

Tyne Esk LEADER

'Supporting opportunities for rural communities'

Local Development Strategy and Business Plan

APPENDIX 8

Previous LEADER+ Experience and Lessons Learned



31st October 2007

PREVIOUS LEADER+ PROJECTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

Themes

The previous Tyne Esk LEADER+ programme adopted the following primary and secondary themes:

- Improving the quality of life in rural areas; and
- Adding value at the local level.

Its overall aim was to “safeguard the economic, social and environmental viability and sustainability of rural communities through supporting key needs/services, developing businesses, enhancing the natural environment and empowering local communities” In support of this overall aim it developed 10 objectives:

- Community Capacity Building
- Community Transport
- Tourism Development
- Business Development
- Conservation & Heritage
- Food & Agriculture
- Health & Well Being
- Training & Development
- Community Facilities
- Access & Interpretation

The programme focused on the following key groups:

- Women
- Un/Under Employed
- Disabled People
- Young People
- The Elderly
- Micro Business

Grants

The total grant allocation for the Programme in 2006 was:

Action 1 projects - £1,187,955; and

Action 2 (cross border/ trans-national) projects - £51,449.

Project Expenditure

Table 1 details project expenditure, and shows significant underspend in both Action 1 and Action 2 headings. However, it should be acknowledged that project activity is ongoing until December 2007 and that the actual expenditure will increase considerably until then.

Table 1: Project Expenditure				
	Expenditure to September 2007	Project Allocation	Programme Allocation	Expenditure as % of programme allocation
Action 1	£806,570.37	£1,187,955 ¹	£1,055,318 ²	76%
Action 2.1	£30,636.66	£44,767	£44,767	68%
Action 2.2	£2,937	£7,113	£7113	41%

¹ The LAG over committed in its allocation, predicting an under spend of 12% from projects

² The programme allocation has recently been revised from £1,075,318 to £1,055,318. The revision has allowed a transfer of funds to the administration budget, therefore allowing for a 100% allocation of Action 1 funding.

Project Activity

Table 2 details project activity to date. It shows, not unexpectedly given funding allocations, that the bulk of the projects were funded under Action 1 - they represent 93% of all approved projects and 92% of all completed projects.

Table 2: Project Activity							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Sept 2007	Total
Action 1 Approved	3	17	22	10	28	0	80
Action 2.1 Approved	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Action 2.2 Approved	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Action 1 Completed	0	2	11	9	14	14	50
Action 2.1 Completed	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Action 2.2 Completed	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

For the period 2002 to December 2006, 86 projects and 58 organisations were supported by Tyne Esk LEADER+ Programme. The vast majority of projects have come from organisations that are community based rather than public sector organisations or institutions - this confirms that the programme is meeting the aspiration of being "bottom up".

Targets and Outcomes for the Current Programme

The data supplied that compares targets against outcomes relates to Action 1 - Measure 4: Improving the Quality of Life. These results are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Targets and Outcomes (from 2002 to 31 st December 2006)			
	Target	Outcome	% achieved
No of new markets accessed	1	249.5	24950%
No of new products developed	1	89	8900%
No of community led projects	60	57	95%
No of networks established	2	15	750%
No of awareness raising events held	6	297.25	4954%
No of feasibility/pilot plans undertaken	2	10	500%
No of marketing and promotional activities undertaken	12	120.2	1002%
No of new community facilities created	30	14	47%
No of individuals trained, gaining new skills or re-skilled	120	1032	860%
No of training days provided	15	202	1347%
No of training courses delivered	2	295.5	14775%
No of jobs created/safeguarded	50	713	1426%
No of businesses advised/assisted	25	441	1764%
No of community groups advised/assisted	80	660	825%
No of individuals retained in the area	8	339	4238%
No of women assisted	100	4289	4289%
No of young people assisted	100	5487	5487%
No of under-employed assisted	30	269	897%
No of micro/small business assisted	25	1506	6024%
Other target groups assisted	100	1387	1387%

There are a number of issues raised by the data reported in Table 3. However, it is important to note that this was the first time that a 'LEADER' programme had been in the Tyne Esk area. Therefore it was challenging to define targets that would be achieved.

Many targets are met by a factor in excess of 1,000, and some by a factor in excess of 10,000. Only two targets have not been met:

- Number of community led projects - 95% achieved; and
- Number of new community facilities created - 47% achieved.

The Table also raises issues relating to how outcomes have been measured - it suggests that:

0.5 of a market had been accessed;

0.25 on an awareness raising event had been held;

0.2 marketing and promotional activities had been held; and

0.5 of a training course had been held.

There may also be an issue in relation to measurement definitions, and a confusion between *assists* and *assisted*. For example, the baseline review identified that rural East Lothian had 1,209 businesses (1,019 less than 10 employees), whilst rural Midlothian had a business base of 1,071 (865 less than 10 employees) - a total of 2,280 businesses (1,884 less than 10 employees). Table 3 suggests that 1,506 businesses were assisted - a penetration rate of 66% of all businesses (80% with less than 10 employees). These penetration rates seem excessive and unrealistic, and are more likely to have been assists rather than businesses assisted. This is also likely to apply to the number of women and young people.

THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

Structure

In Tyne Esk, the formation of the LAG was led by East Lothian and Midlothian Councils. The composition of the LAG remained fairly stable over the life of the LEADER+ Programme with few individuals or organisations changing. The interim evaluation highlighted that the individual members worked well together with a good understanding of what the Tyne Esk LEADER+ Programme was seeking to achieve.

The LAG members comprised individuals from the main public agencies, community groups and voluntary organisations from across the two Council areas. This included:

- Midlothian Council
- SEEL
- NFU (Scotland)
- Midlothian Voluntary Action
- Association of East Lothian Community Councils
- Youth Development fund
- East Lothian Council
- Midlothian Tourism Forum
- Scottish Agricultural College
- East Lothian Voluntary Organisation Network
- Scottish Women's Rural Institute

The interim evaluation highlighted that the 50:50 balance of paid officials and "volunteers" provided the group with a strong community base and the involvement of young people through the Youth Development Fund and a representative for the farming sector through the NFU (Scotland) was a further strength and highlighted the breadth of representation within the group.

Working Methods

The day-to-day management of the Programme rested with the Project Officer who reported to the LAG at its quarterly meetings. As lead partner and banker to the Programme, East Lothian Council also provided administration support. In terms of recording data (outputs, activities etc.) and the quarterly claim forms and annual progress report to the Scottish Government, this was produced by the Project Officer.

The LAG took the view that it was not its role to directly initiate project ideas - project ideas were to come from the local community and project sponsors were expected to approach the programme for support.

The Project Officer liaised with applicants and provided assistance with the application process - essentially to discuss the project idea, identify eligibility and assist with the application process. There was clearly wide ranging discussion about projects and project ideas across a range of stakeholders.

Activities

The key activities undertaken by the LAG were:

➤ Approve or otherwise the project application:

When an application was formally received it was circulated to the LAG members and scored against a common set of criteria. However LAG members considered a range of other variables including ability to deliver the project successfully and project sustainability before making a final decision.

➤ Project monitoring:

This was seen as an important role for the LAG, and involved:

- project visit - upon award of funding to discuss project administration etc; to monitor progress; prior to payment of the final grant contribution
- a quarterly review of monitoring data to ensure that projects were being delivered to profile and to anticipate where there may have been any problems.