LODDON & TEST

LEADER Programme

Local Development Strategy

2014-2020

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Summary

- The Loddon and Test LEADER programme will fund and support innovative economic growth within a defined area covering the rural Test valley, West Berkshire and north Hampshire with an eligible population of 112,439 from 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2021.

- The Loddon and Test LEADER programme will fund and support farming, forestry, tourism, rural services, micro and small enterprises, conservation and heritage through 66 projects, creating at least 60 new jobs, safeguarding at least 105 jobs and benefitting a conservative minimum estimate of 13000 individuals.

- The area is dominated by the rural landscape with villages and market towns stretching from West Berkshire and Wokingham in the north, across north east Hampshire and the Loddon valley and down through the north west of Hampshire and the Test valley.

- The LEADER programme is funded by DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and the European Union through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

- The RDPE sets out six national priorities for LEADER strategies:

    - Support for increasing farm productivity
    - Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification
    - Support for rural tourism
    - Support for rural services
    - Support for cultural and heritage activity
    - Support for increasing forestry productivity

- In line with DEFRA requirements, the Loddon and Test LEADER programme will also ensure that 70% of projects will directly support rural economic growth and the remaining 30% will contribute to improving the rural economy.

- The Loddon and Test LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) is made up of local public, private and civil society representatives that will agree and deliver a local rural development strategy. This community-led, bottom up approach to local development is the key to LEADER.

- This strategy aims to help rural economies and communities to be more sustainable by encouraging green technologies and sustainable working practices while benefitting and enhancing the landscape, biodiversity, heritage and culture. Through local consultation, a SWOT analysis, and ensuring incorporation of the six national LEADER priorities, 4 local priorities for the area have been identified:

    - Local Priority 1: Supporting innovation for a sustainable future for farming, rural economies and communities.
    - Local Priority 2: Enabling and supporting new and existing rural enterprises and SMEs while benefitting the rural economy and rural community.
    - Local Priority 3: Boosting the rural tourism economy to benefit local rural communities while enhancing and protecting the landscape, heritage and culture of the area.
    - Local Priority 4: Improving the financial viability and productivity of forestry through innovation in accessibility and processing, and the development of the market and supply chain.

- Once the strategy had been agreed by DEFRA the LAG has delegated powers from DEFRA to encourage, support, fund and monitor projects that are in line with the LDS and RDPE objectives.

- This LDS is intended for use in conjunction with the National Delivery Framework and National Operational Manual.

1   The Local Action Group Partnership

The Local Action Group partnership is not a formally constituted group, its members are volunteers and the group is a dynamic entity, continually adapting itself to local needs and aspirations. It operates under a Terms of Reference but has no legal responsibility or liability. The legal responsibility rests with the Accountable Body, Hampshire County Council, who is responsible for the delivery of the programme under guidance from the Local Action Group.

1.1   Membership

The Local Action Group (LAG) partnership comprises 28 members and supports the objective that the LAG is a community led local development (CLLD). The membership strongly reflects this method of delivery and embodies a broad cross section of representation throughout the Loddon and Test LEADER area; from public, private and civil society. The members work together, sharing their knowledge and best practice from the various sectors they represent, including; business, farming, forestry, nature conservation, community, heritage and tourism. This sector knowledge has driven forward the strategy, as well as new representation from previously underrepresented groups such as women in business, the young, disadvantaged or vulnerable during the consultation and drafting of the strategy. These groups will continue to be involved and be retained in the membership of the Loddon and Test LEADER Partnership.

Membership of the LAG is composed of the following representative organisations, businesses and civil societies. It is however an evolving body and will continue to be flexible, bringing in additional expertise where and when required.

Public	Private	Civil Society
Forestry Commission	Herriard Estates	National Farmers Union
Environment Agency	JDB Forestry Contractors	Country Watch
Hart District Council	Simmons and Sons	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	Clearfleau	Wild Trout Trust
Hampshire County Council	Hildon Water	Hampshire Fare
Test Valley Borough Council	Corporate Asset Solutions	Hart Voluntary Action
Natural England	Dummer Farms Ltd	CPRE
	Interweave Now	WIRE
	G.K. Benford and Co	Community Action Hampshire
	Hampshire Woodfuel Cooperative Ltd	
	Two Hoots Cheese	
	The Little Grey Sheep	

Table 1: LAG Membership

Membership is mainly private, with 43% of the LAG being of private sector, civil society represented by 32% and the public sector taking up 25% of the LAG membership. Women are strongly represented in the LAG, making up 43% of the votes. There is also a wide age range within the LAG. There is no fixed length of term for LAG members and members are encouraged to remain engaged for the lifetime of the

programme. However the LAG is a dynamic body and if members do step down, replacement representatives will be recruited from the appropriate sector. New members will also be welcomed to join the LAG if their interests and representation are relevant.

To ensure that membership of the LAG is representative across sectors and maintains the right balance of skills we will recruit members by advertising in papers, volunteering agencies, local nomination and recommendations. There will be clear job descriptions and a transparent selection process.

1.2   Structure and decision making process

The LAG is responsible for delivering and being consistent with the objectives of the Local Development Strategy (LDS). It will monitor the progress of the programme by ensuring that projects are guided by the strategic priorities as well as fitting in with the wider DEFRA priorities. The structure in the previous programme when evaluated was found to work very successfully and members were supportive of continuing with this method of organisation, which was seen to be a strength of the Loddon and Eversley LEADER 2007-2013.

The proposed LAG structure will be as follows:

LAG meetings will be held a minimum of every quarter, with further meetings held if necessary. The LAG will comprise a Chair and Vice-Chair, elected annually. It is not essential that members attend all meetings, though all members should attend a minimum of one meeting per annum. Each meeting will monitor the implementation of the strategy and members will take turns at taking minutes. All LAG members will be involved in promoting the LEADER Programme and encouraging projects to be submitted.

A published Terms of Reference will be produced, setting out the roles and responsibilities of LAG members, including how the risk of conflict of interest will be avoided. This will also include reference to confidentiality of meetings and data protection. Members have already completed a pro-forma, outlining their affiliations and experience. All members will be expected to declare a conflict of interest if this arises during a Decision Making Panel. Training will be provided to enable LAG members to understand the need for transparency and help them make appropriate decisions (see Section 1.6 Training Requirements).

LAG members will be informed as Expressions of Interest are received. Before proceeding to full application, all projects should show they meet the LAG priorities and RDP Document. A project selection criteria and sustainability checklist (see section 3.5 Sustainability Appraisal) will be produced, demonstrating adherence to LAG priorities and outcomes. Any specialist advice will be given as necessary.

Applicant support will be provided to enable high quality applications. Appraisals will be undertaken externally. Decision Making Panels will consist of a minimum of 3 LAG members chosen based upon their experience relevant to the projects assessed. They will need to declare any conflict of interest prior to viewing application documents. Decision Making Panels will aim to ensure public sector involvement is no greater than 33% of the votes and will work in line with the equal opportunities statement (section 1.4).

Projects will be presented to the Accountable Body and to DEFRA for final verification of eligibility before approval.

LAG members will monitor the implementation of the strategy quarterly to an annual delivery and financial plan. The LAG will ensure that the programme takes full account of local needs and opportunities. Any deviation from this plan and spending profile will therefore be addressed at an early stage and remedial action taken as necessary.

The LAG will also oversee the programmes communications strategy, this will include press releases, website and other local and community networks to ensure that awareness of the programme is fully exploited and that grants are distributed in a fair and inclusive way.

1.3   Local Action Group staff, numbers and job descriptions

All staff will be employed by the Accountable Body. A full-time programme manager will be necessary to co-ordinate the programme, and other staff roles are likely to adapt to the changing requirements of the programme as it develops. This may be due to a greater demand for marketing and promotion initially, and more financial support as the programme proceeds.

The staff structure will be as follows:

- Programme Manager – to oversee and co-ordinate the general day-to-day running of the LEADER Programme, facilitating the LAG, co-ordinating stakeholders, project development, checking project applications, resolving issues, reporting to the LAG and the accountable body on the progress of the programme and maintaining records of each project and the budget spending profiles.

- Administration Officer – an officer at Hampshire County Council (HCC) to oversee and co-ordinate claims procedures, checking claims before authorisation and claims from the Accountable Body to DEFRA. They will also offer general administrative support to the Programme Manager and LAG.

- Compliance Officer – a senior officer at HCC responsible for checking and signing off all claims before submission. They will also check all correct procedures are being carried out by all parties involved in the programme, including examination of sample of projects, appraisals, approved grants and management of conflict of interest within the Accountable Body and LAG.

- Finance Officer – an officer from HCC responsible for preparing and submitting claims to DEFRA from the Accountable Body and for managing the accounts of the LEADER Programme on behalf of the Accountable Body.

- External Project Appraiser – external consultant approved to appraise project applications received by the LAG. This person will work closely with the Programme Manager to ensure that projects are appraised in a fair, unbiased and responsible manner.

1.4   Equal opportunities statement

The LAG and all programme staff will be expected to adhere to the equality policies of the Accountable Body. Training and documentation will be supplied to all LAG members.

The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public bodies.

The general duty requires public bodies to pay due regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the following three aims:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The PSED is supported by a set of specific duties which are intended to help public bodies to carry out the above aims in a way that is tangible, transparent and accountable.

A key specific duty is to:

- prepare and publish one or more measurable and specific equality objective(s)

Hampshire County Council's equality objectives focus on three priority areas:

1. Scrutinising and improving access to services, treating all people fairly, providing equality of opportunity and gaining the business benefit of opening up our services to the widest possible community
2. Ensuring that the profile of our workforce reflects best practice in recruitment and that through open and honest dialogue with our staff we develop a culture of inclusion and openness
3. PSED requirement to base service development on sound knowledge and evidence about the needs of the community. We feel this is best achieved through further work to embed Equality Impact Assessment in our planning and decision-making process

This policy and all council equality procedures are in line with the following legal frameworks: Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Race Relations Act 1976; Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000; Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Equal Pay Act 1970.

The overall LEADER programme will be subject to a Race and Equality Impact Assessment. This is to ensure equal access for all by removing barriers to opportunities, meeting the requirements of all current equalities legislation and documenting best practice and things we do well.

Project applicants will need to prove that their projects meet these requirements and are accessible to all. Capital projects will need to demonstrate that they meet the DDA 1995 and that they show equal opportunity in any revenue projects where a workforce is involved. All projects must also show that upon completion, they are rigorous in their priorities to meet the needs of a diverse community. Where necessary the LAG will ask that applicants undertake specific equality of opportunity training.

The LAG and Accountable Body will be responsible for ensuring that the LEADER Programme is promoted in a fair and open way. It will develop means of promotion that reach all groups and no person will receive less favourable treatment than others because of gender, disability, age, ethnic or national origin, marital status, religion or belief, sexual orientation or responsibility for dependants.

All project applicants will be asked to identify specific groups of beneficiaries so that beneficiary type can be mapped throughout the course of the programme. This will establish if a particular group is under represented, enabling the LAG to target these specific groups to encourage project applications.

1.5   Involvement of the community and consultation activity undertaken

The members of the Loddon and Test LAG have themselves been part of the programme of consultation, using their local knowledge to address issues and priorities for the strategy. In addition to this, a further more extensive programme of consultation has been undertaken to ensure that a wide representation of local rural businesses, farmers and communities have been included when addressing the SWOT analysis and drafting the priorities of the Local Development Strategy. The consultation has ensured that a wide representation of various rural industries and interests have been considered, this has been achieved through meetings, workshops, online and telephone surveys. These have included the following:-

- Rural business workshops in Dec 2013 with businesses in the Loddon Test LAG area
- An on-line consultation with rural SMEs, farmers, and community groups – Feb to April 2014
- A telephone survey of over 300 rural businesses July 2014
- Consultation and SWOT analysis with the LAG and key partners, testing priorities and key local issues – April and July 2014
- Press releases to local papers etc. asking for local community feedback and input – throughout 2014
- Consultation with Hampshire & Isle of Wight LNP and Berkshire LNP – Feb 2014
- Consultation with Enterprise M3 LEP – April 2014
- On-going consultation with Forestry Commission and other key partners.
- Engagement with Hampshire Rural Forum, Wessex Rural Farming Network

- On-going engagement with Enterprise M3 LEPs and Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.

Many of the issues raised during the consultation have been integral to identifying the needs and priorities of the local area. This has especially fed into the SWOT analysis, but also into forming the local priorities for the Loddon and Test LEADER area.

1.6   Training requirements

A Training Needs Analysis of LAG members and officers will inform the required skill development and training programme required. The aim of this will be to ensure competent, transparent and effective delivery of the LEADER programme. It will help to ensure that the programme is delivered in line with programme guidance, as well as in a timely manner. It will enable LAG staff and members to operate consistently within their local community and deliver an accurate message to the public and grant applicants. This will reduce potential conflicts and enable a strong cooperation within the LAG and its programme staff.

The skills development and training programme is likely to include:

- Introduction/re-cap on LDS priorities and purpose of programme
- Overview of LEADER processes and requirements including outcomes, outputs, reporting, monitoring and claiming.
- Project appraisal requirement
- Conflict of interest management
- Risk management
- CAP-D IT system
- Equalities and diversity
- Site visits
- Networking and events

New and existing LAG members will be encouraged to undertake training and mentoring to ensure they have the necessary skills to be competent in their role. Expenses for attendance will be reimbursed if required through the Management and Administration element of the budget.

2   The LAG Area

2.1   Description of area

The Loddon and Test LEADER area covers over 500 square miles of breath-taking countryside, vibrant rural towns and charming villages. Transport links are excellent by rail and road with major routes such as the M3 and M27 all easily accessible and linking the geography across from west to east.

In this round of LEADER the original Loddon and Eversley LEADER area has been retained and expanded to include the upper Test Valley and parts of rural West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough (taking in much of the remaining Loddon valley). The remaining parts of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council which were uncovered by LEADER in the previous programme have also been included (this ties in well with a collaborative initiative with the Borough – see section 3.6). These areas combined as one represent a wider area that is outside of any formal designation but is surrounded by two national parks and an AONB. The rural settlements of Stockbridge, Overton, Whitchurch, King's Somborne and the Candovers are now part of the new Loddon and Test LEADER area. This new and expanded LAG links the two river valleys of the Loddon and Test chalk streams and brings cohesion to a geography that has no formalised brand or identity, receives little public funding as a result and is outside of any major designations. It also shares many of the same issues as the original LAG area, such as catchment management and flooding. The transport infrastructure also brings cohesion between the 'old' and the 'new' geography.

The area is dominated by the rural landscape with villages and market towns stretching from West Berkshire and Wokingham in the north, across north east Hampshire and the Loddon valley and down

through the north west of Hampshire and the Test valley. It is flanked by the North Wessex Downs AONB to the north-west, the New Forest National Park in the west and the South Downs National Park to the south. The area is steeped in history that reflects industrial, agricultural, literary and military heritage; and the breath-taking views, lovely walking, cycling trails and picturesque villages make the area a special place for residents and visitors alike.

The geology of the area is one of underlying chalk, clays, flints gravels & sands, which supports a diverse pattern of landscapes, including rolling chalk downland, pastoral river valleys, historic parkland, remnants of ancient forests and mosaics of lowland farmland and woodland, with a scattering of farms, villages and hamlets, and a few larger settlements including Basingstoke and Andover.

Much of the landscape is defined by the river valleys and their associated wetland habitats. The chalk gives rise to the Chalk Rivers Loddon and Test and their associated tributaries. These Chalk Rivers are globally rare and are unique in terms of their wildlife and support many internationally protected species such as Atlantic salmon, otter, water vole, native crayfish and southern damselfly. The River Test, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with its source near Overton is one of England's most famous trout fisheries. These rivers and wetlands are dependent on the continuation of traditional farming practices and systems, in particular livestock farming.

The area also includes part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA), a Natura 2000 site dependent on livestock for its maintenance.

A map of the Loddon and Test LEADER area is included as appendix 3.

2.2   Rural population

According to the Census of 2011 data from the Office of National Statistics the rural population of the LAG area is 106,564. The combined urban-rural population is 199,814. DEFRA has stated that the eligible population is 112,439.

The LAG has decided to include the rural hub town of Tadley. It has a population is 19,347. Tadley is a small town situated centrally in the rural area between Basingstoke, Newbury and Reading. It provides essential services to the surrounding rural communities as it is the only town for quite some distance. Tadley is seen to bring together communities and provide social cohesion with its provisions and services such as a local cinema, small supermarkets, and a good base for business.

2.3   Economic Profile

The Loddon and Test LEADER area has a highly productive agricultural sector, a significant tourism sector and many successful businesses. The towns of Basingstoke and Andover play a crucial role on the economy of the area as a whole. Rural communities offer the potential for innovation and economic growth.

The statistical information presented in this section provides an understanding of the economy of the area and where possible this data only covers the Loddon and Test LEADER area. However, some of the data available crosses boundaries, but it still provides a good indication of the situation within this LEADER area.

Employment

Almost 73% of the LEADER area population is economically active, 4% over the England figure of 69%. The major towns of Andover and Basingstoke provide employment to rural residents of the LEADER area.

The rural economy of the LEADER area is dominated by SMEs with 85% being micro businesses (this includes self-employment). Business insolvency and survival rates are about average for that of England.

Agriculture

Hampshire has a vibrant agricultural sector with around 65% of land under farm management (half under arable production and a third in pasture). In 2012/13 the output per worker was £119,500 compared to £90,919 for South East England. On average each farm in Hampshire made £29,412 net profit. This is from 396 cropping farms, 149 grazing livestock farms and 217 other types (including pigs, poultry and mixed). 43.8% of the farmed land in Hampshire is currently under agri-environment schemes. However, under the new agri-environment programme there will be a greatly increased area of land that will be ineligible for agri-environment schemes and this will affect the landscape and wildlife.

The UK and European farming population is also getting older. In 2007 28% of UK farmers were aged 65 or over and just under 3% were aged 35 or under. This is very much the same picture across Europe.

Tourism

5.2% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Hampshire economy (£37.9 billion, in 2011) could be attributed to tourism (£2.0 billion, in 2011).

£2.50 billion is estimated to have been spent by day and staying visitors in Hampshire in 2012. The total value to the Hampshire economy, when including induced expenditure, was £3.08 billion in 2012.

In 2012 63,600 individuals were employed in tourism in Hampshire, representing 8.9% of the county's total employment.

Forestry

West Berkshire, Basingstoke and Deane and Test Valley have a combined 31,757 hectares of woodland. 14,597 Ha of this is in management (932 Ha managed by the Forestry Commission) and 17,159 Ha is undermanaged. The total estimated potential yield of all this woodland is 147,582 m3 per year with an estimated potential yield of woodfuel 73,253 m3 that could have an energy value of 155,674 megawatt hours per year. This indicates a significant opportunity for the Loddon and Test area.

3 The Strategy

This LDS has been prepared by the LAG and through wider consultation. It presents the main priorities of the area, as developed through a SWOT analysis, and describes how these priorities meet the DEFRA priorities and how they can deliver real and positive benefits to the rural economy and communities of the LAG area.

3.1 A 'SWOT' analysis of the local area

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Strong and broad LAG with strong new additions from private businesses, civil societies, Test Valley Borough Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Hart District Council & West Berkshire Council, building on the successful delivery of previous Loddon and Eversley LEADER • Existing and previous strategies/ initiatives – Loddon Catchment Partnership, Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership, Loddon Farm Advice project, active LEP (EM3) • Key business strengths and facilities in and around market towns which provide valuable services and employment to surrounding rural areas	• Poor branding of area - no strong identity or designations. • Neglect/poor management of the countryside from lack of economic viability, change of land use and loss of skills. • Insufficient accessible recreational green space to cope with the demands and pressures of a growing population. • Declining livestock industry (beef, dairy, sheep) and absence of local livestock market. • Woodland uneconomical to manage leading to neglect and loss of traditional management skills • Loss of identity for rural communities due to high

• Diverse natural heritage, chalk geology and built heritage integral to value and attractiveness of the area. • Over 200 non-agricultural based businesses have set up in the area primarily due to the landscape, character and environment (Loddon & Test business survey) • Strong agriculture, forestry and fisheries industry (5.08% of industry in the area compared to 4.42% across England) employing 1.84% of the rural resident population compared to 0.81% in England (Census 2011). • Quality local food and drink production (More hectares of vineyards in Test Valley than any other part of Hampshire). Good locally based food group in Hampshire Fare. • Proximity to London and good road and rail links to major town and cities.	cost of rural properties compared to rural incomes leading to young people leaving for urban centres and commuters moving in - ageing workforce and loss of land management skills • Trading from a rural location results in low volume of passing trade and low visibility with customers outside the area • Social exclusion and loss of business opportunities in rural areas due to poor access to broadband, poor mobile signal and poor public transport • Lack of support for women, young people and entrepreneurs starting businesses. • Poor collaboration/co-operation to develop and share skills.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Innovation to make farming more competitive, productive and resilient sustainable farming to protect natural capital and ecosystem services • Encourage best practice farm management to provide a high quality landscape that attracts visitors and improves health and quality of life benefits for the wider community. • Develop marketing, promotion and branding of small business • Investment in local services and infrastructure to provide a better environment for businesses to operate in. • Investment in high quality business premises and IT use in marketing is important. • Enabling business co-operation and collaboration • Farm diversification for risk management (economy/markets, weather/climate and diseases etc) • Community initiatives to enable community resilience, social inclusion and independence. • Tourism and area branding to grow the GVA of the area, create jobs, support existing businesses, increase the investment in public transport and natural and historic assets • Improve access to woodland for management and recreation • Improve supply chains and co-operation in forestry	• Under CAP reform there will be a greatly increased area of land that will be ineligible for agri-environment schemes and this will affect the landscape and wildlife. • Feeding a growing population, meeting energy and resource demands, and climate change resilience. • The Loddon and Test business survey revealed that the lack of rural services was seen to be a barrier to trading in a rural location. • Loddon and Test Business survey identified low volume of passing trade, visibility and lack of awareness for businesses was a disadvantage. • A lack of recreational infrastructure • Accessibility of sensitive woodland sites

Table 2: SWOT Analysis

3.2   Evidence of alignment with LEP activity

This LDS is being drawn up against the backdrop of the much broader Strategic Economic Plan that has been developed by the Enterprise M3 Local Economic Partnership (EM3). LEADER funds are but one of many sources of funding and support and this LDS will complement the work of the LEP through funding innovative projects that increase economic activity and productivity and link with low carbon and renewable initiatives.

There are two LEPs active over the Loddon and Test LAG area: Enterprise M3 (EM3) http://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/ and Thames Valley Berkshire (TVB) http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/. The majority of the LAG area sits within the EM3 area. Both LEPs focus on employability and skills, enterprise and innovation, productivity, infrastructure, regulation, international relations and visitor economy, and the environment. They both provide support to business – small, medium and large – through their web sites: EM3 with Business Support and TVB with the Business Growth Hub. The Loddon and Test LAG will work closely with both LEPs to ensure effective delivery of European funding across the LAG area.

The Loddon and Test LEADER has been in discussion with EM3 and this LDS focuses on similar areas to that of the LEP priorities, albeit on a smaller scale. Meetings have been held between EM3 and the corresponding LAGs within its boundary. It is envisaged that EM3 and the LAGs will complement their activities to enable the most effective administration of grants within their geographies. Discussions have already taken place as to how this could best be achieved and potential plans have included EM3 providing rural business hub support in the form of advice and facilitation, enabling rural businesses to make best use of their resources and access financial assistance where available. It may also be possible to look at cooperative projects that require greater funding assistance, and indeed working across the area with other LAGs to enable wider support.

To date the EM3 £118 million Growth Deal has been agreed with Government, part of which will be invested in the EM3 Growth Hub. This will provide a focussed and co-ordinated enterprise, innovation and skills support to enable businesses to secure the connections they need to start, grow and develop their businesses via the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. It will also support local sustainable transport to improve the quality of transport such as railway access and easing business based congestion.

There will also soon be agreement on the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) deal for EM3. EM3 has produced a draft ESIF strategy and received a notional allocation of €45.7m (£38.54m) for the period 2014 - 2020 with an assumption of 50% European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) targeted at the stimulation of business growth and jobs and 50% for European Social Fund (ESF) for skills investment, workforce training and targeted inclusion activities.

EM3 also aim to use part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, once this has been allocated. EM3 is fully supportive of this LDS and a letter of support from EM3 accompanies this submission.

3.3   Local Priorities

The following local priorities are based on DEFRA's national priorities for LEADER and have been developed specifically for the local needs based on the statistics for the area, the SWOT analysis and from the various forms of consultation that were undertaken. The strategy will focus on the strengths and opportunities (supported by the statistics) in order to overcome the weaknesses and threats that were highlighted during the consultation.

The area has a rich heritage and is dominated by the catchments of both the River Loddon and River Test, two chalk streams that have a great potential to provide a key attraction in terms of identity and economic potential, particularly in the area's tourism sector and to add value to farmers and producers sales through local food marketing.

70% of projects under this LEADER programme must show a direct contribution to the rural economy by creating and developing micro and small rural businesses that either increase productivity or employment. The remaining 30% of projects must demonstrate that they contribute to improving the rural economy through measures such as increasing visitor numbers or improving a rural service.

The Loddon and Test Strategy will have 4 distinct key local priorities, as well as a further cross-cutting priority which will aim to promote sustainable working and living within the LAG area.

- **Local Priority 1: Supporting innovation for a sustainable future for farming, rural economies and communities** (DEFRA priority: support for increasing farm productivity).

- **Local Priority 2: Enabling and supporting new and existing rural enterprises and SMEs while benefitting the rural economy and rural community** (DEFRA priority: support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification; and provision of rural services).

- **Local Priority 3: Boosting the rural tourism economy to benefit local rural communities while enhancing and protecting the landscape, heritage and culture of the area** (DEFRA priority: support for rural tourism; and support for cultural and heritage activity).

- **Local Priority 4: Improving the financial viability and productivity of forestry through innovation in accessibility and processing, and the development of the market and supply chain** (DEFRA priority: support for increasing forestry productivity).

There will also be a cross cutting priority which will focus on sustainability. It will enable rural economies and communities to be more sustainable by encouraging green technologies and sustainable working practices while benefitting and enhancing the landscape, biodiversity, heritage and culture. All projects are expected to adopt a sustainable approach with equal opportunities. Applicants will complete a self-assessment sustainability checklist to demonstrate how their proposal supports the development of a sustainable rural economy, environment and community.

As part of our cross cutting priority we see an opportunity for LEADER to help deliver DEFRA's pollinator strategy. Pollination services are currently worth £440 million per annum to the UK and our pollinators are in trouble. Applicants can demonstrate how they will help deliver benefits to pollinators, where appropriate, and the Wildlife Trust will provide a bespoke assessment of opportunities to provide the applicant with and understanding of the steps they could take.

3.4   Programmes of activity, outputs and targets

The following tables provide a breakdown of the activities, outputs and targets for each local priority. Details are provided for the related DEFRA priority, budget, rationale for the priority, objectives, measures, and examples of what we will fund. We have also listed eligible projects already in the pipeline. We have been working in advance to identify potential projects under the local priorities. These have been listed in each table and are ready to proceed immediately in the event of this application being accepted.

The budget has been split in line with recommended DEFRA priority budget percentages as this fits well with the local picture. The business audit has highlighted that there are more micro and small businesses than farming or forestry businesses in the area. This highlights an opportunity to expand upon the productivity of these businesses and therefore 40% has been allocated to this. The SWOT analysis and local consultation has identified opportunities to significantly develop rural tourism in the Test Valley (both national and international), and to increase local day-tripping in the east part of the area, hence we have decided to allocate 20% of the budget to tourism. Our strategy focusses strongly on job creation and GVA, therefore we have decided to allocate only 10% of the budget to rural services, and culture and heritage. These two priorities can also be delivered within projects under the other priorities.

The rationale for each priority has been drawn directly from the SWOT analysis and consultations with the LAG and wider stakeholders. An audit of 3491 businesses has been carried out by Tourism South East for the Loddon and Test LEADER to establish the nature and scale of business sectors operating in the Loddon and Test area. Evidence has also been drawn from a more detailed survey of over 300 businesses. This provided data on the profile and health of the various industry sectors.

The outputs and targets for number of projects and number of jobs created have been calculated with the aid of the Benchmarking Outputs Submission Table as provided by DEFRA, which can found in Appendix 1. It has also been based upon projects and outputs data from the previous Loddon and Eversley LEADER Programme, as well as experience gained from setting and achieving these outputs in practice.

Local priority 1: Supporting innovation for a sustainable future for farming, rural economies and communities	
DEFRA Priorities	Support for increasing farm productivity - 20%
Budget	Total for priority 1 - **£252,166** Percentage of project budget - **20%**
Target groups	Farmers, landowners
Rationale for intervention	• Farming is economically important in the Loddon and Test area. The agriculture, forestry and fisheries industry represented 5.08% of industry in the area compared to 4.42% across England. 1.84% of the rural resident population are employed in this sector compared to 0.81% in England (Census 2011). • There is a need to promote innovation to make farming more internationally competitive, more productive and more resilient to the threats it faces, such as feeding a growing population, energy and resource demands, and climate change. • Farming has a major influence on the landscape, aesthetics, character and environment - the Loddon and Test business consultation identified that over 200 non-agricultural based businesses stipulated this as the main reason for setting up in the rural area. • Under CAP reform there will be a greatly increased area of land that will be ineligible for agri-environment schemes and this will affect the landscape and wildlife. • The Loddon and Test business survey identified that there are twice as many businesses within the accommodation and food services sector in the Loddon and Test area compared with the national picture (10% compared to 5% in all rural areas in England). This provides a good opportunity to further develop local supply chains between farmers and the food and hospitality sector. • Promotion and support of sustainable farming will help protect natural capital and ecosystem services and provide a high quality landscape that attracts visitors and in turn improves health and quality of life benefits for the wider community. This also creates opportunities for associated tourism businesses and farm diversification
Objectives	• Adding value to produce • Taking farmers closer to a business free from reliance on subsidies and grants through sustainable practices and innovation • Support collaborative working that will result in improved productivity and biodiversity gains. • Boosting the rural economy and local community through improvement in turnover, wage levels and employment, including encouraging the younger generation to enter the industry • Improving animal health and welfare • Safeguarding natural capital and ecosystem services • Improving links between farmers and local businesses (supply chains)
Measures	Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: Farm and business productivity

Examples of what we will fund (not exhaustive)	• Innovation in equipment, processing and packaging • Water and energy efficiency • Animal health and welfare • Marketing and supply chains • Co-operation and collaboration • Resource protection and waste management • Direct selling initiatives
Potential projects already identified	• Broughton Buffalo – improving processing and kitchen facilities to add value to produce • Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust – adding value through modernising the agricultural holding and marketing the rare breeds beef products

Outputs	Targets
Projects	12
Farm holdings benefitting	20
Businesses benefitting	20
Individuals benefitting	500
Jobs created	5
Safeguarded jobs	20

Table 3: Local Priority 1 activity, outputs and targets

Local Priority 2: Enabling and supporting new and existing rural enterprises and SMEs while benefitting the rural economy and rural community	
DEFRA priorities	Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification – 40% Provision of rural services – 5%

Budget	Total for priority 2: **£567,375**
	Percentage of project budget: **45%**
	
	     Micro & small enterprises & farm diversification: **£504,333**
	     Percentage of project budget: **40%**
	
	     Rural services: **£63,042**
	     Percentage of project budget: **5%**

Target groups	Sole traders, micro, small and medium rural-based businesses, farmers, civil societies and social enterprises
Rationale for intervention	• Local rural businesses support the rural economy by maintaining and creating jobs, growing local supply chains and bringing investment into the area. • Vibrant local communities rely on high quality and diverse local services and business. The Loddon and Test business survey identified that 95% of the rural food and drink industry relies on trade from the local village/settlement and day visitors. • Marketing, promotion and branding of SMEs needs to be improved. 25% of rural businesses in the Loddon and Test business survey said that the low volume of passing trade, lack of visibility and awareness of their business is a disadvantage. • Investment in local services and infrastructure will provide a better environment for businesses to operate in. The Loddon and Test business survey revealed that the lack of rural services was seen to be a barrier to trading in a rural location. • Investment in high quality business premises and marketing/IT is important. Over half the businesses surveyed in the Loddon and Test business survey either sell direct from their premises or online, or both. • Improvements are needed for international business relationships through increased competition and co-operation. Only 12% of goods and services produced/provided in the Loddon and Test rural area are distributed within Europe and only 9% outside Europe. • Farmers should consider all diversification options available to them to enable mitigation of risks caused by economy/markets, weather/climate and diseases etc. • Develop community initiatives to enable community resilience, social inclusion and independence.
Objectives	• Support a diverse business base to support a local community • Support new business start-up and expansion of existing business to

	create and sustain jobs. • Invest in the local rural community, local skills, rural services, and community buildings to create multi-functional facilities and social hubs
Funding measures	Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: Farm and business productivity Measure 7: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas
Examples of what we will fund (not exhaustive)	• Business start-up, expansion, premises and equipment • Developing/improving local supply chains • Investment in marketing and promotion • Local food and drink producers • Farm diversification • Community investment and social enterprise • Village and rural facilities innovation and improvements • Community investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes
Potential projects already identified	• Bee Good – a bee farm micro business wishing to develop skin care products from honey • Shire Oak – a wood furniture business looking to expand business through investment in physical assets • Newnham Club Room – innovative improvements to village hall • Jennie Maisels Ltd – a women-run arts and crafts business wishing to grow the business and employ staff • Money's Farm – seeking to expand their office rental business • Artisan Dairy Ltd – expanding existing business and branching into the local dairy industry • Dummer Farm – investments to expand upon existing diversifications.

Outputs	Targets
Projects	29
Farm holdings benefitting	6
Businesses benefitting	120
Individuals benefitting	500
Villages/communities benefitting	13
Population benefitting	12,000
Jobs created	36
Safeguarded jobs	55

Table 4: Local Priority 2 activity, outputs and targets

Local priority 3: Boosting the rural tourism economy to benefit local rural communities while enhancing and protecting the landscape, heritage and culture of the area	
DEFRA Priorities	Support for rural tourism – 20% Support for cultural and heritage activity – 5%
Budget	Total for priority 3: **£315,208** Percentage of project budget: **25%** Rural tourism: **£252,166** Percentage of project budget: **20%** Cultural & heritage: **£63,042** Percentage of project budget: **5%**
Target groups	Rural entrepreneurs, businesses and social enterprises, farms, parish councils, civil societies
Rationale for intervention	• The rich heritage of the Loddon and Test landscape is a major attraction for visitors along with associated rural activities that are special to the area such as fly-fishing on the chalk streams, the Basingstoke canal and the many historic assets such as Silchester Roman town, Danebury Hill fort and Odiham Castle. • Tourism offers a significant opportunity to grow the GVA of the area, create jobs, support existing businesses, increase the investment in public transport, and provide investment into the natural and historic assets of the area. • The accommodation and food services industry in the Loddon and Test area is double that of the national figure and therefore can be developed further to support the visitor economy. • A lack of recreational infrastructure provides opportunities to enable cycling, walking and horse-riding to key attractions, businesses and natural assets. • There are many opportunities to develop food and drink trails that will enable local businesses to take full advantage of direct selling e.g. vineyards. • The Loddon and Test at present has no obvious branding for the area – it is not part of an AONB or a National Park – yet it has a distinct identity which is open to development and promotion to provide a brand for local products and industry. • Opportunities have been identified to further develop festivals and events in the area to celebrate its local heritage, food and character. • Fishing is an important contributor to the local economy. The River Test is world famous for its Trout fishing and attracts enthusiasts from far and wide but has limited access – this could be further developed. • The River Loddon is a lesser known chalk stream and therefore opportunities to improve access and tourism should be taken full advantage of.
Objectives	• Promote and support sustainable tourism • Promote health and well-being through increased outdoor leisure activities

	• Education and awareness of local culture, heritage, wildlife and landscape • Develop opportunities for local businesses to benefit from a growing visitor economy. • Invest in natural, historical and cultural heritage
Funding measures	Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: Farm and business productivity Measure 7: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas
Examples of what we will fund (not exhaustive)	• Food and drink trails • Recreational infrastructure e.g. cycle routes • Visitor amenities – cafes, tearooms, local food and drink retailers • Visitor attractions, events, education and activities • Information, interpretation, marketing and promotion • Accommodation • Eco-tourism • Riparian and water-based recreation • Landscape and habitat enhancement for 'green tourism'. • Historic asset management • Recreational business opportunities in woodland/forests
Potential projects already identified	• Hillside Farm – wishes to develop B&B facilities, green tourism and learning centre • Hampshire Fare – looking to develop a local food and drink trails and food festival event • Odiham Society – cultural and heritage access improvements and events • Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust – developing fishing based tourism • Houghton Lodge and Gardens – improvements to buildings for workshops, meeting space, exhibitions and the tea house

Outputs	Targets
Projects	16
Existing tourism activities supported	8
New tourism activities supported	8
Facilities benefitting	20
Potential additional visitors	50,000
Jobs created	13
Jobs safeguarded	20
Population benefitting	12,000

Table 5: Local Priority 3 activity, outputs and targets

Local priority 4: Improving the financial viability and productivity of forestry through innovation in accessibility and processing, and the development of the market and supply chain	
DEFRA Priorities	Support for increasing forestry productivity – 10%
Budget	Total for priority 4: **£126,083** Percentage of project budget: **10%**
Target groups	Woodland owners, forestry contractors, SMEs
Rationale for intervention	• According to the Forestry Commission, 54% of the woodland in the Loddon and Test area is currently undermanaged. This offers a significant opportunity to improve the economic value of this land. • If this land was utilised for woodfuel it could yield an energy value of 155,674 megawatt hours per year. This would significantly contribute to renewable energy targets. • Consultation identified opportunities to improve and increase management. These include access for harvesting and extraction, appropriate forestry machinery, storage and processing, skilled workforce, co-operation between woodland owners, and collaborative management plans. • The coppice industry has declined due to change in management practices but opportunities exist to develop it within the biomass/woodfuel industry. • Gaps in the supply chain have been identified so opportunities exist to strengthen the supply chain in woodland products from harvesting, haulage and transportation through to processing, marketing and retail.
Objectives	• Bring woodland back into active management to increase its economic value • Support improved access to woodlands • Support processing of timber and woodfuel • Encourage collaboration between woodland owners and managers • Improve storage facilities to add value to wood products • Encourage young entrants into the forestry sector to ensure the future of the industry.
Funding measures	Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: Farm and business productivity Measure 8: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests
Examples of what we will fund (not exhaustive)	• Improved woodland access • Innovation in harvesting and extraction • Wood processing and woodfuel hubs/yards • Storage facilities • Mobile sawmilling • Co-operation management activities • Site-specific machinery • Small-scale wood processing facilities for local contractors
Potential projects already identified	• Engelfield Estate – seeking to develop a co-operative project with another forestry business to create a sawmill

• Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust – purchase of forestry machinery to release the commercial value of their small woodlands	

Outputs	Targets
Projects	9
Forests/woodlands/holdings benefitting	15
Jobs created	5
Jobs safeguarded	10

Table 6: Local Priority 4 activity, outputs and targets

3.5 Sustainability appraisal

The sustainability appraisal looked at interactions of the priorities and actions in the strategy and how these contributed to the sustainability of the rural economy, with consideration of the three measures of sustainability, economic, social and environmental. The Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East sets out the following vision for the South East:

'A socially and economically strong, healthy and just South East that respects the limits of the global environment. Achieving this will require the active involvement of all individuals to deliver a society where everyone, including the most deprived, benefits from and contributes to a better quality of life. At the same time the impact of current high levels of resource use will be reduced and the quality of the environment will be maintained and enhanced'.

The sustainability appraisal is based on the previous LEADER programme sustainability checklist and uses the South East vision as a guide. The following summary describes the requirements of applicants and the LEADER programme administration for all activity.

Theme	Contribution to sustainable rural economy	Method(s) of compliance
Energy and Heat	Minimise the use of energy and heat as much as possible, and to source what energy needed from renewable or low carbon sources, and to reduce heat loss.	Overall plan for minimised energy consumption Energy efficient appliances, low energy lighting and control systems Use of renewable or low carbon sources of energy on site Purchasing green tariff electricity
Water	Minimise water consumption and potential pollution	Waste water treatment on site Water efficiency devices, rainwater collection facilities and water recycling and re-use Soil management, water and run-off reduction technologies and methods Pesticide and herbicide management plan
Waste	Extract the maximum benefits from products and to generate the minimum amount of waste	Purchase products with less packaging Use less packaging in production and marketing Re-use materials where possible Recycle where possible

		Facilities to treat, sort and store waste at source
		Recycling facilities that benefit the wider community
Management, purchasing, materials and marketing	Reduce costs through improved management efficiency and sustainability of the whole supply chain	Use sustainably produced materials and products and source locally where possible
	Reduce the environmental impact of manufacturing materials	Use recyclable, biodegradable and non-polluting materials and re-use where possible
		Sustainable packaging
		Advertising of green credentials
Landscape, heritage and biodiversity	Conserve and enhance the natural and historic landscape for the local community, visitors and wildlife.	Habitat improvement/restoration and creation through good land management of new or existing sites or strengthening habitats around the margins of the site
	Re-use old buildings to reduce material and energy costs	Use existing resources such as a derelict or existing building to serve a new purpose to preserve the cultural and local value of a property
Transport	Increase the use of greener transport	Maximise accessibility to public transport for the rural community and visitors
		Provide car pool and car share incentives
		Facilities for cyclists and walkers
		Eco-friendly vehicles
		Carbon management schemes
Communities	Improve interactions with customers, the local community and wider population	Visitor charter
		Improvement and creation of high quality green spaces for health and leisure activities
		Corporate Social Responsibility – working with local community on social and environmental projects, sponsoring events.
		Young people and training
Projects	Mitigation of risks to ensure successful outcomes	Competitive tendering/quoting
		Business planning
		Risk management
Economic development	Creating and growing long-term viable businesses that support the local rural economy	Ensure projects add value to the business
		Balance between innovation and risk

Table 7: Summary of sustainability appraisal

3.6   Proposed co-operation activity

The Loddon and Test LEADER programme will look at co-operation between neighbouring LAGs to share best practice, facilitate learning and develop cross-boundary projects.

Co-operation and partnership working will also be developed where possible with LEPs, LNPs and other initiatives. Meetings have already been held with both the Enterprise M3 LEP and the Hampshire Local Nature Partnership. These have been encouraging and suggest good potential for joint working. The Loddon and Test LAG is also developing a cooperation with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, the latter are developing their own rural grants scheme and discussions are already in place as to how the two grant schemes can best complement each other. This is also in cooperation with the North Wessex Downs LAG which covers the North West part of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough, whilst Loddon and Test covers the South East part of the Borough. This partnership will prove to be beneficial for all parties and the cooperation will enable joint marketing and research opportunities.

The Loddon and Test LAG has received support from; Hampshire Local Nature Partnership, Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, Enterprise M3 LEP, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, Rural Farming Network, Hampshire Rural Forum, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Hart District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. This is via letters and emails of support. The LAG has also received letters of support from a wider partnership of stakeholders, many of which are now part of the LAG itself.

The Loddon and Test LAG will also seek to develop international co-operation focussing on local food and drink, including production, harvesting, storage, packaging, marketing and supply chains and links to tourism. European countries considered for this include Greece and the Greek Islands where food and wine co-operatives are supported through tourism.

4   Management and Administration

4.1   Accountable Body

Hampshire County Council (HCC) will act as the legally accountable body for the Loddon and Test LEADER programme and as such will be responsible for all matters relating to administration, personnel and financial control over the course of the programme and in accordance to the National Operating Manual. During the course of the former programme 2008-2013 there were some initial procedural problems but this enabled the accountable body to closely address its procedures and as a result the LAG have felt that the working relationship with the accountable body has been successful and would like to continue. In fact, evaluations and audits showed the value of the accountable body in ensuring the success of the former programme. They highlighted the positive working relationship with the LAG, the overall performance, and delivery of more than just its statutory function, including provision of additional funds in light of budget cuts to enable completion of the programme. The accountable body has an equal opportunities policy (section 1.4) and will also work in line with the LAG's Terms of Reference to ensure risks are managed including conflicts of interest.

Contact details are:

Name: Andrea McCallum

Address Hampshire County Council, Economic Development, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8UJ

Email: Andrea.McCallum@hants.gov.uk

As the Accountable Body, HCC will be responsible for:

- Ensuring as wide a range of the community as possible are able to participate in the programme through stimulating local interest in local development by informing, supporting and co-ordinating activities of local community stakeholders. This will be achieved through a communications and publicity strategy (Section 4.4.1) and animation measures.
- Employment and management of programme staff and independent appraisal consultant.
- Projects that are selected meet the LDS priorities and the RDP Document (Section 4.2.1)
- Project analysis and selection procedures are open and transparent (Section 4.2.1)
- Risks management
- Internal auditing takes place to ensure correct procedures are being carried out
- Issuing grant offer letters
- Monitoring active projects (Section 4.2.2)
- Communication with DEFRA
- Processing grants (Section 4.3)
- Keeping records for financial accounts and project specific information
- Maintaining project paperwork and records to enable regular monitoring and provide an audit trail as required.
- Maintain full compliance and record retention requirement after the programme is completed in 2020.
- Provide all procurement as necessary for the project to deliver successfully.

Hampshire County Council managed the previous Loddon and Eversley LEADER programme successfully and delivered on time and on budget. It was also awarded further funding due to the success of the programme delivery and spend.

4.2   Value for money

The Loddon and Test LAG is confident it can deliver the programme within the 18% as it is well supported by both Hampshire County Council and other stakeholders. In the unlikely event of a shortfall, the LAG is confident that this can be met by the accountable body and supporting local authorities.

Hampshire County Council will provide capacity in 3 members of staff in kind to assist with the programme delivery in order to ensure they meet separation of duty requirements. These staff will be the administration officer, compliance officer and finance officer.

Other in kind contributions include:

Meeting rooms for the LAG and Decision Making Panels - from Veolia, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Herriard Estate, and other local businesses

IT support – from Hampshire County Council, local IT volunteers

We will also, wherever possible, create opportunities for joint working with other LAGs in order to share resources and develop collaborative working. Discussions have already taken place with the New Forest LAG and the North Wessex Downs LAG.

Travel costs will be kept down by ensuring meetings are arranged within the same area on the same day. Hampshire County Council have also limited the maximum amount of mileage at the full rate, therefore encouraging sustainable travel.

Hampshire County Council also have strict procurement rules on how, when and what is purchased.

4.3   Project development and assessment procedures

4.3.1   Animation

The Programme Manager and LAG members will stimulate local interest in the LEADER programme (animation) by promoting the priorities of the LDS to the wider area community (see section 4.4). Animation will be key to reaching the less active members and communities to participate in the local development process.

4.3.2   Project development and assessment

The Programme Manager will stimulate local interest in the LEADER programme. The community will be asked for expressions of interest for activity which will address the issues and meet the LDS priorities and work with applicants to develop their projects.
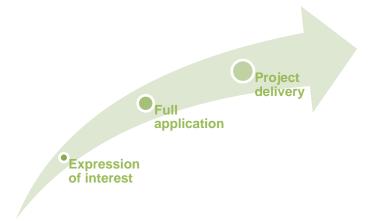

Figure 1: Application process

Step 1: Expression of interest

The applicant shall submit an expression of interest, after discussion with the Programme Manager. An eligibility criteria will be used to demonstrate that the proposal adds value to the business and to the wider rural economy; it fulfils one or more of the local priorities and one or more of the DEFRA priorities; and that it will deliver sustainable growth outcomes through one or more of the following:

- Innovation
- Co-operation
- Equality
- Environment
- Rural community
- Job creation or retention
- Growth in GVA
- Direct contribution to the rural economy

The Programme Manager will then assess the expression of interest and if it is eligible for funding will take it forward to the LAG for further comments and approval.

If the expression of interest is approved by passing the assessment criteria, the applicant will be invited to make a full application with further project development and business planning provided by the Programme Manager.

If the expression of interest is not approved, it can either be withdrawn or reviewed and then re-submitted by the project applicant.

Step 2: Full application

To ensure transparency, the Accountable Body with the LAG and under guidance from DEFRA will be responsible for ensuring the following are adhered to:

- Sustainability of project – by self-assessment sustainability checklist for applicants
- Transparency and honesty when LAG members assess projects
- External appraisal through an independent external consultant for fully completed applications to assess the viability of a project (including financial risk).

Applicants that gain approval at Step 1 shall submit a full application to the Programme Manager.

An external appraiser will assess the application and report to the LAG with recommendations.

The LAG decision making panel uses the appraisal as part of the assessment of whether or not to fund the project.

If LAG approves the application it will then be subject to DEFRA approval. If it is not supported by the LAG the applicant can enter an appeal process.

Once approved by DEFRA a contract can be drawn up with the Accountable Body, signed by both parties, and project delivery can commence.

4.3.3 Monitoring and evaluation

All projects funded by the LAG will be inspected at the point of claim. After project completion, an evaluation will be carried out annually to establish ongoing outputs of the project.

Projects will be subject to routine inspection at least once during the lifetime of the project (before claims are paid) and target inspections will be undertaken if there are any concerns about the progress of the project.

Applicants will be required to set out milestones and measurable outcomes and how they will be met. Project applicants will also have to demonstrate the long term sustainability of the project to show that it is not just a quick fix. This information will be sourced from the sustainability checklist (Section 4.2.1). These will form the basis of monitoring the success of the project. The Programme Manager will assist with this process. Monitoring will assess what impacts the project has had on identified and/or new beneficiaries. The outcomes of individual projects will be recorded centrally to input to the progress of the programme as a whole and will be used to monitor the identified programme outcomes (Section 3.4).

The Programme Manager will report back to the LAG and accountable body on overall programme performance, so any problems can be identified and sound resolution and budget forecasts made accurately. Monitoring will be a standing agenda for all LAG meetings.

Roles and responsibilities will be outlined at the start of the programme amongst programme staff and the accountable body will regularly check the correct procedures are being adhered to by all those involved in delivery of the programme. A representative sample of projects will be checked, to include procedures, appraisal process, approval/rejection of projects and the management of conflict of interest within both the accountable body and the LAG. Duties will be clearly separated for project development, appraisal, approval, inspections, claim authorisation and post payment supervisory checks.

Evaluation of the programme will be undertaken in the final year and be based on the outputs for each local priority (Section 3.4).

4.4   Claims and payments

Claims and payments will be managed according to the new CAP-D system. HCC will check the claims and then forward them to the RPA for sign off and payment. The following steps provide an indication as to how the claim and payment process will work and are based on the process used in the last LEADER programme. This is subject to change and will be finalised once full details of the CAP-D IT System are provided by DEFRA.

- Programme Manager to liaise and support the applicant by providing guidance on how to complete the claim form
- Claim form and supporting documentation sent by the applicant to specified officer at HCC
- Claim received and dated at HCC
- HCC Officer carries out project inspection to ensure that monies have been spent in line with the contract form signed by the applicant.
- Claim checked by HCC and claim checklist completed in line with DEFRA documentation.
- Claim passed to second officer at HCC to check
- HCC retains a record of the claim process and returns the original documents to the applicant, explaining that the claim has now gone to the RPA for payment
- Claim sent to the RPA for payment

4.5   Communications and publicity

The Loddon and Test LEADER programme requires an effective communications and publicity strategy to ensure the LAG receives high quality applications, and that the programme delivers its overall objectives successfully. It is key that the right messages are delivered to the right people at the right time. Communication tools will include a variety such as, regular press releases, bulletins, talks, workshops, website, networking opportunities and attending events.

4.5.1   Aims of the communication and publicity strategy:

- Raise awareness of the LEADER programme and encourage target groups to come forward with appropriate high quality applications. To encourage applicants from all walks of life, aiming to be inclusive and provide opportunities for those from different ethnic backgrounds, gender, age and ability. This will be achieved through targeted marketing and the provision of in-house support to applicants.

- Increase understanding and engender support for the LEADER programme amongst the public, key stakeholders, decision makers and target groups.

- Raise awareness and increase understanding of the value of the Loddon and Test area and the importance of farming, forestry and rural business and the benefits of sourcing and buying local produce.

- Make appropriate links with other related initiatives within England and Europe to encourage networking, collaboration and co-operation.

- Positive enforcement of benefits of LEADER to businesses including case studies and online. To encourage applicants to come forward and to demonstrate that the LEADER process is simple and inclusive.

4.5.2   Target audiences:

- Farmers, landowners, their families and employees
- Existing diversified farms and micro and small rural businesses
- Potential new rural businesses
- Farm and village shops

- Forestry and wood workers
- Woodland based enterprises
- Processing industries
- Educational and recreational businesses
- Local rural tourism enterprises
- Businesses, social enterprises, charities and other formally constituted groups with links to farming, forestry, rural tourism and other rural activities
- Enterprises that create and sustain local rural employment
- Enterprises that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits to the area
- Co-operation partners
- Members of the public
- Parish Councils

If targets are not being met, the LAG will regularly reassess their marketing and communications strategy and adapt this as required in order to make appropriate links with relevant sectors and individuals. This will be an on-going process throughout the programme and if there should be low take up in particular sectors/areas, this will be addressed by introduced a more targeted marketing approach.

4.5.3   Key messages that reflect the local priorities:

- The Loddon and Test area is important for its landscape, biodiversity, heritage and rural economy. It is a living and working landscape that relies on farming, forestry and fishing to maintain its character.

- The LEADER area is an undesignated landscape between the South Downs National Park in the south and the North Wessex Downs AONB in the north and bordering the New Forest National Park to the West. This results in more development pressure and therefore highlights the need for more sustainable development appropriate to the nature of the area.

- The rural economy is important for the environmental and social value of the area.

- Major development pressure and economic focus on urban centres has led to social and economic disadvantage for rural communities

- LEADER offers a significant opportunity for local people to address these issues in a manner that will benefit both individuals and the communities in which they live.

5   Financial Plan

The total budget allocated to LEADER for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 is £138m. This represents 5% of the EU component of the total RDP budget. DEFRA will be running a competitive selection process for the 86 prospective LEADER groups with the final selection being made by a national panel in the autumn. In the interim, DEFRA have provided an estimate of the indicative allocation for Loddon and Test LEADER.

The Loddon and Test LAG has based the budget upon the actual allocation (conversion from 1.922m euros at 0.8 exchange rate). For Loddon and Test, this is £1,537,600. The breakdown of expenditure for each year by measure is in Appendix 1 – Financial Profile.

The spend has been profiled evenly across the programme period (with a little less in the final year) which commences 1st January 2015. Due to early developmental work which has included marketing of the new programme, a number of potential projects have already been identified that could be funded in the first year (see priority table section 3.3).
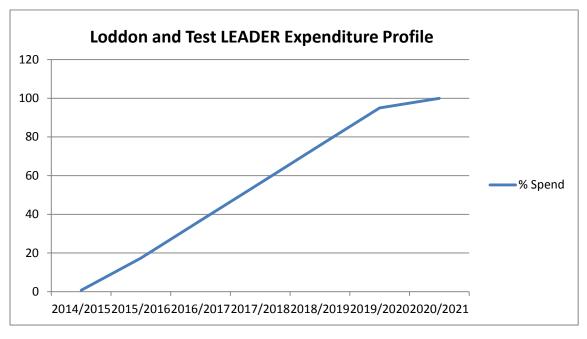
5.1 Overall funding profile

Figure 2: Expenditure profile

5.2 Use of grants, procurement or other type of financial support

Delivery of the LDS relies on the availability of a range of funding investments, the grants available through the LAG will be invested at grant rates which are acceptable to the regulations including state aid. It is not possible to show the total funding investment that is needed to deliver the LDS while details on intervention rates and funding availability is unavailable.

It is useful to understand the potential match funding through other grant aid and public investment. These are shown below and include:

- Public match funding indicated is speculative due to local government decisions and engagement to be developed into the LAG.
- Private match funding indicated is speculative based on funding bids and other contributions. The availability of private match is subject to individual businesses and collaborations making the investment. Figures are based on previous initiatives such as schemes in previous LAG programmes are helpful.
- Future years of LDS delivery will need research and monitoring of the success of initial programmes established. Future investment funding should be included in the research for reviews of the LDS delivery and future annual delivery plans

Running costs and animation - Local authority investment over and above the 18%

M&A (through Leader) to increase the animation services utilised by the LAG to deliver its LDS objectives.

6   Programme for LAG and administration activities

	Activity	Timescale
Recruitment	Agree roles, responsibilities and contract with Programme Manager	Dec 2014
	Recruitment of Appraisal Consultant	Jan to Mar 2015
	Agree responsibilities of Administration, Compliance and Finance Officers with HCC	Jan to Mar 2015
Development of the LAG	Agree Terms of Reference and conflict of interest declaration	Jan to Mar 2015
	Agree dates for LAG meeting on an annual basis	Annually
	Review of LAG skills mix and membership	Annually
	LAG to undertake relevant training and participate in collaboration and networking.	Ongoing
Launch	Publish LDS and promote widely	Year 1
	Contact project applicants who have already expressed interest	Dec 14/ Jan 15
	Launch event	Year1
Communications and Marketing	Deliver Communications and marketing strategy	Ongoing
	Set up distribution lists for communication with relevant sectors/interests	Jan to Mar 15
	Set and establish media contacts	Jan to Mar 15

Table 8: Programme for LAG and administration activities

The above delivery plan has been agreed by the following:

	Name	Signature	Date
LAG Chair	Robert Benford		
Accountable body	Hampshire County Council – David Fletcher, Assistant Director for Economic Development.		

7   Appendices

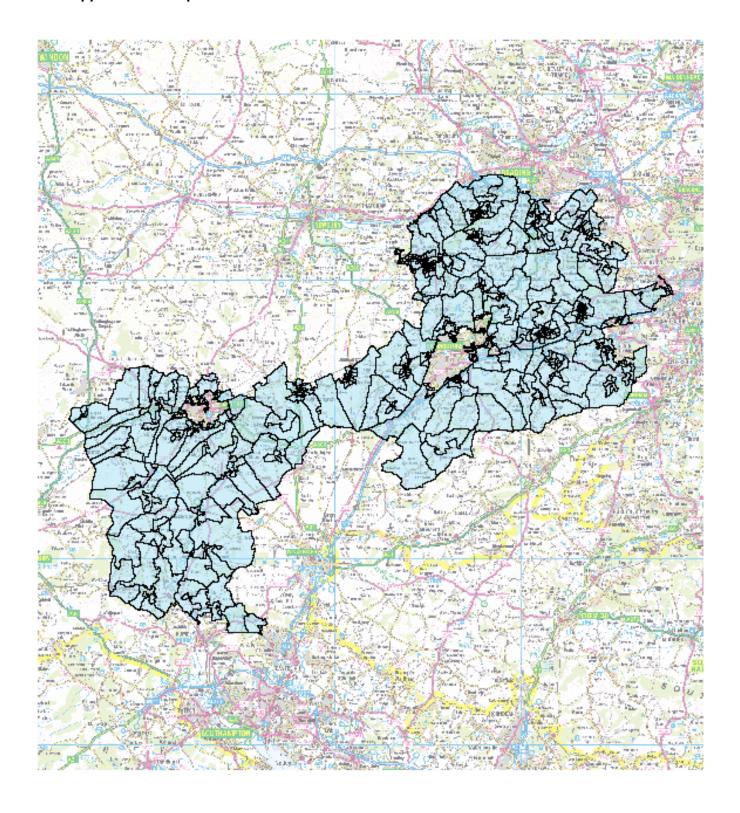### 7.1   Appendix 1 – Financial Profile

Policy Priority	Expenditure Forecast (£)							Total programme
	Financial Year							
	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	
Support for increasing farm productivity	0	0	50433	50433	50433	50433	50434	252166
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	0	0	100866	100866	100867	100867	100867	504333
Support for rural tourism	0	0	50433	50433	50433	50433	50434	252166
Provision of rural services	0	0	12608	12608	12608	12609	12609	63042
Support for cultural and heritage activity	0	0	12608	12608	12608	12609	12609	63042
Support for increasing forestry productivity	0	0	25216	25216	25217	25217	25217	126083
Running costs and animation	11532	46128	46128	46128	46128	46128	34596	276768
Grand Total	11532	46128	298292	298292	298294	298296	286766	1537600

Table 9 Expenditure for each year, by measure: maximum allocation if only 70 LEADER areas selected

7.2 Appendix 2 – Table 10: Output figures using benchmark provided for RDPE expenditure per FTE job created and average RDPE grant size

LEADER Policy Priority	RDPE expenditure per FTE job created (£)	Average RDPE grant size (£)	Relevant CMES output indicators for LDS application	End of Programme forecast (by December 2020)
Support for increasing farm productivity	61,011	29,884	Total RDPE expenditure	£252,166
			Number of projects supported	12
			Jobs created (FTE)	5
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	11,931	19,951	Total RDPE expenditure	£504,333
			Number of projects supported	24
			Jobs created (FTE)	34
Support for rural tourism	32,477	31,764	Total RDPE expenditure	£252,166
			Number of projects supported	11
			Jobs created (FTE)	11
Support for culture and heritage activity	55,191	28,165	Total RDPE expenditure	£63,042
			Number of projects supported	5
			Jobs created (FTE)	2
Provision of rural services	33,272	23,378	Total RDPE expenditure	£63,042
			Number of projects supported	5
			Jobs created (FTE)	2
Support for increasing forestry productivity	77,045	21,788	Total RDPE expenditure	£126,083
			Number of projects supported	9
			Jobs created (FTE)	5

7.3 Appendix 3 – Map of the area

7.4 Appendix 4 - Census output areas

OAcode	Rural_Urban	Total_population	OAcode	Rural_Urban	Total_population	OAcode	Rural_Urban	Total_population
E00117704	Rural	229	E00082481	Rural	474	E00117796	Urban	394
E00117655	Rural	278	E00082186	Rural	381	E00117795	Urban	387
E00117853	Rural	326	E00082185	Rural	369	E00117794	Urban	398
E00117778	Rural	386	E00082189	Rural	293	E00117799	Urban	323
E00117670	Rural	281	E00082188	Rural	311	E00168077	Urban	350
E00117679	Rural	396	E00168078	Rural	337	E00117783	Urban	329
E00117711	Rural	133	E00117716	Rural	294	E00117782	Urban	300
E00117717	Rural	341	E00117719	Rural	321	E00117786	Urban	336
E00117715	Rural	241	E00117856	Rural	346	E00117650	Urban	293
E00168076	Rural	355	E00117855	Rural	394	E00117792	Urban	284
E00117662	Rural	326	E00117858	Rural	237	E00117904	Urban	211
E00117862	Rural	186	E00117766	Rural	277	E00117905	Urban	222
E00117709	Rural	126	E00117765	Rural	186	E00117908	Urban	404
E00117654	Rural	261	E00117775	Rural	329	E00117632	Urban	328
E00117659	Rural	375	E00117803	Rural	304	E00117631	Urban	369
E00117712	Rural	133	E00117807	Rural	307	E00117635	Urban	330
E00117767	Rural	269	E00117660	Rural	277	E00117638	Urban	324
E00117764	Rural	228	E00117672	Rural	277	E00117639	Urban	266
E00117769	Rural	385	E00117714	Rural	165	E00117826	Urban	326
E00117773	Rural	168	E00117718	Rural	271	E00117829	Urban	328
E00117770	Rural	305	E00168073	Rural	269	E00117962	Urban	289
E00117771	Rural	332	E00168074	Rural	532	E00117965	Urban	342
E00117776	Rural	123	E00168075	Rural	315	E00117968	Urban	273
E00117779	Rural	251	E00117663	Rural	253	E00117800	Urban	338
E00117806	Rural	475	E00117661	Rural	333	E00117884	Urban	229
E00117808	Rural	442	E00117666	Rural	277	E00117889	Urban	281
E00117674	Rural	187	E00117667	Rural	150	E00117970	Urban	369

E00116143	Rural		531	E00117664	Rural		283	E00117971	Urban		328
E00168062	Rural		306	E00117863	Rural		311	E00117811	Urban		395
E00116156	Rural		339	E00117864	Rural		297	E00117890	Urban		318
E00116307	Rural		354	E00117865	Rural		412	E00117816	Urban		282
E00116282	Rural		119	E00117703	Rural		372	E00117814	Urban		304
E00116285	Rural		243	E00117780	Rural		222	E00117894	Urban		415
E00116293	Rural		153	E00117706	Rural		239	E00117722	Urban		293
E00116095	Rural		223	E00117707	Rural		330	E00117723	Urban		213
E00116158	Rural		282	E00117705	Rural		402	E00117726	Urban		323
E00084199	Rural		274	E00117708	Rural		293	E00117724	Urban		274
E00084232	Rural		305	E00117651	Rural		300	E00117725	Urban		264
E00084008	Rural		366	E00117658	Rural		309	E00117952	Urban		325
E00114583	Rural		406	E00116289	Rural		298	E00117950	Urban		271
E00114699	Rural		196	E00117713	Rural		292	E00117951	Urban		303
E00114550	Rural		202	E00117710	Rural		341	E00117955	Urban		274
E00114702	Rural		224	E00117629	Rural		504	E00117640	Urban		338
E00114703	Rural		159	E00116139	Rural		446	E00117644	Urban		362
E00114706	Rural		364	E00117857	Rural		266	E00117648	Urban		336
E00114370	Rural		288	E00117859	Rural		437	E00168063	Urban		299
E00114624	Rural		308	E00117768	Rural		252	E00168066	Urban		341
E00114242	Rural		197	E00116291	Rural		420	E00168067	Urban		334
E00114240	Rural		164	E00117772	Rural		126	E00168064	Urban		370
E00114358	Rural		241	E00117777	Rural		330	E00167903	Urban		431
E00114697	Rural		272	E00117774	Rural		325	E00114289	Urban		223
E00114619	Rural		341	E00117804	Rural		260	E00114656	Urban		355
E00114698	Rural		253	E00117805	Rural		356	E00167843	Urban		260
E00114570	Rural		335	E00117809	Rural		439	E00114476	Urban		325
E00114362	Rural		139	E00117665	Rural		362	E00167853	Urban		476

E00114360	Rural		272	E00117668	Rural		300	E00167851	Urban		347
E00114367	Rural		147	E00117669	Rural		305	E00167859	Urban		159
E00084200	Rural		207	E00117673	Rural		296	E00114340	Urban		410
E00084001	Rural		149	E00117676	Rural		307	E00114491	Urban		301
E00116253	Rural		334	E00117677	Rural		285	E00114410	Urban		313
E00116296	Rural		502	E00117678	Rural		380	E00167845	Urban		306
E00083871	Rural		133	E00116140	Rural		338	E00114532	Urban		260
E00083859	Rural		237	E00167926	Rural		301	E00114533	Urban		237
E00084237	Rural		243	E00167927	Rural		930	E00114531	Urban		265
E00116152	Rural		293	E00116151	Rural		308	E00114687	Urban		314
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E00116258	Rural		338	E00116155	Rural		291	E00114661	Urban		271
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E00116260	Rural		229	E00114621	Rural		266	E00114657	Urban		271
E00116265	Rural		333	E00114539	Rural		306	E00114658	Urban		310
E00116272	Rural		271	E00114560	Rural		188	E00114659	Urban		283
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E00116262	Rural		317	E00167882	Rural		333	E00167852	Urban		249
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E00116267	Rural		384	E00114561	Rural		415	E00167855	Urban		106
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E00116249	Rural	302	E00084230	Rural	401	E00114260	Urban	217
E00167921	Rural	270	E00116251	Rural	289	E00114261	Urban	329
E00167928	Rural	312	E00084196	Rural	371	E00114266	Urban	311
E00116303	Rural	210	E00084007	Rural	324	E00114264	Urban	270
E00116300	Rural	286	E00084009	Rural	344	E00114585	Urban	211
E00116301	Rural	304	E00116287	Rural	237	E00114584	Urban	367
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E00084191	Rural	244	E00116141	Rural	270	E00114452	Urban	386
E00084197	Rural	296	E00116145	Rural	332	E00114453	Urban	317
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E00114620	Rural	333	E00082477	Rural	264	E00114602	Urban	343
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E00114717	Rural	275	E00082479	Rural	338	E00114685	Urban	268
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E00114547	Rural	311	E00116228	Urban	364	E00114272	Urban	297
E00114563	Rural	267	E00116229	Urban	139	E00114270	Urban	311
E00084189	Rural	314	E00167906	Urban	401	E00114271	Urban	327
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E00114553	Rural	221	E00116131	Urban	382	E00114275	Urban	246
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E00114708	Rural	388	E00117720	Urban	294	E00114693	Urban	279
E00114709	Rural	321	E00117957	Urban	330	E00114692	Urban	269
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E00114353	Rural	500	E00117958	Urban	297	E00114690	Urban	267
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E00082200	Rural	375	E00117798	Urban	514	E00114730	Urban	330
E00082197	Rural	280	E00117903	Urban	362	E00114734	Urban	305
E00082191	Rural	334	E00117828	Urban	314	E00114738	Urban	366
E00082199	Rural	359	E00117831	Urban	347	E00114739	Urban	303
E00082198	Rural	246	E00117966	Urban	271	E00167872	Urban	263
E00082376	Rural	335	E00117967	Urban	279	E00167873	Urban	302
E00082372	Rural	308	E00117969	Urban	340	E00167871	Urban	289
E00082373	Rural	241	E00117972	Urban	317	E00167877	Urban	266
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E00082382	Rural	260	E00117949	Urban	309	E00167878	Urban	257
E00082381	Rural	295	E00117642	Urban	371	E00082125	Urban	403
E00082380	Rural	314	E00117643	Urban	361			
E00082482	Rural	360	E00117647	Urban	441			

7.5   Appendix 5 - Letter of support from Enterprise M3 LEP

enterprise**M3**

Driving prosperity in the M3 corridor

Hampshire County Council

The Castle

Winchester

Emily Preston   Hampshire
Loddon & Test LEADER Programme Manager   SO23 8UD
Economic Development Office
Hampshire County Council
The Castle
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8UJ

20th August 2014

Dear Emily,

Ref: Loddon & Test Local Action Group Local Development Strategy

Thank you for sharing the Loddon & Test Local Action Group Local Development Strategy with the Enterprise M3, Local Enterprise Partnership. Your objectives and associated action plans demonstrate the knowledge that the Loddon & Test Local Action Group has of its area and business economy along with understanding of the opportunities and challenges that will be faced in the future.

Enterprise M3 welcomes your recognition of the Enterprise M3 Strategic Economic Plan and EU strategy. Your key focus on employability and skills, enterprise and innovation, productivity, infrastructure, regulation, international relations and visitor economy, and the environment all resonate hugely within our own thinking.

We are pleased with the discussions that have occurred between the LAG and Enterprise M3 and believe that the demonstration of our joint working will provide complementary and enhanced support for rural and farm businesses.

We are supportive of your strategy and look forward to working with you on rural activities. We wish you every success with your submission.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Wyatt – Enterprise Project Manager

For and on behalf of Enterprise M3

7.6 Appendix 6 - References

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