

# **Tyne Esk LEADER**

## **'Supporting opportunities for rural communities'**

### Local Development Strategy and Business Plan

#### APPENDIX 6

#### Stakeholder and Project Consultations



31<sup>st</sup> October 2007

## INTRODUCTION

This appendix summarises the key themes that emerged from a number of strands of consultation that we undertook as part of producing the Local Development Strategy and Business Plan. These elements included:

- The stakeholder workshop that we conducted in February 2007;
- Telephone and face-to-face interviews with LAG and Advisory Group members;
- Telephone interviews with a selection of projects supported under the previous LEADER+ programme; and
- Inputs from the follow-up stakeholder workshop that we held in September 2007.

The issues arising from each are summarised below.

### STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP (FEBRUARY)

The first part of this workshop involved discussions on the main economic, social and environmental issues perceived for the area and consideration as to how these fitted with the Rural Development Programme.

Examples of the issues identified in relation to the “Revitalising Communities” theme are set out below:

Revitalising Communities		
Economic	Social	Environmental
After-school transport	Poor transport links	Environmental impact of transport issues
Public transport review	Isolation of women and older people	Access to coast and country parks
Community facilities in estates	Youth disturbance issues	Maintenance of paths
Healthy leisure and recreation activities (e.g. swimming)	Ageing population	Sustainability issues
Rural childminding	Encouraging use of paths and access facilities	Enhancing the environment of villages
Skills and training	Community awareness and usage of facilities	
Access to technology	Post Office closures	
Importance of village halls		

A summary of the issues identified under the theme of "Progressive Rural Economy" is detailed below:

Progressive Rural Economy		
Economic	Social	Environmental
Support to small businesses	Uptake of Farmer's Markets	Sustainable tourism issues
Entrepreneurial skills of young people	Affordable housing	Green tourism
Training issues	Shopping patterns and impact on small communities	Impact of housing on the environment
Business start-ups	Increase in number of migrant workers	Pollution control
Homeworking		Alternative energy
Business diversification		Encouraging uptake of recycling
Cluster marketing activity		
Themed trails and facilities		
Events		

The workshop went on to explore how the LEADER programme could enhance both project and environmental sustainability. The following suggestions were made:

- Encouragement of more partnerships and cross-sector co-operation;
- Enhanced marketing;
- Expansion of the LAG (since acted upon); and
- Additional advice and support to projects
- Encouraging previous projects to communicate with others to achieve a "mushroom" effect.

Some suggestions as to the streamlining and enhancement of administrative processes were also made within this workshop.

## INTERVIEWS WITH LAG AND ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

### The Area

These discussions had a particular purpose in relation to informing the SWOT analysis, providing insights that would be additional to the more "formal" strands of evidence gathering.

It is recognised, firstly, that the areas have a number of strengths on which they can build:

Strengths		
Economic	Social	Environmental
Certain pockets of business strength (e.g. biotechnology, forestry, tourism)	Quality of life	Environmental assets, including: open space, coastal areas, parkland, nature reserves
Contribution of agricultural economy	Developing community capacity (aided by LEADER+)	Air quality
"Golf" economy	Community spirit generally	The physical situation in many of the towns and villages is appropriate for promoting sustainable communities.
Connectivity to other areas	Balance between urban and rural areas	

A number of weaknesses were also identified in these discussions, which are not always reflected in statistical information:

Weaknesses		
Economic	Social	Environmental
Low innovation and productivity	Linkages between housing programmes and retail and work opportunities	Some scope for transport improvement on a local basis
Links between schools and industry	Young people feeling "there is nothing to do" in the area"	
Economic and vocational training	A significant number of vulnerable families exist who are not always identified	
Affluent areas that bring wealth to the area		

Building on this overview, a range of opportunities and threats become apparent:

Opportunities and Threats	
Opportunities	Threats
Ensuring that rural exclusion is addressed by the Community Planning partners and process	Becoming a sleeper community for Edinburgh
Outdoor leisure opportunities	Potential decline in agricultural economy

### Other Funding Support

A diverse set of other funding mechanisms were cited as having been used to support rural development. Amongst others, these included:

- Lottery/Challenge Fund
- Local Authority
- Scottish Enterprise
- Visit Scotland
- Woodland Grants and Scottish Forestry Grants Schemes

It was clear from the discussions that LEADER+ funding had played an important role as a catalyst and the “glue” for other funding packages, specifically at a local community level.

### **Other Rural Development Initiatives**

A number of partners’ mainstream activities were cited as examples of other initiatives and developments that had been used to develop rural areas in the past. Examples included:

- Tourist Information Centres
- SNH Trails
- Childminding training

Other specific project examples, included:

- The Waverley railway Link, seen as integrating urban and rural communities
- Initiatives by Forestry Commission Scotland to promote and enhance woodland.

### **Lessons Learned from previous LEADER+ Experience**

LEADER+ has been seen as successful as a model of community engagement and is perceived by some stakeholders to have real potential as one of the key methods of ensuring “bottom up” participation in the Community Planning process.

Some of the specific successes identified of the previous programme included:

- Extensive enhancement of local community facilities

Some areas of more limited success were also identified:

- The programme has had limited know-how exchange through trans-national projects
- Youth engagement remains a challenge
- There is scope to improve linkages and information exchange between projects.

When they were able to comment, these stakeholders expressed positive views regarding the overall management of the process and the secretariat support provided to the LAG. They felt that membership had been stable and that the LAG benefited from a strong chair. Other LAG strengths include; background, diversity, expertise and local knowledge of members and a good balance between official and voluntary representation. Some weaknesses included members’ time constraints, lack of technical knowledge amongst some members and perceived under-representation of young people.

### **Participants in the LAG and Advisory Group (AG) Interviews**

Ruth Hutton	Communities Scotland (AG)
Ginnie Morton	East Lothian Community Health Partnership (AG)
Dougie Denholm	East Lothian Council (AG)
David Evans	East Lothian Council (AG)
Mary Preston	East Lothian Council (AG)
John Sowerby	East Lothian Council (AG)
Grant Talac	East Lothian Council (AG)
Esther Wilson	East Lothian Council (AG)
Alan Russell	East Lothian Tourist Forum (LAG)
Maida Ballarini	Forestry Commission (LAG)
Nic Gordon Smith	Midlothian & East Lothian Chamber of Commerce (LAG)

Brian Forsyth	Midlothian Council (AG)
Jim Gilfillan	Midlothian Council (AG)
Tony Holsgrove	Midlothian Council (AG)
Sandy McMillan	Midlothian Council (public body)
Archie Pacey	Midlothian Federation of Community Councils (LAG)
Margaret Nisbet	Midlothian Voluntary Action (LAG)
Leslie Kelly	Midlothian Voluntary Action (voluntary body)
Scott Murray	SAC (LAG)

## PROJECT INTERVIEWS

### Key Findings

A range of project types have been supported and were reflected in these consultations. Expenditure has paid for items such as staffing, facilities, ICT, promotions etc.

We were struck by the exceptionally high levels of additionality claimed by projects. In almost all cases this was absolute, with LEADER+ having been essential in ensuring the project's go ahead. This is indicative of good project selection and the availability of resources through LEADER is seen as a significant benefit to the community. Amongst the projects we consulted, projects were often being sustained further through the ongoing work of local communities.

The project participants had only limited comment to make with respect to the future focus of any LEADER programme. Essentially, their desire was for "more of the same" in terms of the scope of projects to be supported. A desire for sustainable local facilities was the key theme to emerge.

The programme thought by most to be well-marketed but by definition these are the people who know about it - some suggestions were made that more needs to be done (and this was reflected in the subsequent stakeholder workshop).

Mixed views on the application and monitoring process - some think it is perfectly fine but quite a lot perceive it to be overly bureaucratic. The implication is for a need to support at least some potential projects through this process. The work of the current Project Officer is held in high regard.

### Participants in the Project Interviews

The following projects provided feedback as part of the interview programme:

British Horse Society - Lothian Branch  
Connections Counselling Services  
Dalkeith After School Club  
Dunpender Community Council  
East Lothian Council  
East Lothian Investments Ltd  
Gorebridge Community Health & Regeneration  
Howgate Village Hall Association  
Lamp of Lothian Collegiate Trust  
Midlothian Sure Start  
Midlothian Money Advice Development Centre  
Midlothian Tourism Forum  
Midlothian Voluntary Action  
New Leaf - Adult Guidance  
Penicuik and District YMCA & YWA  
Penicuik House Preservation Trust  
Pentland Hills Produce

Pentland Hills Regional Park  
Saltoun After School Club  
Silverburn Community Association

## **STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP (SEPTEMBER)**

The stakeholder workshop focused on three particular themes where a need for greater depth of input was identified:

- Taking forward the issues and target groups identified
- Innovation
- Co-operation
- Sustainability.

The key points in relation to each are summarised below.

### **Issues and Target Groups**

The suggestion in the workshop was that the following groups needed to have more involvement with LEADER:

- Young people, including schools and here a special plea was made to start working with pupils of the age of 14+, so that they can be directed towards appropriate skills for future jobs, before they have failed school examinations by the age of 16. It is widely considered that the age of 16 is too late;
- Women - no special interest groups
- Elderly people, defined as 60+;
- Micro-businesses - dovetailing with the services of Business Gateways;
- Unemployed and underemployed including NEET- things that are too small a scale;
- Migrant workers

Much of the group discussion was about how the LAG could reach out to these groups. Some of the common observations made are set out below:

- Overall the strong feeling was that LEADER has to start going 'out' and meet the community, rather than letting project applicants approach them;
- More efforts are needed to promote and meet/talk to community/target groups, including the use of unorthodox, interactive, and not paper-based approaches;

New approaches which were suggested included: MULTIPLE APPROACHES

- Work through the churches, as they already provide lots of community services and work with the key target groups, get them involved in LEADER;
- Approach the Young Farmers Association and give them a role on the LAG, as they are already used to formal structures of committees, etc;
- There are also active youth work organisations which should be approached (some of them are already contacted by LAG). For example, Lothian Association of Youth Clubs have a dedicated Co-ordinator.

- Make much better use of existing organisations and projects, not only to reach target groups, but also to join-up action, funding, reaching objectives, etc. (North Berwick Youth Area, great projects there which are in need of continued funding);
- Work more closely with Housing Associations as their residents usually include target groups, and provide a good mechanism to reach out. (East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panels)
- Set up stronger links with universities (Queens Margaret), particularly with regard to graduate placements in some projects concerning marketing, product development etc. This would also help reducing project/funding costs;
- Develop volunteering activities, again through joint-up action with existing initiatives (Volunteer Development Mid-Lothian, East Lothian);
- Approach secondary schools (maybe through prefects) and see if they can become involved in LEADER (it will be important though that there is a purpose behind the intent for co-operation. Ideas included: involving them in the design of promoting LEADER through their IT skills;
- Use the assets/premises of the area more effectively, to raise awareness of LEADER, and stimulate involvement/interest in LEADER;
- Continue ongoing engagement with Community Councils

Some additional observations were made as to the implications of this thinking for LEADER:

This cannot all be done by LEADER co-ordinator, additional expert input is required to reach out to target groups -utilising Community Learning and Development, Community Representatives and so on;

More joint-up thinking and linking is required, to make various initiatives and projects and organisations work together and use each other for achieving respective objectives;

There is a perceived need to get more funding bodies on board through Advisory Group structure

## **Innovation**

Workshop participants felt that innovation worked well alongside other strands of LEADER, such as cooperation and sustainability and was also closely related to the engagement and marketing agenda. People saw innovation in its wider sense as encompassing the development of not only products, but new processes and management methods.

Some of the key components of innovation were considered to be the following:

- Exchange of knowledge
- Learning from project ideas from elsewhere
- Sourcing of best practice

Some aspects of innovation (such as effective use of technology) were seen as being able to assist the "process" of LEADER by, for example, encouraging the engagement of young people. Other innovative engagement ideas included the use of community radio.

Other specific potential areas for innovation included:

- Local food co-operatives
- Green transport
- Fair Trade
- Innovative forms of local transport

It was considered that some form of mentoring support to projects (or potential projects) would benefit them in bringing forward innovative ideas and in avoiding the pitfalls involved in bringing forward such concepts. However, other barriers were also noted including the need to recognise that “innovation takes time” and also the recognition that highly innovative projects can have a higher degree of risk associated with them.

## Co-operation

Participants in the workshop session defined the components of co-operation thus:

- Coming together for mutual benefit
- Sharing common ground
- Shared objectives
- Doing something together
- Willingness to be flexible
- Cooperation between those with need and those with funding - a matching process
- Linking information to action

The benefits that workshop participants felt could come from this included the following:

- Sharing ideas/good practice
- Knowing what works - a benefit to all parties
- Challenge - getting information across at community level, easier at strategic partner level
- Pooling of resources
- Sharing skills
- Economies of scale
- Best use of resources for wider benefits

Some barriers were noted, however:

- Funding
- Public transport across Local Authority boundaries when setting up joint projects
- Limited private sector involvement
- Lack of knowledge of what is available
- Accountability of Local Authorities for spend and willingness to relinquish power over resources

Some of the key partners for cooperation were identified thus:

- Targeting of umbrella organisations rather than individual organisations to
  - Maximise benefits
  - Make it easier to communicate
- Not just the two Local Authorities but also their neighbours
- Business community - who may give money not time
- Young people
- Socially excluded groups

Some of the key messages in terms of “how” this might be addressed are summarised below:

- Identification of common ground as a starting point
- It is important to get people physically together
- There is already lots of cooperation between groups - LEADER should plug into this
- Disseminate information to generate ideas then bring groups together
- Share premises, develop hubs for community social groups

## Sustainability

Workshop participants considered environmental, economic and social sustainability to be inherent in the sorts of activities that had been delivered by LEADER in the past through, for example:

- Supporting projects to protect and enhance both the “natural” and “built” environment in the area
- Retaining economic activity within the area
- Building local community capacity and the capacity of the social economy

There was particular support for a greater emphasis on aspects of environmental sustainability, with some of the suggestions made including:

- More sharing of good practice
- Set certain sustainable development standards, provide tools and mechanisms, and adhere to those standards
- Get specialist advisors in to support the LAG and projects
- Link up with existing initiatives, such as Energy Reduction Programmes, which are free of charge, and seek to reach out to the community, LEADER could be a tool for those initiatives to reach their objectives
- Provide organisational development, raise awareness of sustainable development amongst volunteer groups, raise capacities.
- Encourage projects that would make a specific contribution to sustainable development.

A general theme that related to this, and other issues, was of developmental support being provided to projects and potential projects as an inherent part of their involvement with LEADER.

## Participants in the September Stakeholder Workshop

Alasdair Mathers	Midlothian Council
Lesley Kelly	Midlothian Voluntary Action
Grant Talac	East Lothian Council
Jim Gilfillan	Midlothian Council
Janice Winning	Scottish Natural Heritage
Barry Turner	East Lothian Council (Elected Member)
Carolyn Tate	Royal Highland Education Trust
Veronica Campanile	Community Planning Officer, East Lothian Council
Chris Lewis	Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust
Graeme Wilson	Midlothian Council
Mary Preston	East Lothian Council
Brian Forsyth	Midlothian Council
Andrew Noble	Melville Housing Association
Jennifer Hewitson	SRPBA
Scott Murray	SAC
Ruth Hutton	Communities Scotland
Ginnie Moreton	East Lothian Community Health Partnership
Kate Duthie	Esk Valley Trust
Archie Pacey	Midlothian Federation of Community Councils
Donna Scoular	Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian
Susan Smith	East Lothian Council