North Pennine Dales LEADER
Local Development Strategy
LEADER 2015 – 2020
1. The Local Action Group Partnership

Introduction

This Local Development Strategy (LDS) supports the application for £2.406m (the mid point of the allocation range provided by Defra) of funding for an expanded North Pennine Dales LEADER area. This new area will include additional areas in Derwentside, mid Durham and most of Rural Gateshead. The aim of the LDS is to support strong and sustainable rural economic growth throughout the North Pennine Dales area in ways which reflect the area’s local priorities, engage local people and businesses, build more resilient communities and conserve its high quality landscape and environment.

Membership

The North Pennine Dales LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) will be a strong partnership between the private, public and the voluntary sector.

The North Pennine Dales LAG has built up a wealth of knowledge and experience of the LEADER processes and the local economy and communities. The LAG would seek to retain the skills, knowledge and experience of some of the LAG members which will be invaluable in helping the new LAG to hit the ground running. At the same time there is a clear recognition that, with the new LEADER programme focussed on jobs and growth and with the extended area, new members with different backgrounds and skills will be needed. All current LAG members will resign their membership of the Transition LAG and will be given the opportunity to reapply.

During the latter part of the transition year the LAG will undertake an assessment of the skills required to form a strong and effective LAG delivering the jobs and growth agenda while maintaining the LEADER method. This skills matrix will support the selection and appointment of members to the new LAG.

The proposed new North Pennine Dales area includes rural areas of mid Durham and Gateshead, covering a further four Area Action Partnerships in County Durham. These are locally based community partnerships, with public representation. Gateshead follows a different system, with the partnership approach of the Economy, Environment and Culture Board and Rural Economic Strategy Board supporting the process and complementing local networks. Their strategies identify similar targets to LEADER especially with regard to the jobs and growth agenda and strengthening communities. This opens opportunities to work alongside these partnerships, to build and complement their delivery. The new area also includes the hub town of Prudhoe.

Individuals from the extended area who have appropriate skills and expertise will be encouraged to be involved with the Local Action Group as members of the LAG Executive (see page 3). Recruitment of new members will be driven by the desire to maintain a good private/public sector split, open to all individuals without exception, who can add value, knowledge and energy to the group.

It is important to have good representation from key strategic stakeholders and groups. With the emphasis on activities which deliver jobs and growth, the LAG membership will be themed to ensure the appropriate skills for the priorities to be delivered. The LAG will recruit business representatives, business support groups, key stakeholders from the Rural Growth Network and the LEP, although it would not expect a LEP representative to attend each meeting.
The LAG aspires to cover all sectors, geographic areas and aims to be non-political. The transition consultation has identified key stakeholders from the farming, forestry, business, tourisms and community sectors. The new area will cover three local authority areas, County Durham, Northumberland and Gateshead, these areas will have appropriate representation.

To ensure close integration with any future support programmes operating in the area, partners delivering such programmes will be invited to join the LAG.

If the North Pennine Dales LDS is approved in November there will be a public call for LAG members and in addition there will be a targeted approach to obtain specific skills, and recruit representatives from sectors and groups. Organisations representing the land based sector, women and young people will be targeted and encouraged to apply for membership of the LAG. It is anticipated the new LAG will be operational for the start of the new programme. An open call for members will be promoted through local media, stakeholder networks, previous project holders, and digital media.

Current LAG Membership for information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition LAG member</th>
<th>Representing</th>
<th>Area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Davidson</td>
<td>Consultant - DavidsonsGrace</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina Maddison</td>
<td>Weardale Action Partnership</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Sipesteijn</td>
<td>Heart of Teesdale Partnership</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliff Brown</td>
<td>Micro Business &amp; Bowes Parish Council</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Pearson</td>
<td>Durham County Council (Accountable Body)</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Wilson</td>
<td>Visit County Durham</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Fruin</td>
<td>Campaign to Protect Rural England</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona Green</td>
<td>Garden Historian</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazel Coppack</td>
<td>Teesdale Marketing</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Forbes</td>
<td>Friends of AONB</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Ancketill</td>
<td>Hartleyburn Parish Council</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Atkinson</td>
<td>Rural Growth Network (Vice-chair)</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Bettison</td>
<td>Blaize, Teesdale Action Partnership, Village Hall Consortium</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Wilson</td>
<td>Teesdale Action Partnership</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Connor</td>
<td>Groundwork</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam Forbes</td>
<td>Weardale Hub</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Samsom</td>
<td>North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership (Chair)</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Betton</td>
<td>UTASS &amp; farmer</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Peat</td>
<td>GF White</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary Thompson</td>
<td>Farmer, caterer, Village Halls Consortium</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Douglas</td>
<td>Gateshead Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Robinson</td>
<td>Durham Community Action</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Robson</td>
<td>South Durham Enterprise Agency</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas
**LAG Structure**

The North Pennine Dales Local Action Group will be made up of a LAG Forum, a LAG Executive and Task and Finish Groups as appropriate.

The North Pennine Dales LAG Forum will comprise a wide range of community, private and voluntary sector and public sector representatives. The LAG Forum will act as a communication channel between the communities of the area and the LAG Executive (see diagram). It will allow the community to be kept informed about LEADER activities in the area, to highlight developing issues and challenges and to feed in ideas. The LAG Forum will also have a role in shaping priorities within the framework of the LDS as the programme develops. Stakeholder involvement will minimise areas of duplication and build stronger opportunities for joint working. The LAG Forum will not have authority to act for the North Pennine Dales LEADER programme.

The LAG Forum will meet at least annually but it is expected that more regular communication will come through electronic means. The Annual LAG Forum meeting will be an opportunity to demonstrate the value of LEADER through the work supported, to review progress against the LDS and to consider appropriate changes of direction. It also provides an opportunity for the wider community to become involved.

The LAG Executive will be responsible for setting the strategic direction, monitoring delivery of the LDS, managing the approval process of applications and procuring strategic projects. The LAG Executive will have a maximum of 49% public sector membership.

Following an open call for membership, the LAG Executive will consist of up to 30 people. The initial appointments will be undertaken by a selection panel including the Transition chair, representation from the Accountable Body and two independent members. A member’s specification and skills matrix will be developed in the Transition year to support the selection process.
The Local Action Group Executive will aspire to have an equal split between public, private and voluntary members with voting rights. The Accountable Body and the Local Enterprise Partnership will also be members however they will have a non-voting membership. Every endeavour will be made to ensure all appropriate sectors are covered, and additional advice from external experts will be sought when necessary.

The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed from the LAG Executive, in the first instance, by the selection panel. Application for membership will be open to all members from the community. Members of the LAG Executive will be expected to take part in activities to strengthen the LAG, deliver the LEADER programme and to add value and benefit for the whole North Pennine Dales area. The LAG Executive will meet bi-monthly. All members of the LAG Executive will be given the necessary support and training to fully understand their role and responsibilities.

The LAG Executive will work to a set of policies and procedures in relation to application process, project selection, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, which will be developed in partnership with Defra and the Accountable Body. A conflict of interest policy will be developed.

Some members of the LAG Executive will be volunteers. They will be eligible for travel expenses and an attendance allowance.

Projects will be appraised on expected delivery of outputs, objectives and value for money for the programme as identified in the LDS. The LAG will try and work through consensus but, if a vote is needed each member of the LAG Executive will have a vote and members will be able to submit votes by email. A minimum of 30% of the membership will be required to achieve a quorum and the Chair of the LAG will have a casting vote should consensus not be reached and a vote be tied.

Task and finish groups will be appointed throughout the programme as necessary and will cover specific activities. Members of task and finish groups will be drawn from the LAG Executive and if necessary the LAG Forum or external specialists.

**Training requirements**

Members of the LAG Executive will be expected to undertake an induction training programme to allow them to understand the delivery of LEADER, their roles and responsibilities. Formal training delivered by Defra will be available for LAG members.

All LAG Executive members will be encouraged to engage with an ongoing training programme. Each LAG Executive meeting will have an agenda item to refresh training, which will be delivered by the Project Coordinator. The training will include topics such as: conflict of interest, responsibilities, accountabilities, project eligibility, match funding rules, evidence requirements, claim process, monitoring, evaluation and output requirements. The RDPE Network will be used to disseminate information and link with other LAG memberships.

LAG members with specific skills will be expected to deliver information sessions to the LAG covering their area of knowledge.
Where possible good practice will be shared and examples of other projects supported highlighted. All LAG Executive members will be expected to take part in annual events and promotional activity for the group.

LAG staff will undertake continuous personal development, attend events, seminars and work with other LAG groups to share and develop skills.

**Decision making process**

NPD will follow the national agreed application, assessment, claims and monitoring process.

The LAG will have an open, transparent, non-discriminatory procedure for project selection which avoids conflict of interest and allows all members of the LAG Executive to vote either at meetings or in writing.

The decision making process will be the responsibility of the LAG Executive. All projects will have to submit an expression of interest to be considered at LAG Executive meetings. The expression of interest will be appraised against the fit with the Local Development Strategy objectives and priorities. To proceed to the next stage the LAG Executive members will attempt to come to a consensus and if necessary, vote on the suitability of the application. Where a vote is tied the Chair will have the casting vote.

Successful expressions of interest will be invited to submit a full application. Projects will be encouraged to present their ideas at LAG Executive meetings and work with LAG Executive members to support the development of their ideas to maximise the investment made by LEADER. The LAG Executive will approve projects. LAG members will access the information on all projects via a secure page of a North Pennine Dales website.

LAG members must declare any interests and conflicts will be recorded, and the LAG member will have no involvement in the decision making.

Applications will be assessed on value for money and on how they support the LAG in delivering the objectives and outputs of the LDS.

Project applicants will be given support from the Project Coordinator to help develop their application, provide advice on eligibility, inform, encourage collaboration, make applicants aware of the process requirements and set realistic timelines.

The application process:

- Application approaches the Project Coordinator
- Initial meeting to discuss project advice on next stage
- Eligible projects – Invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI)
- EOI – presented at the LAG meeting – applicants encouraged to provide a presentation
- EOI which are likely to deliver the objectives of the LDS and offer value for money will be invited to submit a full application
- Technical Appraisal undertaken by Accountable Body
- Fully completed applications will be presented to the LAG for final decision.
Local Action Group staff, numbers and job description

Durham County Council will continue to be the Accountable Body for North Pennine Dales LEADER. It is envisaged that DCC will employ all staff required for the efficient and compliant management and administration of the Programme.

Assumptions have been made that the main post of co-ordinator (one per LAG area) would be able to support both LEADER Programmes operating in County Durham, if occasionally required, without having to apportion costs across the LEADER areas. All other staff will keep timesheets and costs will be allocated and claimed against the relevant LEADER programme. There will be three roles primarily involved in the management and administration of LEADER – Co-ordinator, Project Assessment and Finance.

Please see Section 4 – Management and Administration for further information on description of roles.

Equal opportunities statement

In line with the Equal Opportunities Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, the North Pennine Dales Local Action Group will not tolerate discrimination because of a protected characteristic, these are Age, Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, religion or Belief, Pregnancy or Maternity and Civil Partnership or Marriage. We will also not discriminate because of working patterns or trade union membership nor will we tolerate harassment or bullying on these or any other grounds. NPD Leader will:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and 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.
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Consultation and community involvement

Throughout 2014 North Pennine Dales LEADER group have undertaken extensive consultation with the local community. The consultation consisted of 100 one to one sessions with individuals from the community, businesses, stakeholders, representative bodies, media and previous project applicants. The purpose of this was to establish the challenges and gaps in the area, to identify potential action required to improve rural life where LEADER may be the solution. Discussions were held with WIRE (Women in to rural enterprise), The HUB in Barnard Castle which operates for young people, youth workers in Teesdale and Young Northumberland.

As understanding the needs of the business community was a prime consideration, an electronic survey was circulated through the Rural Growth Network, the Durham Area Action Partnerships, the Enterprise Agencies, established business contacts, the Federation of
Small Business and Country Landowners & Business Association. Forty responses were received.

Local Action Group members with specific knowledge of our priority sectors, identified existing support and services which are delivered in the area, and highlighted potential gaps and opportunities for collaborative working for the future.

A SWOT analysis was developed, identifying themes, common concerns and issues. The consultation was carefully managed so as not to raise expectations of LEADER to deliver future projects. The emphasis was to encourage the community to think strategically and identify innovative ideas as to how to support the solutions to rural issues, mindful of the jobs and growth agenda.

Four themed focus groups were held covering: Rural services, Farming and Forestry, Rural micro business and Rural tourism, culture & heritage. A SWOT analysis was developed for each group. These events were promoted through social media, the website, stakeholder networks and individuals were specifically targeted for their knowledge and understanding of rural needs within their sector.

Following the initial drafting of the Local Development Strategy, five community events were held throughout the new area. The public were asked to comment on the draft LDS and to encourage the wider community to consider the best use of the indicative allocation subject to a successful conclusion of the bid submitted to Defra. 107 members of the public attended.

Consultation will not end with Transition, part of the delivery of the new programme will include ongoing consultation with communities to continually develop the programme and adapt to their needs. During the consultation process a number of key stakeholders have expressed an interest in becoming involved in the next programme. These include representatives from the RGN Hubs, Country Land and Business Association, Business Durham, The Hub Barnard Castle, Land Agents, FSB, tourism and micro enterprises, Durham University, Colleges, community, tourism and business support networks, and environmental groups.

2. The LAG area and Rural Population covered

The proposed new North Pennine Dales LAG area covers Teesdale, Weardale, South Tynedale, Western Derwentside, mid Durham and rural Gateshead. See map below.

The area is covered by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. A significant proportion of the area is within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Six Durham Area Action Partnerships deliver throughout the area. Three Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership programmes, Heart of Teesdale, Allen Valleys and Land of Oak and Iron offer support and provide potential well-developed projects. There are also two Rural Growth Network Hubs established at Middleton in Teesdale and Gibside.

The total population is 147,035 of which 12,436 is urban, giving a rural population of 134,599. Prudhoe as a designated hub town has been included as it is considered to be a rural service hub. Census Output Areas have been used to develop the map, information was extracted from NOMIS. Defra will provide a postcode checker to confirm eligibility.
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas
Area profile

Population structure

The information reflects the North Pennine Dales area has a higher percentage of population over 64 and a lower percentage of population under 16.

However, in addition there are some substantial differences within the area, with areas like Teesdale, Weardale and South Tynedale and most areas of Rural Gateshead having a substantially lower percentage of people under 40 and a higher percentage of people over 65. (Durham Area profiles 2012; Economic Strategy for Rural Gateshead 2012-2015). This reinforces the need to ensure rural services are maintained and created, to alleviate social isolation. Having a lower percentage of population may suggest families are choosing to not live in rural areas due to the lack of services, poor rural transport, distance from services and higher living costs.

Jobs by Sector

In 2012 there were over 35,500 jobs in the North Pennine Dales LEADER area. Key sectors are: production, health, wholesale & retail, accommodation and food services. Job density for NPD is 0.6 jobs per population compared with 0.8 nationally (ONS). This contributes to significant commuting outside of the area for work. NPD also has a higher percentage of home workers 7.1% nationally 5.4%. (Census 2011)
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

Business

There are approximately 4,480 business units in the North Pennine Dales LEADER. (ONS 2012)

Key sectors are wholesale, retail, construction, agriculture, professional, scientific and technical.

Residents earnings

Gross weekly earnings for the area is lower than the national average £480 compared with a national figure of £510.

However change in earnings 2008-2013 have seen an increase greater than the national average, NPD 9.7% nationally £6.7%.

Benefit Claimants 2008-2013

Source: ASHE

- North Pennine Dales Leader Area: Approximately 13,140 claimants, a rate of 14%. Change from 2008 – 2013; -6.8%
- England and Wales: Benefit claimant rate 13.1%, change 2008 – 2013; -1.9%
- This masks certain concentrations of worklessness in areas such as Chopwell and Highfield (Economic Strategy for Rural Gateshead).

Qualifications

Higher percentage of no qualifications and lower percentage of NVQ level 3 & 4 or higher. Source: Census 2011
Access to Services

Although not as pronounced as the average for Rural England communities in the North Pennine Dales area have substantially reduced access to services with distance to the nearest job centre being twice as far as the England average. Distance to a pub is greater in the NPD area than the average for both England as a whole and Rural England. Again, the picture is complex across the area itself with obvious differences between the upland areas of the North Pennines AONB and the areas further down the valleys.

Broadband Speed

- Percentage not receiving 2Mbit/s - 13% of properties
- Take – up including superfast broadband – 68.3% of properties
- Superfast take up – 10.2% of properties (UK 19%)
Agriculture in the North Pennine Dales LEADER area

In 2010 there were approximately 1,380 farms in the North Pennine Dales Leader Area, farming 149,600 hectares of land and employing just over 3,000 people.

85% of land is grasslands with significant lower levels of cereal and arable.

Most of the agricultural land in the west of the area in the North Pennines AONB is in Environmental Stewardship schemes and is characterised by very low intensity farming. Substantial areas are Common Land. Farmed area has reduced by 5% (2007-2010)

Figures provided by the Forestry Commission show that the North Pennine Dales area has just over 20,000 ha of woodland (8.9% of land cover). Unmanaged woodland makes up nearly 8000ha or 39% of all woodland in the area.

3. The Strategy

A “SWOT” analysis of the local area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths Economic</th>
<th>Weaknesses Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong sectoral representation in: manufacturing, construction, retail/wholesale, accommodation, food, arts, entertainment and recreation</td>
<td>Unemployment above the national average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Growth Network Hubs</td>
<td>Significantly more tenant farmers than the national average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctive upland agricultural sector</td>
<td>Smaller working population than the national average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant stock of small firms</td>
<td>Succession planning for businesses and farm holdings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well established businesses</td>
<td>Job density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significantly higher than national average stock of home workers</td>
<td>Earnings below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial culture</td>
<td>Underperforming rural economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of the tourism offer</td>
<td>Access to skills and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country sports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Market towns</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Contextual | |
| Natural assets (organisations, heritage, Protected Landscapes and sites, wildlife) | Distance from markets and services |
| Strong tradition of LEADER with communities in NPD | No connecting infrastructure for network and geographical area as defined by Leader |
| | Transport in rural areas |
| | Broadband – underpin support social media and technology |
| | Fragmented business support offer, difficult to access |
| | Incubator units, office space, move |
### Organisational
- Experience and knowledge of previous LEADER programmes
- Volunteers active participation
- Track record of effective delivery in similar area
- Good networks in some areas (thematic and geographic)

### Opportunities
#### Economic
- Potential to grow high quality tourism economy, based on the area’s natural and cultural assets and local produce
- Potential to develop more ‘products’ associated with the local area
- Packages and collective working
- Events
- Social enterprise to deliver rural services
- Digital economy
- Develop programmes of events and festivals

#### Contextual
- Potential for better cooperation between farming, forestry, conservation and tourism sectors
- Potential links with Rural Growth Network

#### Organisational
- Improve community cohesion and resilience
- Learn from best practices – shop local
- Build on existing networks
- Refresh LAG membership
- Strengthen SME and business networks
- Learn from other LEADER areas in Britain and Europe
- Linking LEADER and the Rural Growth Network

### Threats
#### Economic
- Economic decline
- High cost of living in rural areas
- Fuel poverty
- Many SME’s have marginal profitability
- Declining farm incomes
- Significant out commuting for work from the area
- Cuts to public services
- The risk of losing established tourist attractions, critical mass

#### Contextual
- Community development
- Understanding of the complexities of funding
- Projects being “rural proofed”
- Aging population
- Single dale focus (e.g. parochial approaches to marketing)

#### Organisational
- Complex administrative geography
- Limited Management and Administration budget
Alignment with LEP activity

The North Pennine Dales Local Development Strategy contributes to ‘More and Better Jobs. A Strategic Economic Plan for the North East’ (March 2014) by creating more jobs, creating and supporting private sector and community businesses and connecting people and communities in the North Pennine Dales area with the region’s economy and jobs. LEADER will complement the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) delivering ‘More and Better jobs’ by ensuring there is no duplication with mainstream LEP activities, concentrating on larger strategic investments.

North Pennine Dales LEADER LAG is also working with partners on the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) in respect of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) to identify where value can be added. County Durham is a transition region for ESIF investment, and the County Durham Economic Partnership has developed an Investment Strategy for the County, which has a fit within the SEP. The Investment Strategy for County Durham has identified two potential CLLD areas, which have been selected to be complementary to the proposals for LEADER areas in the County. Development of CLLD proposals is still subject to further negotiation via the NELEP and UK Government, and the North Pennine Dales LEADER LAG will play a supportive role in developing CLLD plans if areas are confirmed.

An extensive range of documents were appraised and discussed in order to determine best alignment between funds and local strategies. Local strategies such as Gateshead Rural Economic Strategy, NELEP Independent Economic Review, Visit County Durham Destination Management Plans and the Forestry Commission’s Roots to Prosperity were taken into consideration. The LDS and any subsequent LEADER activity will work to avoid duplication of activity and resource within the North East LEP, Combined Authority, NEFRAN, North East Combined Authority and RGN and more local provision such as the County Durham Economic Partnership and local Durham Area Action Partnerships.

The LEADER National Framework Document and the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) are the main sources of information regarding the delivery of LEADER 2014 –2020. LEADER will focus on delivering the Defra agenda (as defined by the Measures) in rural communities and addressing rural issues. Consultation with colleagues delivering Regional Growth Network (RGN) funds suggest we might focus our investment into customer facing businesses where jobs and economic growth can be identified, ensuring compliance with State Aid de minimis regulations.

Discussions have also been held with Forestry Commission colleagues and activity will not duplicate the forthcoming Farming and Forestry Productivity Scheme (FFPS) or the New Environment Land Management Schemes (NELMS) -we will continue to work closely with partners for clarity.

Alignment and communication

LEADER activity will align with a number of strategies and programmes both at a regional and local level. This alignment will be achieved using the following communication channels.

Within County Durham communication takes the form of activity feeding into both the County Durham Economic Partnership’s European Investment Group, the CDEP Board and its subgroup, the Rural Working Group. Within Gateshead Council similar ties will be formed with the Gateshead Strategic Partnership. Related activity has a clear communication channel into the Economy, Environment and Culture Board supporting the delivery of the
Rural Economic Strategy (RES) Board, which controls and monitors RES activity within the Authority. A similar approach will be adopted with Northumberland County Council.

Using Local Authority corporate structures in this manner will also allow alignment with both the North East LEP, NEFRAN and RGN (LEADER Groups are represented on both NEFRAN and RGN) and other networks such as the Federation of Small Businesses, North East Chamber of Commerce and Education and Training Networks such as the County Durham Learning Partnership.

By feeding information into these channels any activity under NPD LEADER will complement these strategies and structures and the programmes they support.

**Aim of the Local Development Strategy**

The aim of the Local Development Strategy is:

*To support strong and sustainable rural economic growth throughout the North Pennine Dales area in ways which reflect the area’s local priorities, engage local people and businesses, build more resilient communities and conserve its high quality landscape and environment.*

**Our local priorities**

The consultation has identified four clear priorities: Rural business, Farming & Forestry, Rural tourism, culture and heritage, and Rural services. These priorities clearly align closely to the policy priorities which Defra has set out for the LEADER programme (2014-2020) in the National Delivery Framework.

We have translated these priorities into four key objectives for the North Pennine Dales Local Development Strategy, which have then been used to shape our proposed programme of activity.

The following information has been developed, using the information from the one-to-one consultations, the themed focus groups and the direct information from LAG members who have specific skills and interested in the identified local priorities.

**Objective 1- Rural business:**

*To encourage strong and sustainable economic growth and employment in the North Pennine Dales area through:*

- *Investing in the creation and growth of micro - and small enterprises, farm diversifications and social and community businesses*
- *Supporting innovative approaches to support appropriate apprenticeships delivered by others*
- *Supporting development of business networks, of rural business hubs and their services*

The nature of the area is one of substantial numbers of small micro businesses with many people working for themselves in a self-employed capacity. The employment opportunities can be limited and necessitates many people finding a range of income generating activities to provide a sustainable living. This can take the form of several part-time and seasonal jobs, some elements of business activity and some casual work opportunities.
In order to support the diverse range of small businesses, the new programme must provide a flexible range of support. Many SMEs require modest investment to encourage significant changes to working practices. The programme can also look into creative ways of providing the additional labour resources for growing companies and those who require occasional, or infrequent additional labour by means of a pool of local people who are looking for ways to enhance their current income levels. Much of the money paid in wages to these people will be spent within the local economy.

In the North Pennine Dales area the tourism and retail sectors and other customer-facing businesses provide both a valuable commercial component in the economy, but also a valuable social and community asset. NPD LEADER will seek ways of supporting the development and sustainability of these sectors.

Young people are a vital part of the community and more effort must be made to create the employment and career opportunities to allow them to stay in the rural areas. The challenge for many young people is finding apprenticeship places in their local area. Transport services are infrequent and travel to employment outside their immediate area is often difficult, even if they are able to find a placement. Many small rural businesses are unable to justify the cost and resources to provide a full time placement for a young person. By working with the Apprenticeship Hub in the NELEP area, the North Pennine Dales LAG will explore opportunities to help provide more innovative approaches to providing learning and work experience for young people, including such experience being provided by a group of businesses working together.

Since the demise of Business Link’s national service, business support services across the country have become fragmented, no more so than in rural areas where such services are more expensive to deliver. There is an excellent opportunity for NPD LEADER to continue the work that RGN has undertaken in the area over the last 18 months to ensure that rural businesses are able to access the widest range of opportunities to help them to grow their businesses. It has been seen that the provision of dedicated rural staff that are located in rural hubs can bring a degree of cohesion to the business support offer. LEADER would work to continue this effective mechanism as the RGN pilots wind down in early 2015. However, it is clear that the provision of business support services will also be delivered through other mechanisms and the North Pennine Dales LAG is committed to work with other providers to ensure duplication is avoided.

The consultation has identified a very strong desire for quality, local hands on business support to work alongside the offer from the Rural Growth Network and potentially others. To enable businesses to start and grow strong hands-on business support is needed, perhaps hosted in the main service areas including Barnard Castle, Stanhope, Allendale, Middleton in Teesdale, Lanchester, Prudhoe and Gateshead. We would like to encourage projects which can provide business caseworkers and mentoring support which do not conflict with other programmes running in the area. Our aspiration is to build on the Rural Growth Hub network to provide a seamless service to complement that already provided. The new area opens opportunities for supply chain development both across the rural area but also into the major conurbations such as the urban core of Newcastle Gateshead and beyond.

Additional services specifically supporting businesses in reducing energy costs through energy efficient measures and development of renewable energy generation is expected to be developed through ERDF and North Pennine Dales LEADER will invest in implementing practical measures that would otherwise not be funded.
Opportunities will be encouraged to develop the business infrastructure, including provision of space for manufacturing, office and retail in rural locations. These could be linked to farm diversification projects, home workers to further develop and grow their businesses and support job creation.

The Rural Growth Network’s ‘Rural Hubs’ pilot has invested in a range of capital projects across the NPD area (Middleton in Teesdale Mart, Gibside). These hubs offer office, creative or flexible work space in a number of key hub locations which offer enterprise and support activities in those rural locations. In addition existing ‘Hubs’ have been supported in their capacity to join, become active and network with other hubs with a view to promoting their own services in relation to enterprise and business support.

Capacity within these locations varies drastically and in many cases demand for services outstrip the ability for projects, VCS organisations and the private sector to satisfy the demand for support. Capacity building within these hubs has a strong foundation in the form of the Rural Connect website, a resource which allows communication, promotion and networking amongst the hubs themselves.

Building support around these locations would make economic sense and would take the work of the RGN pilot to the next stage. Demand led; with an adaptable and flexible offer the rural hubs may be able to identify, through their own feedback and routes to market, the needs of their own communities. To this end, the hubs could position themselves to deliver the services they feel (based on feedback from their communities) is required in those locations.

Examples of the services which may be required, or in demand within Rural Hubs have been identified within the pilot and include: CAB services, enterprise support (including one-to-one business advice, workshops and seminars and key business functions), general IAG (Information, Advice & Guidance) around access to rural services, and visitor information. Not all of such services may be able to be delivered through LEADER, but we will seek to support the delivery through additional investment and work with other programmes.

Capacity within Rural Hubs to deliver these services depends on staff within the locations- often volunteers- and the ability for Hub managers to access a suite of funding which will enable them to bring services and provision into their Hub. This could be an aspiration for the NPD LEADER programme.

We will work with broadband initiatives to develop knowledge and understanding of the benefits of a strong e-presence for businesses and rural users and invest in measures to stimulate demand of available broadband services.

North Pennine Dales LAG will work in partnership with NELEP, Business Durham, The North East Rural Growth Network, Gateshead Council and the Enterprise Agencies to ensure a joined up approach and to avoid duplication and confusion of the offer as programmes develop.
Objective 2- Farming & Forestry:

To support development of more prosperous and productive farming and forestry sectors in the North Pennine Dales area by:

- Supporting exchange of best practice to increase cooperation, efficiency, application of new technologies and recruitment of new entrants
- Partnership working to support the delivery of advice and business development services to improve networking and cooperation between woodland owners, woodland management and increase productivity
- Supporting initiatives which add value to farm and woodland products
- Development of country sports and woodland-based initiatives which contribute to the development of tourism

The Coalition Government Strategy for farming has three main ambitions Food Security, Climate Change Mitigation and the Environment. North Pennine Dales LEADER covers large areas under landscape and other environmental designations (North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, SSSI, SPA & SAC) and the carbon storage potential of the significant area of blanket bog in the North Pennines is increasingly recognised. The living and working upland landscape of the North Pennines, though financially fragile, also supports a strong and growing tourism destination which has the potential to compete with the iconic landscapes of the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales and Scotland.

We would seek to encourage cooperative and collaborative approaches within the farming communities to make production more efficient while safeguarding animal welfare and maintaining the environmental benefits of farming production. In particular we would like to see support in adopting new technologies which fully utilise their potential to achieve the above ambitions rather than just satisfying governmental and European compliance requirements. This would include the protection and better management of soils, electronic identification of sheep, small machinery partnerships between farm businesses, marketing groups etc. Stronger networking and cooperation, for instance on areas of Common Land, would also support and complement the High Nature Value Farming initiative recently started by the North Pennine AONB Partnership and the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership.

Monitor farming has proved to be a very successful method of bringing together a cluster of farmers to share ideas and identify potential solutions to their challenges. The monitor farm model has produced significant numbers of events and participation by other farmers. The North Pennine Dales LAG will build on the success of monitor farms to share ideas and explore cooperative working with the farming community.

With the average age of farmers in England now set at 59 years we need to provide support to programmes which develop the next generation and encourage farm succession planning. Initiatives like: Farmer Network and Farmers of the Future, provided opportunities for young people to become involved with agriculture, supported existing farmers and helped identify efficiencies. We will encourage involvement in the LAG from the Young Farmers groups and the agricultural sector.

The North Pennine Dales area has a strong tradition of country sports and we will seek to maximise the opportunities this presents. Hunting, shooting and fishing provide a platform for farm and Estate diversification which can encourage additional tourism activities in the shoulder months of the year. We will work with the Country Land and Business Association,
local Estates and the National Farmers Union to develop the connections and encourage projects.

There is a significant demand for quality log production, utilising undermanaged woodland with support and advice from the Forestry Commission. The challenge is delivering a solution that makes managing the undermanaged woodland financially viable. Often woodland contractors will not consider harvesting smaller areas as the cost of moving the equipment outweighs the potential return. Infrastructure and lack of capital equipment also are barriers to harvesting woodland, however once the investment is made this opens opportunities for future development.

North Pennine Dales LAG will work in partnership with the Forestry Commission to help deliver the actions to implement the ‘Roots to Prosperity’ strategy seeking to target the owners of undermanaged woodlands and to stimulate cooperation, to provide advice and guidance of the opportunities and the potential for financial return where this isn’t covered through other programmes. North Pennine Dales LEADER will support capital investments in cases where the Farming and Forestry Productivity Scheme cannot support such investment.

With the increased demand for woodfuel as an alternative energy source the price of cut logs and chip has risen opening opportunities to develop new markets within the Renewable Energy Industry. Commercial Renewable Heat Incentives are encouraging commercial organisations to consider moving away from oil to biomass. Support needs to be available for businesses and communities to access impartial advice on the financial viability, the initial investment required and the long term return. Advice needs to extend to the end users, educating in areas of best use and quality of product.

“Roots to Prosperity” also identifies opportunities to develop additional tourism activities in woodlands and we will support the development of woodland areas to encourage such activities and the opportunities for small business working alongside the Forestry Commission to provide a quality visitor experience. Working alongside the Forestry Commission we will aim to support initiatives to develop infrastructure around the advice provision.

In addition we will seek to support with project development in Hamsterley Forest and Chopwell Woods, to encourage more tourism, develop business opportunities, enrich and protect the wildlife and manage the woodland crop.

The focus groups identified a gap in provision for skilled woodland managers. By working closely with the Forestry Commission investing in the forestry industries opportunities will open up for development of the businesses and employment for the next generation. The woodfuel supply chain has room for growth and development, building on previous supported projects and encouraging new ideas to be developed.

In the development of all farming and forestry related activities the North Pennine Dales LAG will seek to ensure the environmental assets of the areas are conserved and where possible encourage environmental enhancements.
Objective 3- Rural tourism, culture & heritage:

To develop and promote responsible tourism that builds on, supports and celebrates the natural and cultural assets of the North Pennine Dales area by:

- Supporting development of new and existing visitor offers, increasing quality, sense of place, events and activities
- Supporting networks of tourism businesses, attractions, food and drink and activity providers and encouraging cooperation, business development and efficiency
- Developing small scale community infrastructure widening the visitor offer and supporting links with related tourism business investment

North Pennine Dales LEADER will work in partnership with organisations such as Visit County Durham, Northumberland Tourism, the Newcastle and Gateshead Initiative and North Pennines AONB Partnership and the National Trust to build on successful initiatives which develop the visitor offer. NPD will seek to maximise the opportunities offered by expanding the LAG area to exploit the links to Tyne and Wear and the rural corridor in County Durham.

There is a strong interest in joint promoting and developing activities that link existing tourism providers together and raise the standards of the overall offer. Using existing attractions such as Beamish and Killhope, North Pennine Dales LEADER will support activities to ensure visitors extend their stay and to encourage repeat visits. Visitor attractions and events need to be developed to complement and to work with existing provision. All weather activities, and quality events, during off peak periods (e.g. shoulder months and mid-week) will be supported. We will encourage a good visitor experience by raising standards and availability of good quality accommodation. We will also encourage a volunteers programme as part of visitor welcome, and the use of tourism activities to support sustainability of community facilities/village halls.

By aligning our activities with that of existing organisations, we will be able to maximise the development opportunities for rural tourism. There are opportunities to work with established festivals e.g. Lumiere, Brass: Durham International Festival and Sage Gateshead outreach programme.

The North Pennine Dales Local Development Strategy will support initiatives delivering the Durham Tourism Management Plan and similar ones in Gateshead and Northumberland. In addition, this activity would support the work of Gateshead’s Rural Economic Strategy which has identified a limited but improving rural offer which needs support for further enhancement.

Through close working relationships we will avoid duplication and support activities which are outside of the scope of other providers.

Gaps in provision and opportunities include:

- Development of gardens, parks and public spaces for tourism economic asset
- Creation of family friendly attractions
- Development of market towns to improve the visitor experience
- Raise the standards of visitor accommodation, attractions and restaurants
- Maximise the use of existing natural attractions for outdoor tourism
- Investment in walking and cycling trails
- Encourage projects which extend the visitor stay from day visitors to overnight stays
- Facilities for business tourism, angling tourism, food tourism and nature tourism
- Transport connectivity – cooperation and partnership working
- Adopt and encourage a professional visitor welcome attitude
- There is a patchwork of assets, which would benefit from a mapping exercise to establish the opportunities from underuse
- Themed tourism offer linking artistic hubs with projects such as Land of Oak & Iron and cultural tourism
- Maximising existing attractions such as: – Angel of the North, Bradley Gardens, Killhope, Gibside, Beamish and the Bowes Museum
- Programme of events throughout the year to attract additional visitors
- Potential for farm visitor attractions

Objective 4- Rural services:

To support the development of resilient local communities in the North Pennine Dales area through:

- Supporting community based and innovative approaches to delivery of services, including use of Broadband-based services where available
- Developing community-based service skills and locally based signposting services

We will work with key stakeholders in the sector to encourage communities to undertake in house services, utilising existing facilities, and maximising opportunities to maintain and deliver basic rural services in a sustainable way. ‘Grow Your Own’ is an idea to develop the skills and people required from within a community rather than using outside agents. Communities need to be made aware of the Localism Act and how that can benefit them, the right to bid and community asset transfer.

Access to services in large parts of North Pennine Dales area is very limited because of population sparsity with services in all forms being more expensive to deliver. Private provision of services can be poor as financial returns will be low. In recent years, rural areas have seen a reduction in health, library, transport and post office provision. Parts of the NPD area are still without Broadband coverage, making on-line access to services impossible.

Relatively small levels of funding are not going to impact on rural services or their sustainability. What can make a difference in this area could be to increase the accessibility of services for all. Projects delivering services through a social enterprise model can incorporate a group of small communities, develop skills from within the communities, create employment and strengthen community support.

Community hubs are an option to enable local groups to work together offering good value and long term sustainability by pooling resources. Development of volunteers, expanding and maintaining existing services will provide a cohesive and viable long term solution to local challenges.

Wheels to Work schemes have proved very successful in providing a low cost solution to young people’s isolation and problems with rural public transport.

In 2006 a partnership project in Gloucestershire established a pilot Village Agent scheme. The scheme works with agents, either as employed staff or volunteers, living in the
communities in which they work. Consequently they know the area and their population well, and know the available services.

Rather than offering advice, agents provide an overview of services available and offer help to access them. They often carry a laptop pc with mobile broadband. The successful pilot now means that Gloucestershire has a Village Agent presence in over 200 villages.

In Durham similar programmes do exist. In East Durham there are Welfare Champions and across the county Health Champions. In both programmes the intent is not always to give advice, but to refer or signpost into existing provision. The recent launch of the Advice Services Partnership in County Durham will make this more streamlined and again improve accessibility.

A Village Agent model when up and running can provide Asset Mapping of services to identify gaps and help in the provision and development of services. The Village Agent model works well in providing an holistic approach to tackle lack of rural services or lack of access to those services. It can work in partnership with other organisations, health, care, transport, welfare, fire and police services.

In the North Pennine Dales area Village Agents could also take a role in signposting to training opportunities and into employment services.

Programme of activity

To deliver a programme that will address the challenges identified by communities and businesses, North Pennine Dales LEADER will offer a mixed support package. The package will include:

- Procured projects where a specific need has been identified, and where an organisation is well placed to deliver and fulfil the need. Procured projects will be placed out to tender to ensure a fair, open and transparent approach with a strong commitment to value for money.
- The programme will use both proactive and reactive approaches, through open calls for projects and an ongoing project submission procedure.

We would aim for these projects to have an average project value of £35k, to address the gaps in provision of other channels of support. These gaps have been identified as, scale of project, excluded sectors and projects which find difficulty in access support through mainstream routes.

The evaluation of the previous programme suggested that the scale of investment in projects was too low, with a greater than average number of applications. By limiting the number of projects and increasing the scale of investment we will reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Smaller interventions will be delivered through a delegated scheme. The delegated scheme will only be able to operate once the format has been agreed by Defra and the Accountable Body. However if the delegated scheme is not approved by Defra the allocation will be used to support more projects via the call for projects and the ongoing submission procedure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Example project types</th>
<th>Investment and output type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification</strong>&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 4 Investments in physical assets&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 6 Farm and business productivity</td>
<td>• Premises development &lt;br&gt;• Business case workers for start up and existing businesses &lt;br&gt;• Asset investment to improve productivity &lt;br&gt;• Business network development &lt;br&gt;• Business marketing &lt;br&gt;• Support for previous projects with next phase development &lt;br&gt;• Apprenticeships, popup businesses and shop share &lt;br&gt;• Local Food – branding, supply chain, e-sales</td>
<td>Total investment: £789,168 &lt;br&gt;Projects &lt;br&gt;Holdings benefitting &lt;br&gt;Businesses benefitting &lt;br&gt;Individuals benefiting &lt;br&gt;Jobs created &lt;br&gt;Jobs safeguarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for increasing farm and forestry productivity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 4 Investments in physical assets&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 6 Farm and business productivity&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 8 Investment in forest area development and improvement of the viability of the viability of forests</td>
<td>• Monitor farm investment &lt;br&gt;• Collaborative working &lt;br&gt;• Farmers for the Future &lt;br&gt;• Succession planning &lt;br&gt;• Increase awareness - value of existing woodlands &lt;br&gt;• Investments to increase productivity &lt;br&gt;• Projects to encourage new entrants &lt;br&gt;• Alternative energy supply chain development - &lt;br&gt;• Process marketing &amp; development of agricultural products &lt;br&gt;• Energy usage – reduction schemes &lt;br&gt;• Biomass</td>
<td>Total investment: £591,876 &lt;br&gt;Projects &lt;br&gt;Holdings/forests/woodlands benefiting &lt;br&gt;Businesses benefitting &lt;br&gt;Individuals benefiting &lt;br&gt;Jobs created &lt;br&gt;Jobs safeguarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for rural tourism including cultural and heritage activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 4 Investments in physical assets&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 6 Farm and business productivity&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 7 Basic services and village renewal in rural areas</td>
<td>• Capital investment to raise standards of existing tourism offer &lt;br&gt;• Development of new tourism attractions &lt;br&gt;• Collaborative approaches &lt;br&gt;• Joint marketing and local branding &lt;br&gt;• Events &amp; festivals &lt;br&gt;• Green tourism &lt;br&gt;• Food trails, local markets, local produce &lt;br&gt;• Preservation of heritage –e.g. music</td>
<td>Total investment £493,230 &lt;br&gt;Projects &lt;br&gt;Existing tourism activities supported &lt;br&gt;New tourism activities supported &lt;br&gt;Potential additional overnight stays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provision of rural services</strong>&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 4 Investments in physical assets&lt;br&gt;Note: Measure 7 Basic services and village renewal in rural areas</td>
<td>• Village agents &lt;br&gt;• Wheels to work &lt;br&gt;• Multiuse of existing facilities &lt;br&gt;• Sustainability projects for community buildings &lt;br&gt;• One Stop Centre - Community hubs &lt;br&gt;• Leisure activities &lt;br&gt;• Care facilities &lt;br&gt;• IT activities &lt;br&gt;• Community heating schemes</td>
<td>Total investment £98,646 &lt;br&gt;Projects &lt;br&gt;Businesses benefitting &lt;br&gt;Villages/communities benefiting &lt;br&gt;Jobs created &lt;br&gt;Jobs safeguarded &lt;br&gt;Population benefitting</td>
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Targets, results and outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<td>Existing tourism activities supported</td>
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<td>Potential additional overnight stays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Village/communities benefitting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities benefitting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forests/woodlands/holdings benefitting</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sustainability appraisal

Working with the East Durham LAG, a peer to peer assessment of each other’s Local Development Strategy has been undertaken using a sustainability appraisal template. The appraisal covered fourteen key points including: employment, economic growth, vibrant communities, local needs, environment, social inclusion and participative approach.

The sustainability appraisal of this LDS concluded that the LDS reveals a high level of awareness of sustainability issues beyond a single focus on achieving sustainability of projects when the period of funding for the programme or projects come to an end. There is a clear understanding of the elements of economic, environmental and social/community sustainability which appear to be mainstreamed throughout the strategy. There are no notable omissions or remedial actions required. Whilst there is no reference to monitoring sustainability it is not felt necessary to include such detail in a strategic document and may be referred to in delivery documents and project appraisal.

The LAG as part of the County Council will adhere to local authority policies around procurement of services and transport, and will encourage project applicants to look at sustainability within their own organisations. Sustainability of activity and applicant will form part of the project assessment.

Proposed co-operation activity

Cooperation activity in the period 2014-2020 will be funded centrally with LAGs making applications for cooperation activities direct to Defra. Cooperation can be between neighbouring LAGs, with LAGs elsewhere in England or with LAGs in other UK and European countries. The North Pennine Dales LAG has identified a number of opportunities for cooperation activity.

Following a staff exchange in 2012 the North Pennine Dales LAG has developed a strong working relationship between LAGs in the Czech Republic. This relationship has continued with activities involving local food, food festivals and community cohesion. This experience has led to an opportunity to share and exchange thoughts to continue development of better food networks in both countries.

During the development of the new area for the North Pennine Dales LEADER discussions were held with the Solway Border & Eden LAG with regard to Alston Moor and with the
Northumberland Uplands LAG in relation to Hexham as a Hub Town. Cooperation and collaboration across these boundaries will be promoted and encouraged within the programme. Joint and aligned projects are envisaged across these borders, capitalising on the geographic sense of place that exists in these areas.

From 2015 onwards the Pennine Way will be managed by a partnership, which will be looking to develop the staying tourism offer. The route cuts across at least four LEADER areas which will provide opportunities for cooperation activities to develop a continuous, consistent message.

4. Management and Administration

Accountable Body

Durham County Council as the local authority has agreed to act as Accountable Body for the new North Pennine Dales LEADER LAG.

Durham County Council (DCC) has extensive experience in carrying out the role of Accountable Body, having managed LEADER Programmes since the early 1990s. DCC will undertake this role in accordance with the National Operational Manual and the regulatory key and ancillary controls required.

It is envisaged that DCC will employ all staff required for the efficient and compliant management and administration of the Programme. This will ensure that all required roles are undertaken in the most efficient way possible, and economies of scale can be realised through working as flexibly as possible across the range of roles and responsibilities.

Due to the restriction of only being able to utilise 18% of the allocation on management and administration functions, it is expected that the Programme will be able to operate for a period of 5 years, rather than the 6.25 expected.

The North Pennine Dales LAG and Durham County Council as Accountable Body are committed to work in partnership to deliver this Local Development Strategy. The Accountable Body will employ the staff to deliver all functions associated with LEADER and it is acknowledged that the LAG Executive will have an important role in overseeing this work. An agreement will be drawn up between LAG and Accountable Body setting out the responsibilities of each party, the role of the project coordinator and other LAG staff roles, and will identify how any disagreements between LAG Executive and Accountable Body will be addressed.

Maintaining the required separation of duties, staff will be involved in the following activities:

Project development and assessment

Assisting project applicants with project development for LEADER funds by:

- Animation through stimulating local interest in rural development, bringing forward ideas and projects
- Providing eligibility advice and guidance on proposed activities
- Signposting to other delivery mechanisms of RDPE in the North East, where appropriate
- Ensuring eligibility of proposed actions for RDPE
• Checking appropriate alignment with the RDPE Programme
• Undertaking Project Engagement Visits

**Maintaining maximum community involvement in delivery and management of the North Pennine Dales LEADER Local Development Strategy by:**

• Organising regular Local Action Group meetings
• Facilitate and encourage active involvement of Local Action Group members in the RDPE Network
• Organise appropriate training and support for Local Action Group members

**Completing project assessments on project applications by:**

• Assessing completeness of project applications to ensure a smooth and efficient Technical Appraisal process
• Confirming eligibility of project activities
• Assessing projects’ strategic fit to the LEADER Local Development Strategies and Delivery Plans
• Assessing against selection criteria as set out in the RDPE including assessing value for money of project proposals, reasonableness of the proposed activity and reliability of the applicant
• Determine the appropriate level of LEADER investment and undertake State Aid assessments

**Claims and payments**

**Management and Administration of LEADER by:**

• Issuing grant offer letters to project applicants in accordance with the decisions of the LAG and Defra RDT.
• Processing and reporting project variations in accordance with Defra RDT guidelines
• Monitoring of budget spend forecasts for LEADER in the North Pennine Dales area and implementing actions to address any slippage with budget forecasts
• Providing regular spend forecasts to Defra/RPA
• Respond to any requests for information regarding North Pennine Dales LEADER programme
• Monitor Programme outputs
• Certifying and authorising claims in accordance with RDPE eligibility guidance to ensure compliance
• Report and action irregularities
• Undertaking monitoring visits
• Working in close partnership with communities, businesses and other partners advising them of any opportunities available through the North Pennine Dales LEADER Programme
• Report Programme progress to the Local Action Group
• Set up and maintenance of management and information systems such as ROD and CAP-D
• Retain all Programme information for a minimum of 10 years from the end of the programme.
Maintaining the profile of North Pennine Dales LEADER by:

- Publicising and promoting LEADER in the North Pennine Dales area

Communication and publicity

To ensure the programme is widely known about and to encourage participation an active animation role and communication plan will be developed.

An early call for Local Action Group members will be the start of promotional activities. All press releases will promote the European funding, managed through Defra and appropriate logos will be used. Social media will be used to raise awareness and links to the North Pennine Dales website will be promoted.

The LEADER programme will be promoted through a series of community events throughout the area to raise awareness of the level of investment and the type of projects which are of interest. These events will target specific sectors and be promoted through the local media and networks. At the event banners, presentation and information provided will include the LEADER logos.

To achieve a wider circulation the Project Coordinator will animate the programme by attending meetings and events hosted by the community and partners. By using existing networks, partnerships and key stakeholders there will be an opportunity to cascade the offer available from LEADER.

Action Plan

To ensure priorities in the LDS are translated into activity promptly the following actions will be undertaken. This assumes the LDS is approved by the end of November 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open call for LAG Executive members</td>
<td>1 December 2014</td>
<td>Accountable body/ Transition LAG</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAG Executive selection</td>
<td>17 December 2014</td>
<td>Selection group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment of staff if required</td>
<td>w/b 5 January 2015</td>
<td>Accountable body + LAG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft tenders for two procured projects</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>Transition LAG, Project Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue tenders procured projects</td>
<td>w/b 5 Jan 2015</td>
<td>Accountable Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>First LAG Executive meeting-induction training</td>
<td>w/b 12 Jan 2015</td>
<td>Accountable Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment of tender submissions</td>
<td>w/b 26 Jan 2015</td>
<td>Accountable Body, LAG Exec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue press release North Pennine Dales programme</td>
<td>w/b 2 Feb 2015</td>
<td>Accountable Body, LAG Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second LAG Exec meeting-training</td>
<td>w/b 9 Mar 2015</td>
<td>Project Officer, LAG Chair, AB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Launch event- first public call for projects</td>
<td>w/b 23 Mar 2015</td>
<td>Project Officer, LAG Exec</td>
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<td>LEADER Policy Priority</td>
<td>RDPE expenditure per FTE job created (£)</td>
<td>Average RDPE grant size (£)</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td><strong>Support for increasing farm productivity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification</strong></td>
<td>11,931</td>
<td>19,951</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for rural tourism</strong></td>
<td>32,477</td>
<td>31,764</td>
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<td><strong>Support for culture and heritage activity</strong></td>
<td>55,991</td>
<td>28,165</td>
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<td><strong>Provision of rural services</strong></td>
<td>33,272</td>
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<td><strong>Support for increasing forestry productivity</strong></td>
<td>77,045</td>
<td>21,788</td>
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