



LEADER 2015-2020 Consultation Process Feedback and Update

The following document contains a summary of the four consultation events that took place throughout February and March 2014 at Hovingham, Loftus, Burniston and Northallerton. Four broad themes were covered at each of the consultation events – Natural Environment, Business, Agriculture / Forestry / Fisheries and Communities.

The responses to the questions posed – what are our needs and opportunities within each of these key areas, and what potential projects or areas of activity are out there – will now be analysed in terms of the following 6 priorities once we have received further information from Defra in the next couple of weeks.

Defra's priorities for all future LEADER Programmes are:

- 1) Support for micro /small enterprise & farm diversification
- 2) Support for increasing farm productivity
- 3) Support for rural tourism
- 4) Support for increasing forestry productivity
- 5) Provision of rural services
- 6) Support for cultural & heritage activity

Natural Environment

The following themes all emerged strongly from the majority of consultation session discussions.

- **Use of 'Blue Infrastructure'**

Better use our rivers and coastline as an economic tool. Natural environment activity here could include basic management of rivers, sensitive approaches to water management, invasive species and catchment sensitive farming along with links to a variety of tourism development opportunities including improved access and leisure activities.

- **Local Food**

Look at 'conservation grade' produce, joint marketing and branding opportunities for local products (including game), a local 'quality' mark, online sales portal for all small producers and farmers markets.

- **Nature Tourism**

Utilise the quality natural environment we have to encourage tourism / recreation opportunities based on a specific species, landscape or habitat, dark skies, foraging, art etc.

- **Skills & Apprenticeships**

Lots of discussion took place around the need to protect traditional skills through training opportunities and apprenticeships based in the natural environment as well as by linking to the farming and forestry sectors.

- **Built Heritage, Culture & Traditions**

Better use these strengths as a tourism driver and encourage the movement of visitors between market towns and the rural hinterland. Need to better understand our market towns in terms for functionality for the variety of user groups, as well as the historical and landscape contexts within which they sit. Links to folk festivals, traditional games, customs and celebrations were all also mentioned.

- **Specific Species / Habitat Work**

Bats, invasive species, black bees, ponds and grasslands amongst others were all mentioned. The opportunities and potential benefits of undertaking this work on a small but strategically targeted way directly through communities was discussed.

Business

Discussions within the business group at each event seemed to focus on two main areas of potential activity - the need to provide specific support for businesses to actively engage with and benefit further from tourism and the visitor economy, and the support needed by the small and micro business sector more broadly.

- **Networking and Clusters**

These were considered a valuable tool as they offer opportunities for collaboration, joint ventures, training and information and resources sharing etc. Mentoring was also mentioned as a valuable way of supporting new and developing businesses. Themed business support networks were discussed with specific reference made to creative and agricultural businesses.

- **Direct Business Support**

This covered discussions around better use of existing buildings in the community to operate as hubs, start-up units etc, along with a small grants scheme for businesses to allow them to expand, grow and diversify. The need for this direct support extended from the private sector through to social enterprises. Support is needed to encourage community or social enterprise start-up and to encourage community projects to become more enterprising / business minded.

- **Skills and Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships in newly emerging and more creative sectors such as digital media were felt to be as valuable as the traditional skills and land management courses. It was felt support is needed for both the business and the apprentice. Linked to this line of discussion was a desire for better links with FE colleges / universities and issues around transport needs – Wheels to Work was cited as a good example here.

- **Technology**

Broadband and mobile technology needs were consistently raised. Infrastructure and assistance to maximise these were both mentioned. Training and skills in website design, online sales etc as well as better using newer forms of communication and social media were all discussed.

Agriculture / Forestry / Fisheries

Whilst needing to undertake further consultation with this sector, a range of interesting and innovative ideas started to emerge as a result of conversations at the events.

- **Skills, Knowledge and Best Practice**

Skills, knowledge and resources sharing via networking or cluster groups was discussed at all four of the events. The sharing of skills between generations, re-introducing traditional skills in some instances to better manage land, apprentices and skills training for all, as well as the possibility of under taking pilot or 'co-operative' projects to test new technology or good practice were all mentioned. Specific examples of activity included communal abattoirs, community anaerobic digesters, precision farming techniques and energy efficiency technologies.

- **Wood fuel & Timber Processing**

Traditional management techniques of woodland and forests combined with apprenticeships and links to biomass projects were identified. Woodland activity could also potentially link to wildlife / habitat improvements and could assist with flooding / water management issues.

- **Agricultural Production**

Crop rotation, 'greening' measures and food production. Links to local food production with sales outlets, joint branding, quality produce marks etc. Assistance to help farms diversify was felt to be needed.

- **Fisheries Industry**

Opportunities here to benefit from the wind farm developments off the coast. Training, skills and employment opportunities are all evident here. Local seafood, especially shellfish was also mentioned as part of the discussions around local food.

Communities

The 'Communities' discussion group was well attended at each of the four events and the main areas of discussion raised at the four events were broadly similar but the overall breadth of discussion was large.

- **Support for Small Scale Projects**

This is where the strongest feelings emerged. Many delegates felt that continuing to support small scale, low level activity (up to around £5,000) was needed and would be beneficial.

- **Community Capacity Building**

This was considered to be an area of need for most communities. Networks, mentoring, sharing of resources, help to work with neighbouring communities and support for recruiting and maintaining volunteers were all highlighted as being valuable areas of activity.

- **Rural Service Provision**

This theme brought out conversations around community buildings, better use of existing under used buildings, the need for ICT training, connectivity (mobile and broadband), local means of communication and sports / leisure facilities. Support for communities to initiate community owned enterprises or take on new assets was also felt to be a way to increase economic opportunities locally whilst providing the services most in need.

- **Other Activity**

Other activity within, and for the benefit of, communities within the area included improvements to public footpaths and rights of way, support for events and festivals, projects to engage people in heritage and culture, Totally Locally type of activities, and public realm improvements. Many of these have strong links with the three other themes consulted on.

Next Steps

The next stage of the development process on the way to creating a new LEADER Programme is to analyse the information further and develop a proposed programme of activity that meet with the needs and opportunities of our area that have been identified locally, and also fits within (without duplicating other areas of) the new national Rural Development Programme. Throughout this process we will also be looking for opportunities and projects to collaborate and co-operate with both our neighbouring Local Action Groups (LAGs) and those from around the UK and Europe.

If you have any further comments or project ideas then please send them to me (see contact details) by the end of April. They can then be considered as part of the development and planning process.

We are planning to undertake further consultation on the proposed new LEADER Programme in June / July and would very much welcome any comments you have on this again then. If you would like to remain in contact with the Programme and continue to receive updates on our progress, including a monthly e-bulletin, then please do join the LAG using the form attached to the email. This will be our primary means of communicating news of the LEADER Programme with all interested parties.

Contact Details

For further information, or if you have any questions or queries then please contact:

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