presentations, visits to intended locations for co-working space, workshops and a regional exhibition. This was the third transnational visit as part of this project.



COMMON LANDSCAPE – CWM A MYNYDD AND RURAL ACTION CWM TAF

LEADER funded a project to establish a part-time ranger and a part-time administration officer to develop initiatives aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour, which is prevalent across common landscapes in South East Wales.

Between 2018 and 2020, this project has helped to remove 31 tonnes of fly tipping and litter from the common.

The project also established a volunteer group and built relationships with several local schools to educate pupils about respecting the common and the countryside around them.

LEADER teams have assisted by supporting the Commoners' Association in developing their legal and governance structures, to ensure and enable the future resilience of the organisation. The issues affecting common land remain pervasive across Wales, but the success of this project has led to an application for future funding via the Sustainable Management Scheme.



LIVESTOCK MARKET FEASIBILITY, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

LEADER prepared a report to determine the feasibility of developing a multi-purpose livestock market in the area. This included an extensive programme of research, consultation and engagement, with farmers, producers, council members, government officials, unions and members of the public.

There was an overwhelming level of support for traditional livestock auctions locally, as well as a desire for a mixed livestock market. All consultees expressed the need to attract more buyers locally. With understandable concerns over the uncertainty of sheep production post-Brexit, all stakeholders felt that a new facility should not be a 'like-for-like' replacement and should be used more than once a week.

This research programme was instrumental in proving the need for a new market facility in the area, allowing farmers to diversify and add value to their products, through provision of shared facilities such as meat cutting and access to cold storage. LEADER also recommended a multi-functional auction centre to be used for mixed livestock sales, as well as farm machinery, household goods and antiques. The centre would also have a mini business centre to support rural businesses and food production.

Whilst this remains an ongoing project, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Bridgend County Borough Council are working together to develop this auction centre and explore funds to develop further plans when a site has been agreed upon.

120 Participants supported

13 Organisations engaged

6 Businesses engaged



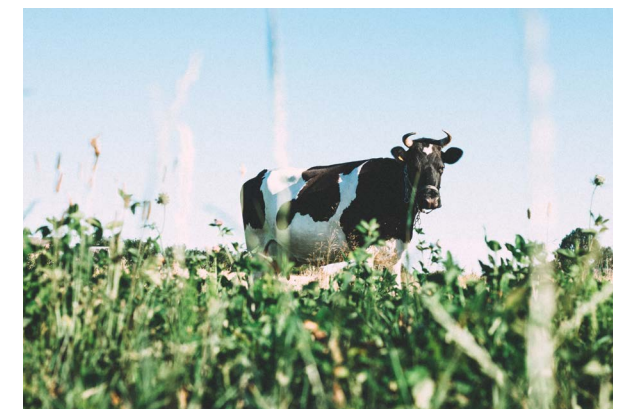
COMMUNITY FOODIE, VALE OF GLAMORGAN, BRIDGEND AND TORFAEN

LEADER-funded officers helped to develop this project in 2011, to support the rising demand for space to grow food. The project has helped transform several neglected or underused sites into thriving gardens, orchards and growing plots, as well as supporting schools and community groups with small-scale growing beds. The project supports healthy lifestyles and introduces valuable skills while raising awareness of the wider benefits of growing locally produced food.



LOCAL PRODUCE RETAIL IN COUNTRY PARKS, BRIDGEND

LEADER helped commission a small-scale study and proposed development plan on the feasibility of marketing and selling local produce and crafts within country parks. The study used Bryngarw Country Park as a case study, exploring physical and online platforms, product development as well as the financial outputs and the integration of local producers. It will provide the basis to plan for future development, funding and sustainability strategies.



SCHOOL SUPPLY CHAIN, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

The Vale of Glamorgan Council catering department is creating a Local Authority Trading Company to allow them to source produce locally for school dinners.

LEADER helped organise one-to-one meetings between the catering team and potential suppliers, resulting in a new pilot to use Ty Tanglwyst Dairy to supply milk to all schools in the Vale.

☀ COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 posed exceptional challenges to our rural communities. Residents and local businesses alike were faced with significant changes to their daily lives and local services came under strain. The LEADER teams across South East Wales were quick to respond to these new circumstances; as well-ingrained, trusted organisations with excellent contacts, available resources and dedicated creative officers, a number of initiatives were quickly implemented tackling a diverse cross section of challenges to mitigate the evolving crisis.

☀ COMMUNITY PANTRIES, BRIDGEND

The Sustainable Community Venues project was proactive in addressing community needs which developed due to the pandemic. The project delivery team secured COVID-19 support funding for some pilot venues and established a network of 12 FareShare community pantries across the borough, from which over 5,400 bags have been distributed containing over 48,000Kg of food to target food poverty. The venues have benefited from increased footfall, increased marketing, and increased use of facilities by residents and stakeholders.



☀ COMMUNITY FOOD SCHEME, TORFAEN

The largely volunteer-led Community Food Scheme helped to develop alternative approaches to delivering projects in the Torfaen community, to help tackle food poverty during COVID-19. These projects aimed to improve access to nutritional and affordable food, educate young people and families to develop food related skills, enhance knowledge of nutritional affordable food, connect people of all ages through cooking, growing and eating, and finally allow experts to share skills, knowledge and experience.



☀ CONNECT TO WELLBEING PROGRAMME. RURAL ACTION CWM TAF

In the light of COVID-19 the Gellideg Foundation Group have had to adapt their Connect To Wellbeing Programme. The project aimed to support vulnerable people, who are isolated and / or in poor health or in hardship to achieve Wellbeing. A Volunteer Coordinator recruited community volunteers to provide new wellbeing services virtually. Also with many people experiencing a drop in income the Volunteer Coordinator organised a mobile community pantry that visited rural wards delivering FareShare food to isolated community members to help sustain a healthy diet.



☀ VALE HEROES, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

During the initial lockdown, the LEADER team was able to support rural communities by working with colleagues in the council to create a searchable online database highlighting available third sector support. Colleagues established a 'Vale Heroes Grant Fund' to support the ongoing efforts of volunteer groups. A number of groups were also directly financed by the LEADER programme to develop schemes to help communities during the pandemic, but which also had scope for long term impact.



☀ CWM A MYNYDD

The rural development programme for Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent offered rural micro and small enterprises 1-2-1 business support throughout the pandemic. Sessions explored how each business was coping, what challenges they were facing, any opportunities, and what was needed to move forward. Participants were given individual advice to help them adapt. The project worked with 11 businesses impacted by COVID-19 and has developed greater understanding of local impacts while linking businesses to direct support offered by the local council and Welsh Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES



LEADER has facilitated a diverse range of projects, some of which could not have happened without the support, advice and encouragement of our dedicated teams. Together, we have fostered innovation, creativity and adaptation across our region within many themes that impact rural life in a quickly changing world.

Our joint experiences and passion for supporting, sustaining and showcasing the rural communities we work in has informed and guided the following recommendations for community-led local development programmes post 2021.

Keep locally-based teams

By assisting with the complexities of paperwork and administration faced by individuals and enterprises, they engage with people and communities that would not otherwise engage with national schemes.

Keep decision making local and accountable

The retention of the Local Action Group and team structure is necessary in a rapidly changing political and economic climate.

Follow the LEADER approach

This approach is designed to use the capacity and energy of people and agencies towards rural development at a sub-regional level to transform our rural communities.

Mixture of capital and revenue funding

This flexibility will increase participation and better support economic activity in sectors and enterprises that are too small or not equipped to deal with government structures and larger national schemes.

Locally administered

Utilising the knowledge, skills and experience of Local Action Group members can increase rural renewal by engaging with smaller enterprises that are often excluded or poorly equipped to access larger financial opportunities.

State Aid cover

Allowing support where needed and in line with support offered through larger centrally administered grant programmes will de-risk LEADER delivered actions, supporting a wider range of projects.

Simple funding and support mechanisms

It is the role of Rural Development teams and Local Action Groups to focus on the potential value and to see the opportunities of projects that achieve the core aims of rural development whilst meeting measurable targets and goals.

Wales wide, locally led

This approach creates a sense of collaboration in Wales that respects and works for each local area. Rural Development teams are experts in facilitating the balance between national priorities and local need.

Expanding Community Led Local Development

This approach should be used as the underlying principle in all public sector funding to ensure local needs and opportunities work towards national priorities, whilst keeping communities at the heart of their own development.

Capitalising local knowledge

Rural Development teams from across the south east have built lasting and productive relationships that can act as a filter and referral service to national level schemes. This ensures local needs remain at the forefront of national ambition and opportunity.



For contact details and further information, please visit:
Wales Rural Network | Business Wales