The New Forest LEADER
Local Development Strategy 2015 - 2020

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Local Development Strategy (LDS) represents the needs and aspirations of the rural communities within the New Forest Local Action Group (LAG) area in relation to rural development opportunities provided through the LEADER Programme.

The New Forest has a complex, interdependent economy, with many businesses reliant to some degree on the unique, internationally recognised, landscape and cultural heritage of the area. In developing the LDS, the New Forest LAG have focused on those predominantly local issues which have the potential to be addressed either directly through LEADER or in collaboration with partner organisations including the Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Authorities. There are also a large number of wider economic issues affecting the LAG area, but as these factors are not unique to the New Forest and generally fall outside of the scope of LEADER objectives, they have not been given particular prominence in this strategy.

2.0 THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP AREA

The New Forest LAG area is based around the New Forest National Park and includes the rural areas of New Forest District Council (NFDC) together with a number of adjacent parishes in Southern Wiltshire, the Lower Test Valley and part of the Cranborne Chase AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Within the LAG area, the population eligible for LEADER support is approx. 113,000, and includes the rural 'hub towns' of Ringwood and Lymington. A map of the LAG area is included at appendix 1.

The New Forest National Park is a unique landscape survival in lowland England - 569 square kilometres of ancient woodland, mire and heath, closely connected to its market towns, villages, smallholdings and farms. Over 56% of the National Park is designated of international importance for nature conservation and the New Forest is one of the few extensive lowland commons where commoning rights are still widely practised and a strong commoning culture continues. The commoners' holdings and the need for pasture as back-up grazing have influenced the pattern of settlements and fields on the enclosed lands. It is an area with a cohesive identity of landscape and culture, characterised by farming, forestry and commoning which in turn support the landscape and a strong tourism industry.

The LAG boundary includes a number of parishes around the National Park as many of the commoning, contracting, and producer businesses that are critical to the local economy are located within these areas. The nature of the New Forest, the development policies and the price of land in the central area of the Forest, all mean that businesses whose work is focussed on the New Forest and in many situations are essential to maintaining the rural landscape, are more often located within the Forest periphery and the adjacent market towns. A high proportion of land managers have secondary employment within the rural business, forestry and tourism sectors, demonstrating the complex links and inter-reliance of the local economy and the New Forest landscape.

Whilst the LAG area includes parishes within the administrative boundaries of Christchurch Borough Council, Wiltshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council, supporting evidence relating to New Forest District Council, as the largest single entity, has been used where appropriate.

3.0 THE STRATEGY

The following section outlines the economic context within which the New Forest Local Development Strategy must operate, and looks at the issues (both strengths and weaknesses) faced by the LAG area. This is based on an extensive SWOT analysis (available on request) and the six main policy priorities for the rural development programme.

3.1 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE NEW FOREST LAG AREA

The New Forest lacks a single major centre in the district, instead it is characterised by a number of relatively prosperous but smaller towns located around the edge of the LAG area, including the rural hub towns of Ringwood and Lymington. Whilst providing a range of jobs, these towns are unlikely to attract the major corporations that might bring with them the higher level occupations and higher wages that would boost the overall prosperity of the district. The lack of a single major urban centre means there is no single driver of growth from which surrounding rural areas can benefit.
The District level analysis\(^3\) (based on changes 1998 – 2001), categorized the New Forest as a significantly rural, low productivity, district. In 2004, Defra classified the New Forest as being one of five districts in the South East with significant poor rural economic performance\(^4\). Despite the time elapsed since the publication of these reports, the issues largely remain unchanged.

**The unique environment and landscape of the area is its greatest economic asset….**

It provides the stimulus for much of the economic activity in the area, generating up to 13.5 million leisure visits per annum\(^5\) by providing opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment. The landscape and free-roaming commoner’s livestock are a major attraction for visitors\(^6\).

**The New Forest has a higher proportion of micro-enterprises than the national norm….**

New Forest District has more individual enterprises than Portsmouth or Southampton or any of the other districts in Hampshire\(^7\). Of this, 88.6% are micro-businesses\(^8\) and ensure the LAG area benefits from a huge diversity of enterprises. Within this are a high proportion of agricultural, horticultural and forestry related businesses\(^9\), providing essential environmental and landscape services.

**Of these a significant proportion are self-employed ….**

In the New Forest, 14.6% of business owners are self-employed compared to 10.4% in Hampshire and 11% in the SE\(^10\), with many working within skilled trades and land-based sectors. Of concern is that it has been estimated\(^11\) that in the UK the earnings of those who are self-employed fell from just under £15,000 a year in 2000 to £10,400 in 2011, a real decline of just over 31%.

**…with potential for productivity to be improved**

The percentage of VAT registered businesses is lower in the New Forest (8.4%) than in the rest of the South East (10%)\(^12\); this suggests these businesses have a turnover below the VAT threshold of £81,000. Local consultation identified that many lack the skills, confidence and investment to grow their businesses in order to take advantage of new opportunities and more efficient ways of working.

**Employment growth within the New Forest lags behind the rest of the region….**

Between 2010 and 2014, the number of jobs within the New Forest fell by 4.6%; this figure is higher still amongst young people (aged 16-24)\(^13\) where the figure is in excess of 20%. This decline is greater than those for Hampshire, Enterprise M3 or the South East Region. As the economy recovers, there is significant capacity within the local economy to reinstate the jobs previously lost, particularly amongst young people.

**The New Forest has above average employment in the rural land-based sector….**

There are still a large number of these businesses in the LAG area, providing employment that is above the average for Hampshire and the South East\(^14\). There are 487 agricultural holdings (above 5ha) in the area covered by NFDC alone, a greater number than in other districts within Hampshire\(^15\). To this number must also be added the farms in the rural areas of Southern Wiltshire and Test Valley. Employment within agriculture is well above county and regional averages with 1714 individuals within the NFDC area alone directly employed by the sector\(^16\).

**Farms are small and less resilient than larger holdings….**

Although the LAG area has a diverse farming and horticultural sector, within the New Forest National Park 80% of holdings are of less than 20 hectares\(^17\). These farms are essential to the maintenance of the landscape and its economy and have high historic and ecological value (commoning is the only practical way of maintaining the unique Forest landscape). However they are less resilient than larger holdings that benefit from economies of scale. Incomes on mixed farms (which predominate in the area) are forecast to fall by 8% in 2013/14\(^18\).

This lack of resilience impacts on the New Forest in many ways. The landscape of the open Forest is dependent on the different grazing patterns of both ponies and cattle; however cattle numbers have fallen in recent years, due mainly to a combination of the high cost of equipment and an increasing administrative burden relative to the small herd sizes associated with New Forest commoner holdings\(^19\). There are also water quality issues in the sensitive New Forest river catchments as a result of diffuse pollution from farms and equine businesses\(^20\).
But the area provides many opportunities for growth

The New Forest Landscape Character Area profile (2013) recognises agriculture’s significant contribution to ‘ecosystem services’. LEADER support will enable farm businesses to further enhance this role through investment in business and environmental performance and resilience.

The New Forest Marque® has enabled local producers to market their produce under a collective and easily identified local trademark and the strength of the local visitor economy provides opportunities for further development of this and other schemes.

There is also significant potential for farm businesses to improve income from diversified activities especially those around the periphery of the National Park; in 2007 it was estimated that only 43% of small farms in the UK diversify compared to 63% of large farms. Given the high proportion of small farms in the New Forest and the LAG’s knowledge of the farming community it would suggest that the situation in the New Forest is similar. Local consultation has identified that access to capital is one of the biggest constraints to the development of farm diversification activities and there is a clear role for LEADER support in this regard.

Privately owned woodland is in small, unmanaged blocks....

The New Forest LAG area contains just under 28,000 hectares of woodland in blocks larger than 2 ha. Of this, almost half is in private ownership but it is estimated that 66% of this is currently undermanaged or unmanaged. Lack of management can result in no more than 10% of broadleaf crops being suitable for the saw logs market and it is estimated that harvesting across the area is generally less than 30% of the Maximum Sustainable Yield.

The homogenous age of woods across the area and a lack of new plantings pose a timber supply and conservation risk in the next 20-30 years as current timber reaches harvesting age. Anecdotal evidence suggests some local sawmills will not use local hardwood due to quality concerns and uncertainty that the current local supply chain could meet demand. High densities of deer are also compromising woodland management.

But the forestry infrastructure is in place...

It is estimated that if 75% of privately owned woodlands in the New Forest were brought back into effective management, it would equate to approximately 28,000m³ of timber per annum. With four sawmills in the New Forest LAG area and a significant local contractor base, who have the specific skills to manage woodland on sensitive sites, the area is well placed to increase forestry productivity if it can address the issue of unmanaged private woodlands.

High historic and ecological value of the area as well as culture, identity and free-roaming commoner's stock attract 13.5 million visits a year....

Total expenditure by visitors to the New Forest is estimated to have increased by 2.7% in 2012 compared to 2010. This expenditure translates to £491,363,000 worth of income for local businesses. Compared to 2010 this represents an increase of 5.6% in total tourism value. It is also estimated that total tourism related expenditure supports 13% of jobs in the New Forest. There is potential however to increase the range of businesses and settlements which benefit from the visitor economy through initiatives which help to extend the season, length of stays and increase visitor spend.

The New Forest benefits from low unemployment....

Unemployment (at 1.3%) is lower than in the rest of Hampshire, however youth unemployment as a % of total claimants is disproportionately high compared to the rest of the County especially in individual wards where the rates are around 8-10%.

But the jobs that do exist tend to be in lower productivity sectors....

Low unemployment rates mask the fact that many of those who are in work are employed in low pay, lower skilled employment with jobs biased towards skilled trades, operatives, personal services and elementary occupations. The jobs that are provided in the New Forest (no matter where the workers live) pay significantly less than the regional average. Earnings by residence in the New Forest are less (£13.39/hr) than in the rest of the SE (£14.37/hr) as are earnings by workplace. Those at the lower end of the earnings scale are particularly disadvantaged; the incomes of the 10% lowest earners in the New Forest are lower than anywhere else in the SE.
And many jobs are seasonal….
As a consequence of significant temporary / seasonal employment within tourism, unemployment in the New Forest peaks in the winter and reduces in summer months.

Pockets of deprivation in a prosperous County…
Although IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) data shows Hampshire as one of the least deprived areas in the Country this analysis masks underlying pockets of deprivation. Of the 20 Hampshire LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) with the highest levels of children living in families where income is less than 60% of the national median average, 3 are in the New Forest (the others are in the urban areas of Gosport and Havant). The Hampshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2011/12 stated: ‘taking in to consideration a range of poverty measures, covering both incidence and impact, the greatest levels of child poverty in Hampshire can be found in the New Forest and Havant’.

Those aged 16 to 29 years old contribute two out of every five out-migrants from the district…
In NFDC the average cost of a house was more than 11 times the average income making it difficult for those on lower incomes and young people to compete in the housing market. This compares to 10 times for the South East and 9.7 for Hampshire. Young people need an incentive to remain in or return to the district, in particular the type of higher wage jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that will enable them to compete in the housing market.

Broadband coverage is poor or non-existent in some areas….
The New Forest has the poorest superfast broadband coverage in Hampshire, but has been required to contribute more than any other authority to the BDUK programme which aims to provide superfast to 90% of premises by the end of 2015. This has implications for the 95% of respondents who stated in the New Forest Broadband Survey that broadband is important or very important to their business.

Rural communities have poor access to services….
Of the almost 32,500 LSOAs in England, 3 within NFDC are ranked within the bottom 1% of the domain which refers to ‘Access to Services’, and overall 28 LSOAs fall within the bottom 25% in this domain.

However cohesive communities are good at finding their own solutions…
The last LEADER programme supported a wide variety of community initiatives across the LAG area; the majority were projects generated and managed by the communities in which they were located. The next LEADER programme therefore offers opportunities for these communities and their partners to utilise their skills and existing infrastructure to address gaps in rural service provision.

3.2 LOCAL PRIORITIES - DRIVING PRODUCTIVITY
This section identifies the opportunities for growth in the New Forest LAG area using LEADER to support the five drivers of productivity - investment, innovation, skills, enterprise and competition.

Productivity Driver 1: Innovation

Constraints on local innovation:
A high proportion of micro-businesses in any one location can result in lower levels of innovation and this may be particularly true for the lower productivity sectors typically found within the New Forest.

Opportunities for LEADER intervention:
Provide support for businesses to exploit new ideas; new technologies, new products or new structures and ways of working. These types of innovations can boost productivity, for example as better equipment works faster and more efficiently.

The area benefits from a number of active business associations which are also cross-connected; it is their collective action that will be the driver for many of the innovative approaches outlined in the LDS, as well as a key communication method, ensuring active engagement by target businesses. Initiatives will be delivered by partners including the New Forest Tourism Association, which has over 250
members, New Forest Produce Ltd, with 120 members and the New Forest Business Partnership which links to nearly 4,000 businesses.

**Within the local forestry sector….**
Closer working between producers, contractors, retailers and consumers would improve the supply chain for wood products and increase uptake of initiatives such as ‘Grown in Britain’. However landowners in the New Forest have struggled to work collaboratively with the resources previously available to them. An innovative approach for the LAG area would be for small woodland owners to form cooperatives or hypothetical estates, which could utilise a professional forester to broker operation deals. The continuing development of wood product markets provides an opportunity to bring under-managed woodlands back into management, resulting in economic and environmental gains, but it requires local co-ordination and facilitation of these activities.

**Within agriculture and commoning….**
Opportunities exist to stimulate innovation within traditional land based sectors through utilising established networks and trusted facilitators to develop new and collaborative approaches to land and resource management.

**Within tourism…..**
The New Forest Tourism Association and its partners, have a strong track record of driving innovation within the sector. There are significant opportunities to benefit the local economy by ensuring all local business networks link together to develop collaborative distribution and marketing activities as well as enhancing digital opportunities and skills.

**Productivity Driver 2: Enterprise**

**Constraints on local enterprise:**
Business start-up rates in the area rank in the bottom 20% of districts nationally\(^43\). The rate of start-up enterprises and local units in the New Forest was 47.7 per 10,000 adult residents compared to 58.2 per 10,000 for the rest of Hampshire\(^44\). In addition, the New Forest has a higher proportion of businesses established over 10 years (46.7%) than the rest of the SE (41.8%) but a lower level of enterprises less than 2 years old (11.4%) compared to the rest of the SE (14.5%)\(^45\). These statistics are supported by the 2014 New Forest Business Needs Survey\(^46\) which confirmed the high volume of long established micro-businesses within the area.

**Opportunities for LEADER intervention:**
Entrepreneurs and businesses, both start-ups and existing, require support to take advantage of new opportunities and develop the management skills to sustain their business in the longer term. However, consultation and the Business Needs Survey identified reluctance by many small businesses in the LAG area, to acknowledge the benefits of business development and mentoring support. It also identified that many self-employed in the area tended to define themselves by industry or activity rather than as ‘businesses’. As such they do not readily access mainstream business support initiatives meaning many lack the most basic business management skills.

The LAG started to address this issue in the last LEADER programme by linking business development support to the grant process; encouraging over 60 land-based micro-businesses (considered at the time by Business Link to be ‘hard to reach’) to commit to 1:1 business support. This safeguarded the LEADER investment in their business and provided the business with the management skills they needed to sustain growth and generate employment opportunities. However it was also apparent that many of those running micro-businesses lacked the basic skills (and confidence) needed to write a simple business plan, undertake financial forecasting or complete an application form for LEADER funding without 1:1 support. This was particularly apparent in many of the land-based, sole trader businesses within the area and was compounded by a lack of digital skills.

Support for entrepreneurs and enterprise is therefore a key feature of the LDS and the LAG will work with the LEPs to find solutions to the current low uptake of business support and mentoring throughout the New Forest.
**Productivity Driver 3: Skills**

**Constraints on local skills development:**
In the New Forest, 11.5% of adults aged 16 – 65 have no qualifications, one of the highest proportions in Hampshire. In addition, the proportion of the working population of the New Forest, who are in ‘elementary occupations’, is significantly higher at 14.81% than in the rest of Hampshire (11.30%).

In the 2014 Business Needs Survey, over 50% of respondents felt that ‘marketing, promotion and social media’ skills were their greatest area of weakness followed by ‘IT professional skills’ and ‘sales skills’. The growth of social media has been rapid in recent years and the results of the survey suggest that there is need for training and support to enable businesses to fully utilise its benefits.

**Opportunities for LEADER Intervention:**
Skills development, both of business owners and their workforce, is a key objective for the LAG as they have a direct impact on the productivity of the area. Whilst mainstream skills development is outside the scope of LEADER, as it will be delivered by the Growth Funds and others, the LAG will work in collaboration with LEPs and partners to address specific skills gaps within the New Forest; in particular within ‘hard to reach’ micro-businesses who do not access mainstream business support. LEADER will also support the development of clusters of similar businesses including supply chain development and networking opportunities.

**Productivity Driver 4: Competition**

**Constraints on competition:**
Competition is a crucial factor in driving economic growth. The relatively low level of business start-ups, as well as the high number of very small businesses who are less likely to innovate, has potential to constrain this driver of growth in the New Forest. Competitive pressure encourages businesses to increase their efficiency and innovate to gain a cost advantage, to differentiate their products, or to bring new products to the market place.

**Opportunities for LEADER Intervention:**
The New Forest, its environment, culture and heritage is a key source of competitive advantage for the LAG area and the visitors that its special qualities attracts, underpins a significant proportion of local economic activity. However the landscape is dependent upon its sensitive and sustainable management and this needs an economic imperative, in addition to local businesses and individuals with the right skills and investment to provide effective management services. In addition to the opportunities to support enterprise start-ups and innovation, as outlined previously, the LDS will support businesses to maximise the benefits of their location and the opportunities it provides.

**Productivity Driver 5: Investment**

**Constraints on investment:**
The LAG area has a high proportion of sole trader micro-businesses, operating below the VAT threshold, that are unable to access sufficient financial resources to make the necessary step-change in performance.

Broadband remains a critical resource for businesses, especially for the 10% within the area who will fall outside the scope of the BDUK programme. This is illustrated in the 2013 New Forest Broadband Needs Survey where a third of respondents stated that they had lost business for this reason. For farmers, the lack of broadband hinders their use of online stock movement registrations. The move to on-line farm payments and other Government services further disadvantages the sector.

**Opportunities for LEADER intervention:**
The LAG will support capital investment in small businesses and not for profit organisations to help them to become more efficient, productive, innovative and resilient.

Whilst improvements to the broadband infrastructure are not within the remit of LEADER, enabling businesses to benefit from the BDUK programme has significant scope for LAG intervention. The reliance on broadband technologies is only likely to increase and as such for rural businesses, access to broadband will be as important as water and energy.
3.3 BUILDING ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LEADER 2008 – 2013

The previous LEADER Programme largely focused on helping secure the long term viability of the area’s land-based sector through adding value to local produce and encouraging sustainable land management. It was particularly successful in supporting businesses throughout the forestry and wood-fuel supply chain. An independent evaluation of the 2008–13 programme confirmed that it “has been wholly successful in achieving its original aims and objectives” and concluded “the New Forest Leader programme was a major success in helping many projects that would otherwise not have gone ahead”.

The complex interdependent nature of the local economy now needs the focus of LEADER to spread to a wider range of rural enterprises, including those within the tourism and heritage sector, to take advantage of opportunities to increase their productivity, sustainability and contribute to the economic wellbeing of the area.

The downturn in the UK economy throughout the 2008-13 programme, resulted in a lower number of applications from business start-ups than had been anticipated. To ensure entrepreneurs benefit from the next programme, the LAG will work closely with local delivery partners, including the Princes Trust, local authorities, colleges and business networks, to promote LEADER support. The LAG will also explore opportunities for a locally delegated small grant scheme if it has potential to increase the uptake of business start-up grants.

The LDS 2015–2020 also reflects the new programme’s increased scope for supporting improvements in farm and forestry productivity and the development of new markets for produce. In particular a focus for the new LDS will be the development of collaborative responses to address gaps and opportunities in the local supply chain and, in conjunction with the LEPs, to develop the skills of local business owners and their workforce.

3.4 ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES

The majority of the proposed LAG area falls within Enterprise M3 LEP, with smaller areas covered by Solent and Wiltshire LEPs. Through the LAGs extensive consultation, the proposed LDS priorities are considered to be relevant to the economic conditions of the area and seek to align with the intervention rationale adopted for the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the European Structural and Investment Funds strategy (ESIF) of the LEPs. Letters of endorsement from the LEPs are attached at appendix 4.

The LAG has sought to avoid duplication of resources and proposed activity, rather it seeks to complement LEP led economic development activity and add value by addressing the identified specific needs of the New Forest at a local level. All the LEPs identify enterprise development and competitiveness as key priority areas and the LAGs experience and success in supporting ‘hard to reach’ micro-businesses and sectors will be utilised to this end.

Another LEP/LAG priority is to develop strategic sectors and clusters (interconnected groups and businesses) in order to develop local supply chains. The New Forest LAG is actively engaged with a number of well-established local business groups and the LDS will further develop these opportunities.

3.5 ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The LDS is intended to complement other economic development activities and this has been achieved through consultation with representatives of the local authorities covered by the New Forest LAG. In addition, LAG staff are part of the Employment and Tourism team at NFDC, and therefore are aware of the wider macro-economic issues which impact the local economy.

Throughout the delivery of the LDS, the LAG will collaborate with other rural development delivery partners such as the Defra RDT and the Forestry Commission, to ensure schemes are complimentary and add value to other initiatives.

3.6 ADDED VALUE FROM THE LEADER APPROACH IN THE NEW FOREST

New Forest LEADER will focus on supporting the development of small business in rural areas which may lack the confidence or capacity to access schemes delivered nationally. The local LEADER programme will also enable the area to benefit from integrated, area based initiatives which are developed and managed by local organisations that have the particular skills and experience to ensure projects address local needs. In addition, the LAG will utilise its ability to engage with the rural business sector to support and add value to initiatives developed by LEPs and other partners.
The delivery of the New Forest LDS will be supported by additional resources from a number of sources. NFDC, in addition to its role as Accountable Body, will also make its staff resource available to support the LAG and Programme staff. This will include human resources advice, communications and tourism expertise, as well as the buying power of its central purchasing unit.

3.7 NEW FOREST LAG’S COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

The New Forest LDS will provide an innovative, transferable model to test sustainable development strategies for rural businesses and communities. Innovation and successful exploitation of new ideas, is central to economic growth, prosperity and sustainability of the economy and will be the key to the long-lasting impact of the LDS in the New Forest. A focus of the LAG’s approach will be support for collaboration innovation (including supply chain development) within the New Forest business community.

Innovation through LEADER also plays an important role in the New Forest’s ability to respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities brought by the changes in agriculture, forestry and related sectors as well as to other major issues, such as climate change and energy security.

3.8 THE VISION FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Extensive consultation, undertaken during the development of this strategy, identified that stakeholders want to see earnings in the New Forest rise, but equally important is that this must be achieved without detriment to the unique landscape, culture and heritage of the area. Therefore the LDS seeks to improve the diversity of the job offer and enable businesses to be more productive and efficient with resources and be able to pay higher wages.

This in turn will mean that fewer people, especially the young, will need to commute outside the area to receive the wages they need to live in the New Forest. To achieve this aim, the LDS needs to create the right conditions for businesses to develop and thrive in the following ways:

- Improve performance, resilience, efficiency and practice within small enterprises in rural areas, in particular those which contribute to the maintenance of the unique landscape of the New Forest on which the wider economy depends.
- Support entrepreneurship and business start-ups with an emphasis on the creation of sustainable employment opportunities which support a year-round economy.
- Support the development of the local workforce – including those not currently in education, employment or training (NEETS) - to ensure they have the necessary skills to contribute to the growth of the local economy.
- Support communities to find sustainable solutions to meet identified gaps in rural service provision and facilities in order to improve the quality of life for residents.

The New Forest LAG will prioritise funding to projects and activities which directly deliver jobs and growth in the local economy, allocating a minimum of 70% of its budget to this. A maximum of 30% will be allocated to projects which contribute to developing the local economy in a less direct way e.g. a project which supports the culture and heritage of the area in turn attracts visitors out of season or an initiative which provides an essential rural service, helping to maintain the diversity of rural communities in the area.

3.9 THE ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION

The complex, interdependent economy of the New Forest requires that the LDS delivers across all six LEADER 2014-2020 policy priorities if it is to have maximum impact. The ‘Actions’ which will deliver the LDS objectives were agreed with stakeholders at consultation events held in July 2014 and are outlined in the following tables: support for increasing farm productivity, support for increasing forestry productivity, support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification*, support for rural tourism, support for cultural and heritage activity and the provision of rural services.

* For the purposes of this document, ‘farm diversification’ is included within the overall Action Plan for farming, however funding for farm diversification activities will be drawn from the budget for micro and small enterprises. Similarly, forestry related micro-businesses are included within the overall Action Plan for forestry, although funding for this support will again be drawn from the micro and small enterprises budget or as advised by the Managing Authority.
### Table 1: Priorities & Action Plan for Agriculture & Horticulture:

**Aim:** To maximise the potential of sustainable growth and profitability of farming and commoning, which support the unique landscape of the New Forest, in order to unlock benefits for businesses & communities.

**Objectives:**
- To improve business and environmental performance, resilience, disease prevention, efficiency and practice within the farming and commoning sector.
- To support locally innovative practice, knowledge transfer and cooperation within the farming and commoning sector to increase farm productivity suited to the local environment and/or help to improve the sustainability of the sector.
- To support the development of the workforce to ensure they have the skills to deliver best practice in agricultural production in the New Forest and surrounding rural areas and contribute to the management of the unique landscape on which the wider local economy depends.

#### Priority 1.1: To improve the economic performance of holdings to facilitate farm restructuring and modernisation through investment in improved infrastructure, processing and marketing of agricultural products, farm diversification, improved animal welfare and risk management. Priority will be given to initiatives which support collaboration with other businesses and organisations (including supply chain development) leading, where possible, to increased employment.

**Priority 1.1 Action Plan:**
- Investment in physical assets leading to improved productivity and sustainability of holdings including improved crop storage, livestock housing & enhanced management of glasshouse crops.
- Support to ensure livestock holdings have a biosecurity plan, especially those who have stock mixing on the open Forest. The plans will help to highlight infrastructure investment needs, such as upgrading cattle crushes, feeding / water troughs etc.
- Strengthen local supply chains through investment in infrastructure to process and market Annex 1 agricultural raw materials into non-food products and to add value beyond Annex 1 processing.
- Initiatives such as collaborative haulage to abattoir to assist farmers to control costs through sharing resources and experience.
- Investments to achieve the better use or elimination of by-products or waste, in particular where it utilises new technology and/or innovation.
- Investment in underutilised or redundant rural assets in order to realise their potential, e.g. the conversion of redundant farm buildings into tourist accommodation or business units.
- Investment in technology, equipment & buildings for the marketing and retailing of farm produce, particularly when undertaken collaboratively.
- Support to identify improved biosecurity measures and new markets for New Forest Ponies.

#### Priority 1.2: Foster the uptake of new technologies, knowledge transfer and innovation which will enhance resource efficiency and support the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient New Forest agricultural & horticultural sectors. Support will not just be about greater productivity but also about improving the fit between businesses and the environment and improving the benefits (to the wider economy) to be realised from the sustainable management of the landscape.

**Priority 1.2 Action Plan:**
- Investment in improved nutrient (slurry and manure) management on livestock farms, linked to advice on best practice in a protected landscape.
- Investment in technology that recovers or reduces energy consumption on holdings.
- Investment in innovative land management equipment appropriate to the New Forest landscape.
- Improvements in livestock management and productivity which also serve to:
a). Tackle the issue of diffuse pollution by run off and drainage water, dirty water and sediments. *(NB. the New Forest River Catchment Group identified a need for farms to operate above the minimum regulatory standard to safeguard the sensitive river catchments (which, because of the small size of farms, are not in a CSF area)).*

b). Reduce the reliance on mains water by harvesting, recycling and re-use of rainwater. The LAG will therefore support small scale capital investment in infrastructure such as:

- Hard standing & water troughs (as an alternative to livestock drinking from water courses)
- Fencing for buffer strips
- Yard works for clean and dirty water separation / rainwater harvesting and storage
- Sediment ponds, traps and bio-beds
- Covers for livestock gathering areas, manure storage, slurry stores and self-fed silage
- Investment in equipment & businesses which help to reduce the impact of flooding.
- The provision of energy audits to highlight opportunities for resource efficiency and provide evidence to support infrastructure investments (where not already supported through FIT/RHI).
- Support for collaborative initiatives which develop co-operative purchasing of key farm inputs.
- Investments in (collaborative) projects which help find new uses for farm waste.
- Support for collaboration to enable small farmers and commoners to fully utilise land and livestock management equipment and machinery through a shared resource.

**Priority 1.3:** Encourage new entrants and succession planning, through support for farm activities key to the future sustainability of the wider land based economy and the landscape, in particular the rearing of cattle, and opportunities for developing new income streams on farms. Where appropriate these activities will be delivered in collaboration with the Defra FFPS Team.

**Priority 1.3 Action Plan:**

- Investment in farm diversification projects; priority will be given to applications that demonstrate the diversified activity is a key feature of succession planning.
- Investment in cattle management facilities for young / new entrants who have commoning rights, to reduce the labour required to manage cattle making it a more economically sustainable activity.
- In collaboration with LEPs, ensure new entrants have access to 1:1 entrepreneur support and ongoing mentoring tailored to the New Forest situation.
- In collaboration with LEPs ensure young farmers and commoners have access to skills development tailored to the New Forest situation.
- A project which will broker work placements to provide young farmers and commoners with the opportunity to learn from a wider range of farm enterprises.

**Priority 1.4:** Provide bespoke facilitation, support and continued professional development opportunities, which reflect the unique local context, to small farmers & commoners who are unlikely to access national schemes. This will enable them to take full advantage of priorities 1.1 – 1.3

**Priority 1.4 Action Plan:**

- A comprehensive package of facilitation, support and guidance which covers all relevant sustainability issues for small farms and commoners holdings (economic, environment & social) using local delivery partners trusted by the businesses they will be supporting. This will include:
  - Visits to land managers who need support to modernise their farming business - explaining processes, networking, guidance, mentoring, sign-posting to relevant organisations.
  - Visits to land managers to help improve their resource management and flood resilience, to benefit the water environment and customised to the New Forest situation
  - Supporting farmers & commoners to become confident using IT and online services especially relating to CAP D, including using computer hubs for those unable to receive adequate broadband.
  - Supporting farmers & commoners to make best use of IT to promote and market their produce.
Health and safety training relating to particular types of land management operations to improve the resilience of farmers and commoners.

A programme of professional development workshops and on-site visits, all customised to the New Forest situation.

- Support the development of local ‘monitor farms’ to share ideas and provide opportunities for local farmers and commoners to see practical examples of on farm initiatives and investments.
- Support the development of a code of practice for hot branding of New Forest ponies.

Table 2: Priorities & Action Plan for Forestry & Allied Industries:

**Aim:** To maximise the potential of sustainable growth and profitability of the forestry sector in order to unlock substantial benefits for businesses and communities and the unique landscape of the New Forest, on which the wider economy depends.

**Objectives:**

- To improve business and environmental performance, profitability, resilience, efficiency and practice within the forestry sector.
- To support and promote best practice, local innovation, knowledge transfer & education and cooperation within forestry and the supply chain to increase productivity suited to the local environment and help improve the sustainability of the sector.
- To support the development of the workforce to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable growth in forestry production in the New Forest whilst contributing to management of the unique landscape on which the wider local economy depends.

**Priority 2.1:** Improving the economic performance of forestry holdings by mobilising, processing and marketing forestry products to create new products and work in collaboration with other businesses & organisations (including supply chain development) leading, where possible, to increased employment.

**Priority 2.1 Action Plan:**

- Investment in improved access to facilitate forestry management and timber extraction.
- Investment in low impact equipment / machinery for enhanced forestry management & extraction.
- Investment in yards, buildings and equipment for the primary processing of forestry products, where it will help to address an identified gap in the market – including costs for the development of contractor / wholesale wood-fuel hubs.
- Investments which add value to timber products e.g. buildings for seasoning firewood or chip.
- Investment in infrastructure and set up costs for the marketing of forestry products, especially in collaboration with other businesses.
- Collaborative initiatives which market forestry products (including the use of new media and viral marketing techniques) to create new opportunities.
- Investment in equipment and infrastructure which improves the efficiency of deer management including investment which helps to manage populations in remote areas e.g. all-terrain vehicles, high seats etc. and investment in activities which add value to venison and bi-products e.g. game larders, small processing units etc.
- Initiatives which facilitate joint working between woodland owners to improve the management of small private woodlands.

**Priority 2.2:** Support innovation in forestry management which will enhance the viability and competitiveness of the local forestry sector, encourage resource efficiency and support the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient sector. Support will not just be about greater productivity but about improving the fit between businesses and the environment and improving the benefits (to the wider economy) to be realised from the sustainable management of the landscape.
Priority 2.2 Action Plan:
- Investment in innovative equipment and machinery which enables forestry businesses to work more efficiently and supports sensitive forestry management in a protected landscape.
- Projects which explore innovative control methods for invasive and non-native species, in the context of a protected landscape, to improve forestry productivity.
- Support for initiatives which improve business resilience to rising input costs through providing tailored advice on energy, water and other input efficiency and opportunities to switch to alternative lower cost fuels (including wood fuel).
- Collaboration which enables owners of private woodlands to share equipment and machinery.

Priority 2.3: Provide animation and facilitation to enable collaborative management of private woodlands, ensuring that owners can maximise economic potential, minimise risks and benefit from priorities 2.1 – 2.2.

Priority 2.3 Action Plan:
The Working Woodlands Project, to be developed through public/private sector collaboration, will be the main vehicle for delivery against this priority. It will facilitate bringing back small woodlands into economic management, adding value to existing schemes and enabling the local forestry sector to benefit from National initiatives such as ‘Grown in Britain’. The project will deliver:
- Facilitation between woodland owners to create cost effective management and economic gains through woodland owners working together to create hypothetical ‘estates’ or cooperatives.
- Facilitation to develop timber storage and wood-fuel hubs, providing storage and access to appropriate machinery, increasing quality control and reducing biosecurity risks - bringing suppliers, contractors, engineers and users together to create better networks.
- Assessments to landowners of the economic and biodiversity opportunities for their woodland.
- Improve understanding of biosecurity, biodiversity, risk and climate change issues in relation to woodland management and species choice.
- Facilitation between woodland owners to ensure that management proposals fit together strategically e.g. removal of non-native invasive species & deer is ineffective if not done on a larger scale that will prevent re-establishment from surrounding areas.
- Signposting to training to develop new woodland and machinery / equipment operation skills and in particular those relating to the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA).

Priority 2.4: Support all aspects of the local forestry supply chain, including businesses that provide services to forestry managers, to ensure the sector has access to local contractors who are competitive and have the skills & understanding needed to work on sites in a protected landscape.

Priority 2.4 Action Plan:
Many of the investments / activities outlined in Priorities 2.1 – 2.3 will also be targeted at contractors. However in addition the LAG will support:
- The development of a ‘contractor’s hub’, providing professional development & networking opportunities for local forestry contractors enabling them to develop working practices which reflect the range of sensitive sites in the New Forest. This will include:
  o Managing invasive & non-native species and reducing their transfer between sites;
  o Technical skills including those locally relevant e.g. holly pollarding & bracken management;
  o Health and safety & writing risk assessments;
  o Networking opportunities to promote and market forestry services and products.
- In collaboration with LEPs, ensure contracting businesses have the skills they need to develop to a point at which they have the confidence to take advantage of wider business support initiatives.
- Support to enable rural businesses to build digital skills to facilitate business growth as well as marketing and social media training to exploit on-line opportunities.
### Table 3: Priorities & Action Plan for Small Enterprises in Rural Areas:

**Aim:** To maximise the potential of small enterprises in the New Forest and surrounding rural areas to unlock substantial benefits for the local economy, communities and environment.

**Objectives:**
- To improve performance, resilience, efficiency and practice within small enterprises in rural areas.
- To encourage and support entrepreneurship and business start-ups with an emphasis on the creation of sustainable employment opportunities which support a year-round economy.
- To support the development of the local workforce – including those not currently in education, employment or training (NEETS) - to ensure they have the necessary skills to contribute to the growth of the local economy.

**Priority 3.1:** Support for small businesses in rural areas to make a step change in performance leading to increased profits and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities. This will be achieved through the development of new products and services, improved marketing strategies and collaboration with other local businesses (including supply chain development). Priority will be given to projects which will result in better cohesion between business, residents & visitors and the natural environment & heritage of the area.

**Priority 3.1 Action Plan:**
- Investment in businesses that reflect the distinctive nature of the New Forest’s products and experiences throughout the year which encourage residents and visitors to spend more.
- Investment in activities that address gaps and opportunities in the local supply chain.
- Support the further development of a local distribution hub & associated low carbon delivery network.
- Investment in businesses which provide essential services to rural residents (see rural services)
- Support for businesses to explore the feasibility of developing new products and services.
- Capital investment in renovations of underutilised or redundant rural buildings including to ‘easy in easy out’ business accommodation.
- Investment in businesses providing services and products to the land-based economy.
- Investments which enable rural businesses to find their own solutions / receive technical advice to address digital technology challenges (excluding infrastructure already supported by other funds).
- Projects which facilitate collaborative working between businesses in order to share the costs of production and marketing.
- Investment in on-line marketing and retailing initiatives including collaborative ventures between different businesses.
- Collaborative projects which enable groups of businesses and communities to work together to promote their village / hub town including investment in small scale infrastructure and activities.
- The SWOT analysis and consultation identified 1:1 business development support, tailored to the local situation and environment, as being crucial to the impact of LEADER funding and therefore a key priority for this LDS. The LAG will collaborate with the LEPs to enable these businesses to:
  - Undertake basic business planning and enhance what they are already doing.
  - Plan sales and marketing strategies.
  - Undertake basic financial forecasting.
  - Understand the power of social media & ICT to support business development & growth.
  - Understand the need for credit management and administration processes.
  - Access higher level support offered via LEPs and other partners.

Consultation also identified a need for this to be linked to on-going mentoring to ensure the developing businesses are supported as they make the next steps and to safeguard any LAG investment.
**Priority 3.2:** Encourage small rural enterprises to implement carbon reductions, reduce their impact on the environment and make best use of resources, including enabling investment in small scale renewable energy systems (where not already supported through e.g. FIT/RHI).

**Priority 3.2 Action Plan:**
- Feasibility studies and investment which enables businesses to work more efficiently and lower utility bills through adoption of new equipment and/or technology.
- Projects which provide tailored advice and energy audits on the importance of energy efficiency, opportunities to switch to alternative lower cost fuels (including wood fuel), reduce water consumption, maximise the range of travel options and reduce food miles.
- Installation of small scale infrastructure to deal with waste from rural businesses.
- Collaborative waste recycling projects.
- Projects which enable businesses to find new markets for waste materials.
- Investment in businesses which develop new, low impact products and technologies.
- Initiatives and investment which reduce the impact of businesses and users on the New Forest River Catchments in order to improve water quality e.g. reduction of pollutants from campsites.

**Priority 3.3:** Support for individuals who have potential to contribute to the local economy through entrepreneurial activity.

**Priority 3.3 Action Plan:**
The LAG will collaborate with the LEP and other partners to deliver:
- Entrepreneurial support and on-going mentoring tailored to the local situation and environment.
- Initiatives which provide support to young entrepreneurs including those who are planning to join existing family businesses.
- Initiatives which raise awareness of entrepreneurship as a career opportunity through ‘enterprise days’ with local schools, colleges and via not for profit groups.

**Priority 3.4:** Support for initiatives designed to address the issues which perpetuate the impact of seasonal / low wage employment in the New Forest and/or reduce outward migration of workers and/or young people.

**Priority 3.4 Action Plan:**
- Investment to enable businesses to diversify to year round activity and / or extend the tourist season leading to the creation of year round sustainable jobs.
- Support which helps businesses to better manage peaks & troughs in business performance.
- Investment in rural businesses throughout the supply chain to ensure there is a local multiplier effect from LEADER investment.
- The LAG will work with the LEPs and other partners to develop initiatives which enable seasonal employees to develop transferable skills to help them to access employment throughout the year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 4.1: Support for rural tourism enterprises to enable a step change in performance through the development and creation of products and experiences leading to an improved visitor offer and, where possible, to increased employment. Support will not focus on greater numbers but on improving the fit between the customer (both visitor and resident), the destination &amp; the environment and improving the benefits to be realised from the rural tourism sector by encouraging more overnight stays, extending the season and consolidating repeat business.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 4.1 Action Plan:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investment in new and developing rural tourism products which reflect the principles of VERB* and encourage more overnight stays and / or help to extend the season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investment in rural enterprises which add value to the visitor experience – priority will be given to businesses making best use of natural / local resources e.g. local foods, crafts and people.</td>
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<td>• Investment in underutilised or redundant rural assets to realise their potential e.g. the conversion of farm buildings into visitor accommodation, attraction or service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investments which enable businesses to find their own solutions / receive technical advice to address digital technology challenges (excluding infrastructure already supported by other funds) for the benefit of the business and visitor experience.</td>
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<td>• The development of websites and IT for tourism businesses as well as support to build digital skills and maximise collaborative on-line opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Through collaboration with the LEP, deliver enterprise support which will provide rural tourism businesses with the confidence and skills they will need to take advantage of initiatives developed by the LEP, industry bodies or destination partnership.</td>
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<td>*The VERB Model: Equity between the needs of the Visitor, Environment, Residents &amp; Business</td>
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<th>Priority 4.2: Encouraging rural tourism business to implement carbon reductions and make best use of resources, including enabling investment in small scale renewable energy systems (where not already supported through FIT/RHI)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 4.2 Action Plan:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The provision of energy audits &amp; feasibility studies which will highlight opportunities for resource efficiency and provide evidence to support infrastructure investments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Schemes to encourage rural tourism business to introduce energy efficiency measures, use low impact products, maximise the range of car free travel options and reduce food miles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investment in low impact technologies such as the installation of bio-digesters on campsites in order to reduce vehicle movements and the impact on sensitive New Forest river catchments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investment in collaborative projects which help to address food and other waste products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investment in businesses to help to reduce pressure on the Forest’s natural and human resources.</td>
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</table>
Priority 4.3: Support for rural tourism businesses to develop the skills of their workforce to raise customer awareness of products and experiences that contribute to better understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest as well as improve profitability.

Priority 4.3 Action Plan:
- Investment in innovative solutions which address the issue of young people in rural areas being unable to access employment opportunities in the visitor economy through a lack of public transport.
- Working in collaboration with schools, FE colleges and tourism businesses – schemes to promote the range of employment & entrepreneurship opportunities within the local visitor economy.
- Support training, for front-line hospitality staff, on the unique landscape & heritage of the area.
- Investment in businesses which provide low impact ways of increasing visitor understanding of the special qualities of the New Forest.
- Initiatives which increase the knowledge and use of local food within the tourism sector.

Priority 4.4: Support for projects which develop collaboration (including supply chain development) between the rural tourism sector and the wider business community throughout the New Forest.

Priority 4.4 Action Plan:
- Initiatives which support the development of digital skills, distribution and marketing via collective and individual learning and link with the supply chain through existing local networks.
- Investment in activities that address gaps and opportunities in the local supply chain.
- Activities which increase visitor spend in towns & villages away from the main tourist areas, in particular on the periphery of the area e.g. food festivals and cultural events.
- Development of the New Forest destination website to optimise visits by overseas visitors (who tend to stay longer and spend more).
- Projects which promote local produce and make linkages between all sectors in the supply chain.
- Development of ‘visitor payback’ schemes to utilise new sources of donations e.g. from business tourism and wedding venues, which will then be used to support the special qualities of the area.

Table 5: Priorities & Action Plan for Heritage & Culture:

Aim: To utilise the ancient and unique culture and heritage of the New Forest to unlock substantial benefits for businesses, communities and the environment.

Objectives:
- To create, develop and ensure environmental and economic resilience of the culture and heritage sector in the New Forest, generating opportunities suited to the local environment and residents and helping to develop a year round offer for both residents and visitors.
- To increase understanding and enjoyment of the culture and heritage of the New Forest leading to increased spend and repeat visits by residents and visitors.
- To ensure rural communities and economies benefit from the value of the culture and heritage sector in the New Forest through enhanced skills or employment opportunities or by enabling communities to develop, manage and conserve rural assets in a sustainable way.

Priority 5.1: Support for businesses and not for profit organisations to enable a step change in performance and financial viability through the development and creation of new products and experiences leading, where possible, to increased employment. Support will not focus on greater numbers but on improving the fit between the customer (both visitor and resident), the culture, heritage and the environment and improving the benefits to be realised from the culture and heritage sector by encouraging more overnight stays, extending the season and consolidating repeat business.
**Priority 5.1 Action Plan:**
- Investment in new and developing rural heritage and cultural products which reflect the principles of VERB* and encourage more overnight stays and / or help to extend the season.
- Investment in existing cultural and heritage offers to improve their financial sustainability.
- Initiatives which contribute to the long term viability of Beaulieu Road Pony Sales Yard by maximising the auction sale price.
- The provision of enterprise support which will provide heritage and cultural asset owners and managers with the confidence and skills they will need to take advantage of initiatives developed by the LEP and industry bodies.
- Support to enable the managers and owners of cultural and heritage assets to build digital skills, including marketing and social media training, and exploit on-line opportunities.
- Development of websites, on-line booking and other marketing activities for heritage and cultural asset owners and managers including those initiatives outlined in the rural tourism priorities.
- Projects which support community based cultural organisations to utilise ICT to promote the New Forest’s culture and heritage.

* The VERB Model: Equity between the needs of the Visitor, Environment, Residents & Business

**Priority 5.2: Support for businesses and not for profit organisations to develop the skills of their work force including opportunities to enhance employment and life skills through volunteering.**

**Priority 5.2 Action Plan:**
- Investment in equipment and tools for organisations teaching traditional skills.
- Projects which provide on the job training and transferable skills to enhance employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups through utilising the area’s heritage assets.
- Training in heritage conservation, management or digital skills for individuals delivering projects.
- Training and advice in the management of important local sites (where landowners are not eligible for Environmental Stewardship) e.g. through Community Wildlife plans.
- Support for heritage projects which contribute to skills development & community cohesion.

**Priority 5.3: Encouraging cultural and heritage organisations to implement carbon reductions and make best use of resources, including enabling investment in renewable energy systems (where not already supported through FIT/RHI).**

**Priority 5.3 Action Plan:**
- Initiatives which improve business and not for profit resilience to rising input costs through:
  - The provision of energy audits and feasibility studies for heritage and cultural asset to highlight opportunities for resource efficiency and provide evidence to support infrastructure investments.
  - Schemes which encourage owners and managers to introduce energy efficiency measures, increase their use of low impact products, maximise travel options and reduce food miles.

**Priority 5.4: Support for projects which develop collaboration between the culture and heritage sector and the wider business community throughout the New Forest.**

**Priority 5.4 Action Plan:**
- Initiatives which promote the New Forest’s forestry and wood culture especially those which use new media and viral marketing techniques to engage new audiences.
- Development costs for collaborative projects which provide a showcase for locally produced arts and culture.
- Development costs for collaborative projects which provide marketing opportunities for local producers of food and crafts including village/town food festivals, wood fairs etc.
- Development of ‘visitor payback’ schemes to utilise new sources of donations e.g. from business tourism and wedding venues, which will then be used to support the special qualities of the area.
**Table 6: Priorities & Action Plan for Rural Services:**

**Aim:** To improve and extend the range, scope and quality of (non-statutory) services available to rural residents of the New Forest and surrounding areas in order to unlock substantial benefits for residents and the local economy.

**Objectives:**
- To encourage and support communities to find solutions to meet identified gaps in rural service provision and facilities in order to improve the quality of life for residents.
- To support businesses and not-for-profit organisations to find new ways to deliver rural services.
- To diversify, add value to and sustain the range of facilities and services available to rural residents.
- To improve the health and wellbeing of rural residents by reducing isolation through greater involvement in social / community activities and improved access to training and employment opportunities.

**Priority 6.1:** Support for businesses and not-for-profit organisations to create and develop (non-statutory) services and facilities and/or add value to existing services. This may be achieved by working in collaboration with other businesses and organisations but, wherever possible, these initiatives should lead to increased employment opportunities. Originality and innovation are encouraged but initiatives should complement, rather than compete with, existing activities and services.

**Priority 6.1 Action Plan:**
- Support for feasibility studies to identify the best delivery method for a proposed rural service or facility as well to ensure its economic sustainability.
- Projects which utilise community facilities to provide opportunities for the wider economy e.g. the marketing of food and crafts.
- Support for the costs of establishing a social/ community enterprise e.g. legal or infrastructure costs.
- Capital investment in businesses providing rural services e.g. village shops, childcare.
- The LAG will collaborate with the LEP to deliver enterprise and business support for business / social enterprise delivering rural services.

**Priority 6.2:** Support for projects specifically aimed at ensuring equitable access to services in rural communities by improving the fit between the specific needs of individual communities and the current availability of appropriate services

**Priority 6.2 Action Plan:**
- Investments in infrastructure and refurbishment to ensure existing community facilities can better meet community needs by making them more flexible and accessible.
- Innovative community transport initiatives enabling rural residents to access services & employment
- Outreach support and advice for rural residents.
- Projects which enable rural communities to find their own solutions to digital technology challenges (excluding infrastructure already supported by other funds).
- Projects to create Wi-Fi hubs in village halls / shops
- Support for childcare provision/facilities; priority will be given to not for profit provision.

**Priority 6.3:** Encourage rural service providers and facilities to implement carbon reductions and make best use of resources, including waste and enabling investment in small scale renewable energy systems (where not already supported through FIT/RHI).
Priority 6.3 Action Plan:
- Capital investment in infrastructure for village shops, pubs etc. to make them more sustainable & resilient.
- Initiatives which improve business and not for profit organisation resilience to rising input costs through:
  - The provision of energy audits and feasibility studies to highlight opportunities for energy and resource efficiency and provide evidence to support infrastructure investments.
  - Schemes which encourage rural services providers to introduce energy efficiency measures, increase their use of low impact products, maximise travel options and reduce food miles.

Priority 6.4: Working in collaboration with LEPs; support not for profit organisations to develop the skills of their work force (both employees and volunteers) including opportunities to enhance employment and life skills and help integration into the local community.

Priority 6.4 Action Plan:
- Projects which provide leadership and management training as well as mentoring support for volunteers wishing to establish or manage community services and facilities
- E-marketing, social media and digital skills training for businesses and individuals who promote community services and facilities.
- Projects which provide transferable skills as well as informal mentoring and confidence building to people not in employment or training.
- Projects which facilitate intergenerational support between older rural residents and young people.
- Projects which will build the capacity of organisations, especially those in the heritage sector, to recruit volunteers from key target groups (e.g. young people, people on low incomes, people with poor health etc.) and to manage volunteers effectively.
- Initiatives which support parents and young people in rural areas as they make the transition in to employment and training and address their particular needs e.g. the provision of a crèche during training sessions.
- Through investment in infrastructure, enable not for profit organisations to offer apprenticeships in activity instruction, business administration, youth work, buildings maintenance or catering.

3.10 TARGETS, RESULTS AND OUTPUTS

These will help to assess the progress, efficiency and effectiveness of the programme in meeting its objectives. The estimated programme outputs based on the LAGs experience to date as well as on the projects known to be in development, are shown at appendix 3. All are based on an average grant allocation in the last programme of £15,000. However further guidance on the outputs expected for each measure / policy priority may require that they be revised in due course.

The LAG has forecasted that 45 more jobs will be created than were achieved in the last LEADER programme. This reflects the focus of the new programme on facilitating and supporting business growth and start-ups. However, the target must be considered in the context of the LAG area which has a high proportion of micro-businesses - the proportionate level of investment necessary for micro businesses to expand their workforce is greater than that of larger businesses. This means that the number of jobs created in the New Forest may be lower in comparison to areas that have a greater proportion of non-micro-businesses, because micro-businesses take longer to grow and develop. However LEADER support is still critical in order to safeguard jobs and develop sustainable businesses over the longer-term.

Throughout the life of the programme, the LAG will collate data on locally relevant outputs to monitor progress against the wider objectives of the LDS including: area of woodland in improved management, the number of business/enterprise collaborations and the number of businesses/enterprises/holdings improving their use of natural resources.
3.11 FINANCIAL PLAN TO DELIVER THE LDS

3.11.1 Overall funding profile
The spreadsheet at appendix 2 provides a breakdown of the proposed budget to deliver the LDS, showing financial details broken down by both policy priority and year. This is based on the mid-range indicative allocation; however the LAG is confident that there are sufficient good quality projects in development which could accommodate a higher budget if this was awarded.

The allocation of budget between the six policy priorities broadly follows Defra’s indicative National budget split, although in order to deliver the LDS the New Forest LAG will allocate a higher proportion of funds to the forestry sector. The budget allocated to ‘increasing farm productivity’ reflects the smaller-scale nature of many of the farms in the LAG area; as such the average size of grant is anticipated to be lower than in other LAG areas. Similarly the allocation for supporting ‘rural tourism’ reflects the LDS focus on collaborative responses to identified local needs.

3.11.2 Use of grants, procurement or other type of financial support
Much of the match funding for the proposed projects will come directly from the businesses themselves, however where possible, LEADER will also look to complement other funding streams available in the New Forest, including the Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership and the National Park’s Sustainable Communities Fund. LEADER will be the only fund focussed on economic development in the LAG area, but by aligning their work with the other funding streams, it allows the LAG to add value and sustainability to all of the funding programmes by effectively joining up environmental and economic objectives and delivery.

3.12 DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY OUTCOMES USING LEADER FUNDING
This will be critical to the local programme and will be achieved through:
  - The experience of the LAG, Accountable Body and programme staff in successfully delivering similar programmes means that the majority of procedures and processes are already in place.
  - In-kind support from the Accountable Body and delivery partners for items such as office accommodation, facilitation and room hire means administration costs are reduced.
  - The involvement of the LAG in all aspects of the delivery of the programme; a vast amount of expertise and local knowledge is therefore available free of charge to the programme.
  - The LAG will ensure that projects offer value for money through efficient working practices and adherence to the scheme tendering requirements for goods and services.
  - Experienced programme staff will ensure projects meet their contracted outputs and deliver the project in the most effective way.
  - Where appropriate, the LAG will prioritise projects which have a multiplier effect e.g. ‘knock-on’ benefits for a number of businesses.

3.13 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
Sustainability is a key priority for the LAG and is essential for maintaining the unique landscape of the New Forest on which the rural economy relies. A sustainability appraisal was an integral part of the preparation of this LDS and is available on request. The appraisal identifies 15 sustainability themes against which the impact (positive or negative) of the LDS was assessed and if necessary, revised.

In delivering the New Forest LDS, the LAG will ensure the sustainability of each project by assessing proposals against the key criteria identified within the sustainability appraisal.

3.14 PROPOSED CO-OPERATION ACTIVITY
The New Forest LAG successfully delivered co-operation projects in previous LEADER programmes and is keen to work in partnership with other LAGs to deliver projects where collaboration adds value through critical mass or shared resources. During the 2015-20 programme the LAG will explore opportunities to share the costs of forestry initiatives and local food promotion with the Isle of Wight LAG and Hampshire Fare. It has been proposed locally that there is a need for a national ‘producer group’, to enable local food groups to share experience and information on a more formal basis. This proposal will be explored by delivery partners during the period of the LDS.
The LAG will also work with neighbouring LAGs to develop initiatives which serve to increase visitor spend in towns and villages away from the main tourist areas, through support and marketing of walking trails, food festivals and along shared assets such as rivers.

4.0 THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP PARTNERSHIP

4.1 Membership of the Local Action Group
The New Forest LAG currently comprises 22 members drawn from the key priority groups outlined in the LDS. Experience from previous LEADER programmes has demonstrated that a LAG of about this size provides the range of skills and experience required to manage a complex programme, whilst remaining focused and enabling all members to take an active role in the decision making process. During the delivery of the programme, it may be necessary for the LAG to review the overall size of the group should circumstances merit the recruitment of new members with additional areas of expertise.

Table 7 below shows the representation of individual stakeholder groups on the LAG and a detailed profile is available on request. During transition, the LAG addressed gaps in sector representation for rural tourism and culture and heritage activities as well as recruiting three new LAG members who are between 20–32 years of age. The LAG has sought to ensure the membership is drawn from across the LAG area and whilst there is not an equal gender balance, it does reflect the sectors in which it operates. The LAG is a dynamic body in that membership may change throughout the life of the programme to adapt to local needs and circumstances and the LAG will use these opportunities to address any gaps in representation. Should new LAG members be required, a role description will be produced, detailing the areas of expertise required, which will be promoted widely amongst relevant target audiences.

A particular strength of the New Forest LAG is that the background and experience of the LAG reflects the complex interrelationships between the different elements of the local economy; the majority of LAG members having active involvement in a wide range of sectors through their employment, business interests or voluntary activities. With the exception of the representatives from the Accountable Body and the National Park Authority, LAG members do not represent specific organisations, rather they bring with them their skills and experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Representation of Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountable Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Sector 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Heritage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Tourism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 LEP Representation
The LAG already has links with Enterprise M3 (EM3) LEP (which covers the majority of the LAG area) as well as with Solent LEP and Wiltshire LEP, either through their own contacts, via the Accountable Body or through partner organisations. LEPs will be invited to attend LAG meetings as advisors and opportunities for cross representation will be explored. This will ensure there is a focus on collaborative and complimentary activity in the area.

4.3 Structure and Decision Making Process
The New Forest LAG is structured in two tiers – the full LAG and a sub group of the LAG called the Decision Making Group (DMG). The process for project appraisal and selection is detailed in a flow chart, (available on request), but in summary the LAG will assess Expressions of Interest whilst the DMG will also appraise full applications and business plans. In addition, the DMG will provide management support to the chair and programme staff.
DMG members have been appointed on the basis of their knowledge of the priority sectors, ability to assess the business case for LEADER investment, as well as their project and financial management skills, underpinned by knowledge of the local business and land management context.

The role of the DMG in undertaking full appraisal of applications, rather than using external paid appraisers, enables the New Forest LAG to deliver a cost effective programme, whilst ensuring an appropriate level of scrutiny of applications, supported by local knowledge. It also ensures the LAG is actively engaged in the delivery of the programme. With minimal project/ business failures to date this approach is proven to work within the New Forest.

The activities of the LAG and DMG will be governed by the New Forest LEADER LAG Terms of Reference, which are available on request. This specifies the role and responsibilities of the LAG/ DMG, their membership, the administration and management of meetings, the annual election of the chair and vice chairs, managing conflict of interests, confidentiality of meetings and data protection. In addition it clearly outlines the role of the Accountable Body and LEADER programme staff.

LAG members will be provided with training and guidance on their responsibilities especially with regard to conflict of interest and will be reminded of this duty at the beginning of each LAG meeting.

Any member found to have breached the LAG policies relating to conflicts of interest and confidentiality will be required to vacate their position with immediate effect.

4.4 LAG Training Requirements
Training will be provided for all LAG members to equip them with the appropriate competencies and skills to generate and support development activity and to undertake project appraisal within the criteria of the programme. This will be in addition to the training on the roles and responsibilities of LAG membership. Training will be delivered “in-house” where possible by LEADER staff or trainers from partner organisations, free of charge. However, there is also provision in the LAG facilitation budget for the employment of external trainers if required.

4.5 Timescale for Establishing the LAG & launch of new programme
The New Forest LAG has been operational since 2002, as such it has developed a vast amount of experience which will enable it to quickly adapt to the new programme. The new members of the LAG will be given a formal induction and all members will receive appropriate refresher training and guidance on the new funding priorities during autumn 2014, ensuring that the LAG is ready to receive and assess applications in January 2015.

The New Forest LAG has worked hard during the consultation period to ensure that good quality projects are in development and will be able to commence once funding is released. The new programme will be promoted widely utilising NFDC and partners’ communication channels as well as through the LAGs and partners extensive links within key stakeholder groups.

4.6 LAG Staff, Numbers and Job Descriptions
As was the case with the previous programme, the LAG will be supported by two staff members (a Programme Manager and an Administration & Finance Officer) comprising 1.5 FTE. They will be employed directly by the Accountable Body and based within the Economic Development unit at NFDC. To ensure separation of duties, tasks will be shared between the programme team and other staff within the Accountable Body. However in summary the Programme Manager will be responsible for the overall management of the programme and line management of the Administration & Finance Officer, who will in turn focus on grant claim processing and administration.

Both members of staff have extensive experience of the management and animation of externally funded programmes and projects and successfully delivered the previous LEADER programmes in the New Forest. The 2008-2013 programme was delivered to within 0.03% of the total budget allocation and the Transition Funding RDT Pre-application Assessment, undertaken in 2013, found the LAG to be ‘clearly well-structured and well supported. Management of files and information was well handled with all audit procedures and policies met’. An organogram is available on request along with job descriptions for the two LAG staff members.

4.7 Equal Opportunities Statement (public sector equality duty)
New Forest District Council and the LAG are committed to creating a community that recognises and celebrates diversity within a culture of respect and co-operation. In all aspects of LEADER programme
delivery including the application process, allocation of funds and implementation, they will adhere to
the principles of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

4.8 Involvement of the community and consultation activity undertaken
The majority of LAG members live and/or work within the programme area and have extensive links
with the wider economy; this ensures the New Forest LAG is embedded within the community in which
it operates.

The cohesive identity of the LAG area has enabled engagement with a number of well-established local
and national business organisations and special interest groups including the NFBP (New Forest Business Partnership) with more than 50 members, the NFTA (New Forest Tourism Association) which
has over 250 members, the New Forest Commoners Defence Association with 800 members, and the
local branch of the NFU (National Farmers Union). These, and a further 37 partners, groups and
associations, formed the basis of the LAG’s consultation and animation (a list is available on request),
with particular emphasis on those sectors not previously included in the local LDS including rural
tourism. In addition the LAG worked with NFDC, NFNPA (New Forest National Park Authority) and
NFBP to develop the Business Needs Survey which was distributed to over 4,000 local businesses by
partner organisations.

The objectives for the LDS and the priorities for action were agreed by over 100 stakeholders (the
majority being small rural businesses and not for profit groups) who attended two consultation events
held in July 2014. It is estimated that in total almost 250 individual stakeholders were actively engaged
in the development of the LDS, demonstrating the level of engagement and support for the bid amongst
the local community.

5.0 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Details of the Accountable Body
New Forest District Council (NFDC) will be the legally Accountable Body for the New Forest LEADER
programme and will be responsible for all matters relating to the administration and financial control of
the project over the Local Development Strategy implementation period. The Accountable body are
fully supportive of the local LEADER programme and recognise the value it has given to the local area;
as such they have endorsed this LDS.

NFDC has an internal audit plan comprising a rolling programme of budget audits by service area, and
programme budgets will be built into this process as appropriate. As a local authority, NFDC is subject
to external audit in accordance with standard financial regulations and with general fund revenue spend
of £19 million for 2014/15 it is subject to rigorous financial procedures and controls.

5.2 Functions of the Accountable Body

5.2.1 Employment of Programme Staff
Programme staff will be employed by New Forest District Council and subject to the normal terms and
conditions of employment. In addition, line management will be provided by the Accountable Body, with
technical and finance support provided on an ad-hoc basis by a range of NFDC staff.

5.2.2 Maintenance of Records
Records will be maintained of budget management authorisation levels and other processes as
required by the MA (Managing Authority). All original records will be kept (where they are not the
responsibility of project operators) by the Accountable Body for 7 years from the date of the last grant
payment or as advised by the MA. NFDC will also maintain a register of potential conflicts of interest of
both LAG members and programme staff as well as records of all staff training activities. NFDC’s
Information, Communications & Technology Security Policy is available on request.

5.2.3 Reporting Procedures
The Accountable Body will maintain and update information relating to budget forecasts and outputs on
databases provided by the MA as required. In addition, they will be responsible for the submission of
M&A (Management & Administration) claims and progress reports; for which they have an excellent
track record.
5.3 Project Development and Assessment Procedures

5.3.1 Profile of Facilitation Activities
Appropriate and targeted project facilitation will be essential to the successful delivery of the LDS. In the previous LEADER programme, almost 60 micro businesses (considered by Business Link to be ‘hard to reach’ in terms of business development support) received one to one business development advice, tailored to their specific needs; for most it was the first time they had accessed this type of support. The support was shown to increase not only the number of project applications submitted to the LAG but also their quality and ultimate success of the businesses, thus safeguarding the LEADER investment. Of the New Forest businesses supported by LEADER 2008-13 all except one (a small start-up) are still trading; testament not only to the project development support they received but also to the thorough appraisal undertaken by the LAG.

This experience demonstrates that this type of support must continue to be provided throughout the application process. This is particularly an issue in the New Forest where 11% of adults aged 16 – 65 have no qualifications, the second highest proportion in Hampshire\(^51\). At the same time the area has the highest number of micro businesses (0-9 employees) of any local lower level authority in the county\(^52\).

These figures, combined with anecdotal evidence from project facilitators in the last programme, demonstrate that there is still a need for the development of literacy and numeracy skills amongst micro business owners to equip them with the knowledge and tools they need to sustain long term growth and take advantage of initiatives and support developed by LEPs. Without the motivation of a grant, it is unlikely many of these micro businesses would access mainstream business support.

In order to ensure adequate separation of duties within the staff team, project facilitation will be undertaken by external contractors experienced in this area of work, with the contracts managed by the Programme Manager. This will provide a cost effective solution as it will provide an opportunity to draw on the sector specific skills of different project facilitators without the costs associated with the direct employment of staff. Additional facilitation support will be offered by partner organisations such as the New Forest National Park Authority and Community First New Forest. Facilitation support will focus on those target groups with little or no experience of external funding.

5.3.2 Project Appraisal and Selection Process
The Accountable Body will ensure that there is openness and transparency in the project appraisal and selection process undertaken by the LAG, that it meets the public sector equity duty and avoids conflicts of interest.

5.4 Grant Claim Process
The RDT Pre-application Assessment confirmed that the Accountable Body has a good record of claim processing, with high levels of accuracy and claim management. The Accountable Body will provide sufficient staff resources to ensure separation of duties for claim recommendation and authorisation.

Key and ancillary controls will be implemented as required by the Managing Authority and all claim payment decisions recorded as appropriate. Post payment checks will be undertaken by Accountable Body audit staff on a sample of claims approved by each authoriser.

5.5 Arbitration
It is expected that the LAG will deal with management issues as they arise. However, if problems persist, it can ask the Accountable Body to act as arbitrators to settle disputes in line with Local Authority procedures and MA guidance.

5.6 Communications and publicity
The LAG’s Publicity and Communication Strategy (available on request) details the mechanisms to be used to promote LEADER locally and will be shared by the LAG and AB during the programme period. It will align, where appropriate, with the wider national strategy for promoting the programme and reflect guidance set out in the National Operational Manual. The strategy will be reviewed regularly; its effectiveness will be evaluated alongside national and local programme objectives. Assessment will come from quantifiable feedback such as website visits, project enquiries and event numbers. In addition, qualitative research will take place to ensure that the right messages are reaching their intended audiences.
All communication activity will be scrutinised for its value for money in terms of its purpose and the ability to reach target groups. Experience delivering other LEADER programmes has shown that, in the New Forest, the most powerful (and cost effective) communication method is often word of mouth and the LAG will utilise their extensive stakeholder contacts for this purpose alongside more conventional methods of publicity and communication via the published and broadcast media and a physical presence at key local public and commercial fairs and events.

The LAG will also disseminate information about the local programme; sharing good practice and publicising success stories via existing and new networks.

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Proposals

5.7.1 Monitoring of Programme Administration and LAG
The Accountable Body will be ultimately responsible for the overall monitoring of the New Forest LAG, its staff and the implementation of the LDS. The successful delivery of the New Forest LDS will be the main output and indicator for performance measurement and this monitoring activity will be undertaken with the input of stakeholders and delivery partners.

The LAG, on a quarterly basis, will review outputs and outcomes delivered to date against the LDS aims and objectives to ensure the programme is on track and will take mitigating measures if any areas are shown to not be achieving stated aims. In addition, monitoring of LAG membership will also be undertaken to ensure that it remains representative of the area and of stakeholder aspirations.

5.7.2 Monitoring of Project Activity
As part of the LAGs appraisal process, projects will need to demonstrate tangible and measurable outputs before they are approved. Monitoring and evaluation of this activity will be based on the CMES (Common Monitoring and Evaluation System), with data entered onto ROD/CAP-D when launched. The requirements for ongoing reporting of project activity will be agreed with project operators prior to the Contract being issued and the detail and frequency of reporting will depend on the size, nature, perceived risk and complexity of the individual project.

It is anticipated that routine inspections, in conjunction with the submission of monitoring reports, will enable programme staff to quickly identify projects which may fail to meet their planned outputs. These projects will be supported by programme staff to ensure that they achieve a successful outcome and negotiate variations to their projects where this is necessary.

6.0 EXIT STRATEGY

One of the main aspirations of the New Forest LDS is to act as a catalyst for practical action to re-invigorate the rural business sector. This will not only be achieved through the provision of capital assets for individual businesses and communities but also through initiatives which support on-going collaboration (including supply chain development) within the wider New Forest business community.

It is acknowledged that LEADER investment is finite and that the LEADER programme is time-limited. Therefore it is the intention of the New Forest LAG to make optimum use of the available funding to help to build on existing foundations and develop new networks and opportunities within the local economy to enable our rural businesses to flourish and grow well beyond the end of the 2015-2020 programme.

7.0 CONFIRMATION OF LAG & ACCOUNTABLE BODY PARTNERSHIP

The New Forest LAG Local Development Strategy is endorsed by the Accountable Body.

On behalf of the Local Action Group:

Chris Gwyn Evans
Chairman
New Forest Local Action Group

On behalf of the Accountable Body:

Bob Jackson
Executive Director
New Forest District Council
8.0 LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of LAG area
Appendix 2: Financial Profile
Appendix 3: Programme Outputs
Appendix 4: LEP Letters of Endorsement

9.0 REFERENCES

1 Based on Rural / Urban Definitions of Census Output Areas 2011
2 New Forest Economic Issues Discussion Paper, Roger Tym & Partners 2005
3 Rural Evidence Research Centre 2005
4 Local Futures Group: The Knowledge Economy in Rural England, 2004
5 New Forest District Council 2014
6 New Forest National Park Local Development Framework 2010
7 ONS 2013
8 Interdepartmental Business Register (ONS) 2013
9 ONS 2011
11 Tax Research LLP, December 2013
12 ONS Official Labour Market statistics 2013
13 ONS Annual Population Survey 2014
14 New Forest – State of the Park Report 2012
15 Defra 2010
16 Defra 2010
17 New Forest National Park Management Plan 2010-2015
18 Forecasts of Farm Business Income by type of farm in England – 2013/14
19 Defra 2010
20 New Forest Catchment Waste Water Improvement Plan 2012
21 Defra: Barriers to Diversification, 2007
22 Forestry Commission Inventory 2014
23 IFOS 2013 dataset
24 New Forest Land Advice Service
25 New Forest Forestry Commission 2014
26 Ref: IFOS 2013 dataset
27 New Forest Forestry Commission 2014
28 Tourism South East – The Economic Impact of Tourism on the New Forest 2012
29 ONS 2013
30 ONS Claimant Count 2014
31 ONS 2014
32 NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics 2013
33 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2013
34 ONS Claimant Count 2014
35 HMRC 2011
36 Land Registry and ONS Survey of Income & Hours (both 2013)
37 New Forest District Council 2014
38 Brand New Forest Broadband Survey 2013
39 Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010
40 NOMIS Official Labour Market statistics 2013
41 The Commission for Rural Communities 2011 - Mind the Gap: Digital England – a rural perspective
42 Growing micro businesses, Lord Young, May 2013
43 ABI Business Demography 2012
44 ONS 2013
45 ONS 2014
47 ONS 2014
48 ONS Annual Population Survey 2014
49 Office of Fair Trading, (date unknown)
50 An Evaluation of the New Forest LEADER Programme 2008-13, The Rural Consultancy 2013
51 ONS 2014
52 Interdepartmental Business Register (ONS) 2013
Appendix 1: Map Showing the New Forest Local Action Group Area of Operation
## Appendix 2: Financial Profile

LEADER 2014-2020 - Local Development Strategy Application Financial Profile

### 1. Applicant Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Action Group:</th>
<th>New Forest LAG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountable Body:</td>
<td>New Forest District Council</td>
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### 2. Financial Profile

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>£0.00</td>
<td>£39,802.80</td>
<td>£45,773.22</td>
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**Grand Total**: £1,618,000.00
### 3. Rationale for budget profile:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Priority</th>
<th>Defra's indicative National Budget split:</th>
<th>% allocation to deliver New Forest LDS:</th>
<th>£ allocation in order to deliver New Forest LDS:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support for increasing farm productivity</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>£238,816.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>£517,436.40</td>
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<td>Support for rural tourism</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>£212,281.60</td>
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<td>Provision of rural services</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Support for cultural and heritage activity</td>
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<td>Support for increasing forestry productivity</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>£225,549.20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,326,760.00</strong></td>
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**Indicative Mid-Point Allocation for New Forest LAG:** £1,618,000.00

**Of this:**
- A Maximum 18% Allocated to M&A
- Therefore allocation to projects: £291,240.00

**New Forest LEADER Expenditure Profile**

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*Appendix 2: Financial Profile (Continued)*
Appendix 3: Programme Outputs

Outputs Submission Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADER Policy Priority</th>
<th>Relevant CMES output indicators for LDS application</th>
<th>End of programme forecast (by December 2020)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Number of projects supported</td>
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<td><strong>Support for rural tourism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobs created (FTE)</td>
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<td><strong>Support for culture and heritage activity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Total RDPE expenditure</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobs created (FTE)</td>
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Appendix 4: Letters of Endorsement from the Local Enterprise Partnerships

Appendix 4a: Enterprise M3 LEP (attached)
Appendix 4b: Wiltshire LEP (attached)
Appendix 4c: Solent LEP (attached)
Dear Sally,

Ref: New Forest Local Action Group Local Development Strategy

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

Enterprise M3 welcomes your focus on innovation, enterprise, skills, competition and investment and has similarly recognised these key components that drive economic growth within the Enterprise M3 Strategic Economic Plan. Likewise, your focus on enterprise development and competitiveness and on strategic sectors is welcomed. We are delighted to see the work of the New Forest Local Action Group and Enterprise M3 woven together for the benefit of our rural communities in providing complementary and supportive services and we look forward to future working with you to make this a reality.

We fully support your strategy and wish you every success with your submission.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Wyatt – Enterprise Project Manager

For and on behalf of Enterprise M3
3rd September 2014

Mr Chris Gwyn Evans
Chair - New Forest LEADER
New Forest District Council
Appletree Court
Lyndhurst
Hants SO43 7PA

Dear Chris

New Forest AONB Local Action Group
Support for LEADER Local Development Strategy bid - September 2014

Thank you for inviting Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership to assess and comment upon your Local Development Strategy and plans for LEADER from 2015 – 2021.

We are happy to be able to support New Forest Local Action Group’s bid for a LEADER programme and endorse your Local Development Strategy.

We are pleased to see recognition of the need to work with SWLEP and the range of local delivery partners when making LEADER investments and grants.

We believe that you will be able to act complementarity and will add-value to other publically-funded strategic economic developments. Through our Rural Economy Group we will be able to jointly discuss the continued alignment of our investments for jobs and growth in rural areas. This will help avoid duplication of effort and help to integrate approaches that promote growth.

We wish your LAG the best of luck in the forthcoming approval process.

Yours faithfully

Isobel Brown
Director, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership
(On Behalf of Chair, Barry Dennington)
Dear Sally,

Re: New Forest Local Development Strategy

Thank you for providing the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft New Forest Local Development Strategy (LDS).

The Solent LEP has been given strategic responsibility for delivering €42.9m of ESF and ERDF over the 2014-2020 period, alongside £2.9m of EAFRD funding, and has set out how it will invest these EU growth funds in the area, how this will contribute to our ambitions for local economic growth, the rationale for our proposed investments, how the Strategy will be delivered, and the anticipated impact of the investment programme, within its EU Structural Investment Fund Strategy (EUSIF), which was published, following central Government approval, on the 20th May, 2014. The Solent LEP EUSIF forms an important part of a wider local growth programme for the Solent LEP area as set out in Transforming Solent: The Solent Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), published in March 2014.

Pertinent to the New Forest LDS, the Solent LEP’s EUSIF Strategy sets out the rural dimension to the Solent economy, and, based on evidence and consultation, sets out how it will deploy its EAFRD funding.

The mainland Solent LEP area is the most urbanised area in the South of England outside London. This strong urban dimension to the Solent is complemented by a rural component, which has a significant spatial dimension, contributes output to the Solent economy, and helps make the Solent such an attractive place to live, work and visit. Whilst the mainland Solent LEP area has a rural fringe, it is the Isle of Wight that represents the principal rural area within the Solent LEP. Here, productivity levels and wages are among the lowest in England, unemployment is significantly higher than the Solent LEP average, employment is highly seasonal, and the small size of land holdings negates opportunities for realising economies of scale. In consideration of the specific challenges impacting on the Solent rural economy the Solent LEP approach
is to focus on supporting diversification, adding value to primary products, and supporting rural businesses getting to market.

Of the four activity types that LEPs are able to use EAFRD to fund, our consultation with partners identified that our focus should be on:

- Building the knowledge and skills in rural areas.
- Funding new and developing micro and small businesses.
- Support for tourism activities in rural areas.

Whilst partners felt that funding small-scale renewable and broadband investments in rural areas is important, it was felt that the market should drive the delivery of the former and it was unclear how EAFRD funding could add value to existing programme of investment for the latter.

The three key activities within the Solent LEP EUSIF, through which EAFRD funding will be deployed, target: building knowledge and skills in the rural base; funding new and developing micro and small rural businesses; and support for tourism activities in rural areas. We have identified specific expected outputs from these activities in terms of jobs created, people trained, and enterprises supported.

The vast majority of ERDF and ESF supported activities are delivered across the LEP area. This includes delivery of business advice and financial support to SMEs through Activities 2 (The Solent Business Hub) and 3 (Access to Finance for Start-ups and SMEs), as well as the £2m p.a. Solent Growth Fund secured through the Local Growth Fund. The Solent LEP intends to work with Natural Enterprise, who will be responsible for guiding rural enterprises towards the most appropriate source of support and, for ensuring that EAFRD is used in a way that adds value to core services that are available across the LEP area. This principle also applies to the availability of skills support, particularly that provided through Activity 7 (Employer Responsive Skills).

Whilst the New Forest LAG area includes only a small part of the Solent LEP area, the LEP recognises the role that the New Forest Local Action Group (LAG) has played in supporting the delivery of Rural Development Programme for Rural England (RDPE) funds over the 2007 - 2013 programming period. We have reviewed your draft Local Development Strategy (LDS), and endorse its four objectives, as well as its priorities and the action plan, which show synergy with the LEP economic strategy and delivery programmes. The LEP welcomes the prioritisation of funding for projects and activities that directly deliver jobs and growth in the local economy and the shift in focus from the 2008-13 programme to allow for a wider range of rural enterprises, including tourism.

Given the focus on supporting enterprise within the LDS, the LEP would welcome the New Forest LAG signposting existing and start-up businesses, within the New Forest LAG part of the Solent LEP area, to our programme funds, to compliment the activity programme set out in the LDS.

The Solent LEP wishes you well in your application for funding, and is pleased to endorse your proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Kew
Board Member, Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

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