



LODDON AND EVERSLEY HERITAGE AREA LEADER PROJECT

Local Development Strategy

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LODDON AND EVERSLEY HERITAGE AREA LEADER PROJECT

Local Development Strategy

1. Executive summary

The Loddon and Eversley Local Action Group (LAG) has been established to meet the challenge of promoting a healthy and sustainable rural economy in the Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area, as this is fundamental to protecting and enhancing all that is special about the wildlife, history and landscape of this valuable part of north east Hampshire.

Long dependant on farming and forestry, the rural economy of Loddon and Eversley underpins its biodiversity, landscape, tradition and quality of life and its continuity is vital to the character of the area. Woodland management and pastoral farming systems in particular are seen as essential to maintaining the character of the area. Yet farming has been pushed to the economic margins by soaring land values, competition of cheaper products from abroad and changing consumer preferences. Woodland management has become uneconomic due to market collapse and supply chain failings for woodland produce. The character of area, its wildlife value and its social quality is being slowly eroded. The LAG recognises the need for economically sustainable farming and forestry in order to preserve the character of the area and the livelihoods of those that make a living from its natural resources.

Situated in the south east of England, the area has been subject to a huge increase in population. Further planned development is likely to add to environmental, social and economic problems as a result of urban-fringe pressures, demands for access and recreation, and congestion from commuting. The rural area of Loddon and Eversley sits between the main conurbations of Basingstoke and Farnborough/Aldershot and it is somewhat taken for granted by those living in the towns that this attractive countryside will always be there. However, over the last 40 years the area's economy has developed mainly around the high-tech industries and the towns, with comparatively little investment to support the land-based industries and a subsequent shortage of labour and skills for traditional countryside management. Rural areas offer few employment opportunities and rural jobs tend to pay much lower salaries. High house prices in the countryside push young people into the towns where housing is cheaper, resulting in an ageing rural population. The profitability of rural business is threatened by all of this, and many village schools, shops and pubs have been forced to close. The LAG has identified the need to address issues of social and economic disadvantage in these rural communities.

This Local Development Strategy aims to deal with these issues by supporting a number of projects under the Leader programme.

We will support competitive and sustainable farming and forestry as this is fundamental to the high quality and diverse landscape and biodiversity of the area, and it will also help both mitigate against and adapt to climate change. We will provide grant aid towards appropriate diversification and expansion projects, schemes which add value to local produce, and the marketing and procurement of local food and woodland produce. Collaborative projects will be encouraged particularly where they add value to food (especially meat and dairy) or woodland products. The area's proximity to London provides a significant opportunity for it to contribute to and benefit from the London Food Strategy. This LDS looks to enhance the social wellbeing of rural communities, including enjoyment and appreciation of the environment and countryside. Proposals will not only provide financial benefits for rural communities but will specifically seek to reduce pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and other sensitive wildlife sites through

supporting sustainable rural tourism, access and educational projects. This LDS also recognises the need to enhance opportunity in rural areas both as above and also through supporting projects that provide local employment and/or environmental and social benefits.

The stated objectives of this LDS are:

- To help farming to become more sustainable and economically viable
- To promote local food
- To help woodland management to become sustainable and economically viable
- To help increase the use of wood fuel
- To encourage viable rural communities and improve quality of life
- To enable rural communities to benefit financially and socially from increased demand for access to the countryside
- To help rural businesses to become “greener” and make a positive contribution to their local environment
- To raise awareness and increase understanding of the value of the Loddon and Eversley area, the importance of farming and forestry and the benefits of buying local produce

We aim to deliver these objectives by investing £1.8M of RDPE funding in the following areas:

- £590K into the farming sector, including £150K on diversification, £400K on adding value to farm produce, and £40K on modernisation of holdings.
- £534K into the forestry sector, including £174K to improve the economic value of forests and £360K on adding value to woodland products, particularly wood fuel.
- £345K into other rural businesses, including £225K to support the development of rural micro-enterprises and £120K for rural tourism and access projects.
- £220K into the community sector, including £100K to support local food retail projects and community renewable energy schemes, £60K for projects which build community cohesion, and £60K for rural heritage projects.
- £143K on networking, training and collaboration, including developing producer networks and supply chains, joint marketing and promotion, and skills development, to help ensure a long term legacy from the Leader funding.
- We aim to support up to 99 separate projects, ranging in size from £3K up to £50K, over the six years of the Leader programme.

The LAG comprises representatives from all the appropriate sectors, with the right mix of skills and expertise to deliver a successful programme. We aim that through delivery of these projects the Leader programme will provide long term benefits which will help to sustain the rural economy, the landscape, the environment and the social fabric of the Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area into the future.

2. Description of the Local Action Group Area

2.1 The features and coherence of the area

The proposed Leader area is based on the existing “Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area” (LEHA) – an area of countryside, villages and market towns in north east Hampshire. Clearly defined by the River Loddon catchment boundary (Hampshire), it extends from Basingstoke in the west to Farnborough in the east and from Hampshire’s border with Berkshire in the north and onto the North Downs in the south. It is flanked by the North Wessex Downs to the west and includes the historic former royal hunting forest, the Forest of Eversley.

Old map evidence suggests that the Forest of Eversley was once very similar to the New Forest, with extensive areas of open common grazed grassland and heath interspersed with areas of grazed pasture woodland and enclosed coppices. Surrounding the common grazed land were small farms from where the stock were depastured. These small farms and associated coppice woodlands would have provided an important element in the functioning of the commoning economy. Much of this ancient Forest heritage is still evident today in the many place names that have their roots in the history of the Forest and its deer parks.

The area is steeped in history; Queen Elizabeth I was a visitor to Elvetham near Hartley Wintney, and King John regularly travelled through en route from Winchester to Runnymede. Monuments and archaeological sites abound in the Heritage Area, whilst old and traditional buildings add character and interest. Village greens found across the area are another valued legacy from times gone by. The Basingstoke Canal is not only an example of eighteenth century engineering but also the site of Second World War defence structures.

The natural environment is a strong feature of the Loddon and Eversley area. It is both an intimate and, at times, dramatic landscape of farmland, woodland, heaths and wetlands with important heritage features. The area is considered to be one of prime importance for biodiversity in Hampshire, its varied geology resulting in a matrix of important habitats such as chalk streams, ancient woodlands, fens, dry acid grassland and heathland. Many of these sites have either statutory or non statutory designations for their conservation value. The rivers of the Loddon catchment have their source in the chalk landscape of the Hampshire Downs, rising at the junction between chalk and clay and flowing north – slow and meandering creating broad and shallow valleys, with braided streams and wetlands – over the clays, sands and gravels of the London Basin to join the River Thames. The Basingstoke Canal SSSI also snakes through the area; it is an outstanding wildlife habitat as well as an important recreational resource.

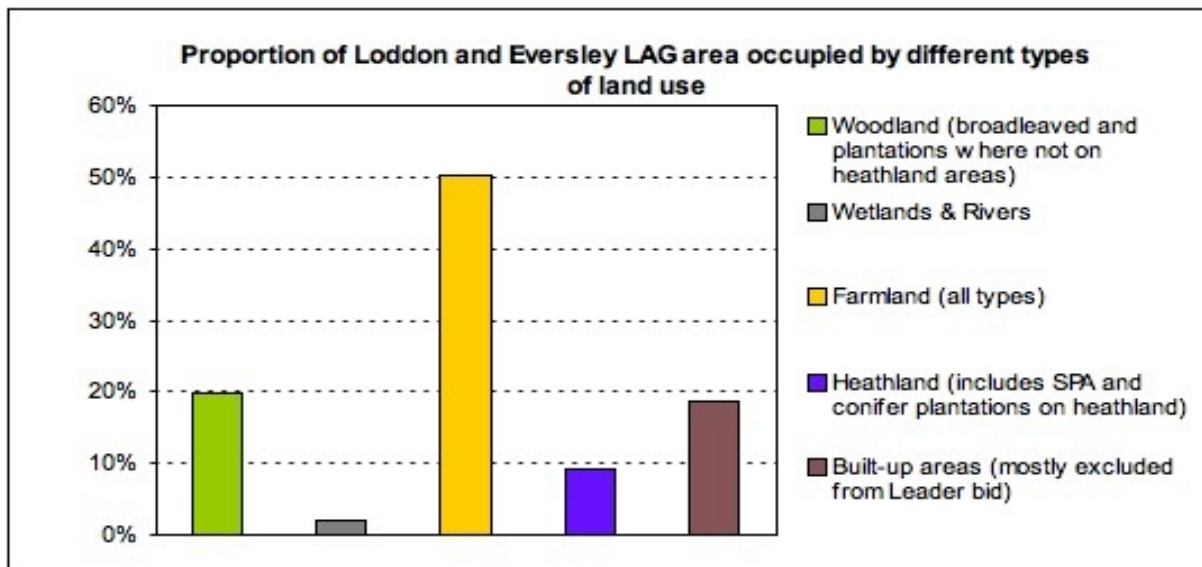
Although the commoning economy is now largely lost, to this day Loddon and Eversley remains a working landscape where arable farming, which dominates in the south, gradually gives way to the mixed farms of the north. It is also increasingly prized for its recreational value by the nearby urban populations. Large tracts of heathland have survived thanks to the MOD, and these now form part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

Much of the old Loddon and Eversley landscape has been lost or fragmented due to urban development, intensive agriculture, conifer plantation and military use. However, in many cases, this damage can be reversed if traditional agricultural and forestry practices are employed, and sufficient water of suitable quality is available.

Despite the fragmentation, the area still retains its identity due the social links through farming and forestry, and it forms an important “green wedge” between the major towns which is tied

together by the river valleys and the strong landscape character. The area is also recognised through management and planning policies, adding to its coherence.

A summary of the major landuse categories illustrates the importance of farming and the high proportion of woodland and heathland in the area:



2.2 Map showing area and border

The LAG area being based on the existing Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area, will build on the area's identity and cohesiveness. The attached maps¹ show the proposed Leader area and its main features. Where parishes overlap with the LEHA boundary the whole parish has been included for ease of administration and to be more inclusive². All urban areas have been excluded, and are greyed out on the attached maps. The proposed Leader area includes the small rural towns of Tadley, Hartley Wintney, Hook, Odiham and Yateley. These market towns are important for the success of the Leader project as they contain the main populations of consumers as well as retail outlets, giving the project access to markets for local produce.

2.3 Table showing parishes included in the Leader area and the rural population statistics

The table in Appendix iii lists the parishes included in the Leader area that fall into the three local authority areas of Basingstoke and Deane Borough, Hart District and Rushmoor Borough. The total rural population in the area is just over 98,000 people.

2.4 SWOT analysis for the area

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful LEHA project and strong partnerships • Workshops identified strong desire from local community to protect and enhance the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining livestock industry (dairy, beef, sheep) • Few meat and wood processing facilities in the area

¹ Appendix i shows the Leader area including the historic Forest of Eversley boundary, the River Loddon Catchment boundary, the SSSIs and SPA. Appendix ii shows the Leader area and the Parish and District boundaries only.

² Apart from the western boundary where we align with the North Wessex Downs Leader area.

<p>area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural heritage – biodiversity and landscape integral to area’s value. • Built heritage – important for character and history of area. (Basing House, Silchester etc.) • Valued green wedge (strategic gap) between urban areas • Farming still main land use • Good road and rail links to major towns and cities enabling access to markets • Historical, cultural, recreational and wildlife value of area recognised in Loddon Biodiversity Strategy and Forest of Eversley Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlands uneconomical to manage leading to neglect and loss of traditional management skills • Large deer populations causing woodland/habitat damage and an increasing number of deer/vehicle collisions • Urban fringe issues • High cost of living compared to rural incomes • Growing urban population requiring countryside access for leisure and recreation puts important wildlife sites under pressure • Lack of understanding of countryside issues amongst urban populations and poor links between urban and rural economies and communities • Few employment opportunities in rural areas leads to out-commuting with attendant increased CO₂ emissions, congestion, social divide and health and quality of life issues • Social exclusion in rural areas – poor access to broadband and poor public transport • Most focus and investment in town centres • Area doesn’t have a strong identity (like the New Forest)
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing interest in local food/quality food and some excellent farmers markets/farm shops in the area • Interest in farm diversification enterprises • Development may provide opportunity for procurement of local timber and woodland products • Local authority rural strategies and sustainable community strategies • Government promoting countryside access to reduce obesity, mental health problems, and emotional difficulties in children and adults • Opportunities for rural businesses through IT leading to regeneration of rural areas and market towns • Recognised role for land managers in tackling climate change • Climate change brings opportunities as well as threats (e.g. energy crops) • Opportunities to conserve and interpret the area’s rich biodiversity and cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge development pressure with focus on growth economy in urban areas (SE Plan and SE RES/ economic powerhouse of the country) but little focus on importance of rural economy. • No strategy for mitigation of impacts of urban growth on rural Loddon and Eversley area • Increasing urban fringe issues • Competition with cheaper food from abroad • Increased regulatory framework • Water resources and water quality are under pressure from increased development through over abstraction and waste management. • Agriculture contributing to diffuse pollution issues in the Loddon Catchment. • Biodiversity will struggle to adapt to climate change in a fragmented landscape • Food (and wood) miles and transport issues = carbon emissions.

2.5 List of key issues and how these have been identified

Analysis of the issues identified in the SWOT analysis through consultations, workshops and meetings with key partners and members of the public have identified the following 2 main issues:

1. Economic decline of farming and forestry and its impact on the countryside and rural communities

Long dependant on farming and forestry, the rural economy of Loddon and Eversley underpins its biodiversity, landscape, tradition and quality of life and its continuity is vital to the character of the area. Yet farming has been pushed to the economic margins by soaring land values, competition of cheaper products from abroad and changing consumer preferences. Woodland management has become uneconomic due to market collapse and supply chain failings for woodland produce. The Hampshire Farming Study shows a 49% decrease in total farming income in the county between 1995 and 2007. **In particular, woodland management and pastoral farming systems are seen as essential to maintaining the character of the LEHA.** Without environmentally and economically sustainable farming (in particular livestock farming) and woodland management, the character of area, its wildlife value and its social quality will be steadily eroded.

2. Declining quality of life for rural communities

Situated in the south east of England, the area has been subject to a huge increase in population. For example, the town of Basingstoke on the western edge of the LEHA has seen its population rise from 26,000 in 1961 to its current level of 90,000³. Further planned development is likely to add to environmental, social and economic problems as a result of **urban-fringe pressures, demands for access and recreation**, and congestion from commuting. The rural area of Loddon and Eversley sits between the main conurbations of Basingstoke and Farnborough/Aldershot and it is somewhat taken for granted by those living in the towns that this attractive countryside will always be there. However, over the last 40 years the area's economy has developed mainly around the high-tech industries and the towns, with comparatively **little investment to support the land-based industries** and a subsequent **shortage of labour and skills** for traditional countryside management. Rural areas offer few employment opportunities and rural jobs tend to pay much lower salaries. High house prices in the countryside push young people into the towns where housing is cheaper, resulting in an ageing rural population. The profitability of rural business is threatened by all of this, and many village schools, shops and pubs have been forced to close.

2.6 Evidence to support these issues

1. Economic decline of farming and forestry and its impact on the countryside and rural areas – evidence	
Decline in Farming and Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of employment in Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing sectors (residence based) in 2001 for Basingstoke and Deane was 1.56%, Hart 1.2% and Rushmoor 0.73%. This is compared to the national average of 1.61% [Office for National Statistics - Local Knowledge; Census 2001] • The total full time agricultural workforce in Hampshire has decreased by 453 persons between 2003 and 2006 [Hampshire Farming Study Review 2007]

³ <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/localpages/basingstoke-attract.htm>

Increase in land value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average agricultural land price in the South East increased by £5423 per hectare from 1993 to 2004. An increase of 118% [Defra - Agricultural Land Sales and Prices in England] • Forecasts undertaken for North Hampshire indicate that there is likely to be a significant gap between demand and current supply of employment land. Depending on the assumptions made, there could be a need for 40-60 hectares of additional land for employment purposes in North Hampshire. [Hampshire County Council]
Competition of cheaper products from abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1998, Britain imported 61,400 tonnes of poultry meat from the Netherlands in the same year that it exported 33,100 tonnes of poultry meat to the Netherlands. Britain imported 240,000 tonnes of pork and 125,000 tonnes of lamb while it exported 195,000 tonnes of pork and 102,000 tonnes of lamb. [Dr Caroline Lucas MEP based on data from the report - Economic evaluation of farm animal welfare policy. Final Report to MAFF by Bennett, R. et al. Department of Agricultural and Food Economics, University of Reading. December 2000 and Eurostat data.]
Changing consumer preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectation of the variety of non-seasonal and exotic foods being available has changed in recent years leading to an increase in imports. For example, in 1996 the UK imported 434,000 tonnes of apples, 202,000 of which came from outside the EU. [FAO Food Balance Sheet Database, 2001] • Even if all the UK's home-grown fruit was consumed domestically, the UK could at present be only 5% self-sufficient in fruit. [Food Miles-Still on the Road to Ruin, Sustain.1999]
Increase in feed costs for livestock farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2004 the average cost of feed wheat was £61.80 per tonne, and for feed barley was £60.00 per tonne compared to £168.30 and £158.90 per tonne in 2007. This is an increase of 172% and 165% respectively. [Defra - UK Weekly Commodity Prices: Cereals]
Few meat processing facilities in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 14 full and low throughput red meat abattoirs in the South east region only 2 are in Hampshire. The remaining full throughput abattoirs in Hampshire and Surrey are situated on high value potential redevelopment sites and are therefore vulnerable to special closure pressures. [SEEDA - Abattoir Provision in the South East Region of England (2000)]
Under utilised woodland in area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total area of woodland of 0.1 hectares and over in Hampshire is 66,939 hectares. This represents 17.7% of the land area, with north-east Hants having a particularly high coverage of Broadleaved, Coniferous and Mixed woodland. [National Inventory of Woodland and Trees] • Hampshire has the largest extent of hazel coppice of any English County, much of it within ancient semi-natural woodland, and a great proportion is currently unproductive with deteriorating nature conservation and landscape value. Only some 500 hectares are regularly coppiced but there is scope for bringing into rotation at least ten percent (or 700 hectares) of the remaining unworked coppice. [Hampshire Woodland Forum, report of the county planning officer]
Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey evidence shows that poor returns from farming are the main

recognised as resolution to low economic viability of farming, but diversification projects often entered into with little or no experience of sector	<p>reason for diversification for 78% of farmers. [Defra, Barriers to Farm Diversification, 2007]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2004/05 and 2005/06 diversification incomes in England increased by 21% and constituted 22% of total farm incomes and all of the increase in farm incomes between those years. [Defra Farm Business Surveys 2003/04 to 2005/06, Non-Agricultural Income and Diversified Enterprises.] • In the South-East region, 300 new diversified enterprises started-up in 2005-2006, but in the same period 400 were discontinued. [Defra, Farm Business Survey 2006]
2. Declining quality of life for rural communities – evidence	
Area subject to massive increase in population and further planned development is likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South East Plan proposes 26,000 new homes in north Hampshire over the next 20 years. [The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA)]
Increased demand for access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport England considers that new housing developments provide the opportunity to fund new community sport and recreation facilities. [Sport England] • Hampshire County Council will ensure that local residents are able to access and enjoy the countryside on their doorstep. [Hampshire County Council – Forest of Eversley Countryside Access Plan]
Environmental pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment Agency is concerned that further development at Basingstoke may increase the volume of discharged water to a level which adversely impacts on the ecological value of the River Loddon. [Hampshire County Council committee report. South East Plan: Final Sub-Regional Policy Advice to the South East England Regional Assembly] • The Loddon is a high quality watercourse subject to a range of environmental objectives including the EU Freshwater Fish Directive (salmonid) designations. [Defra - EU Freshwater Fish Directive]
Very high outward commuting levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% of Hart residents, 47% of Rushmoor residents and 33% of Basingstoke and Deane residents commute out of the area to work. This is compared to the average for England of 39%. [Office for National Statistics - Local Knowledge; Census 2001]
Lack of access to community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7% of Hart residents, 7% of Rushmoor residents and 8% of Basingstoke and Deane residents commute to work on public transport. This is compared to the national average of 15%. [Office for National Statistics - Local Knowledge; Census 2001]
Increased housing prices, young people can't afford to live here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average property price in rural areas is 6.7 times average annual earnings compared with a ratio of 5.6 in urban areas. There are far fewer first-time buyers in rural areas – only 24% of all buyers compared with 41% in urban areas. [Halifax English Rural Housing Index] • The average house cost for the three districts combined is £280,000, with Hart having an average house price of £341,000. This is compared to the national average of £230,000. [Land Registry of England and Wales]

Ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amongst the sub-regions in Hampshire, South Hampshire accounts for between 63% and 73% of total labour supply growth (aged 16 to 74) between 2006 and 2026, depending on the set of activity rates, with North Hampshire providing between just 23% and 27%. [Office for National Statistics - Local Knowledge; Census 2001]
Few employment opportunities in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportions of enterprises in Agriculture Sector in Hart is 3%, in Rushmoor is 1% and in Basingstoke and Deane is 5%. This is compared to the national average of 7%. [Office for National Statistics - Local Knowledge; Census 2001]

2.7 Specific evidence to identify the areas and types of disadvantage that exist in the LAG area

Overall, the IMD data for the Loddon and Eversley Leader area suggests that the area is generally well off, with few pockets of deprivation in the urban centres of Basingstoke and Aldershot. There are however 11 SOA in Loddon and Eversley area which are in the 20% most deprived areas nationally representing 6% of the total LEHA SOA. Of these, seven are in Basingstoke and Deane and four are in Rushmoor.

The IMD data does not show the explicit deprivation affecting the rural population of the Loddon and Eversley area, specifically:

- Significant amounts of people have no academic, vocational or professional qualifications. In Loddon and Eversley 20.1% of the people aged 16 to 74 have no academic, vocational or professional qualifications, compared with 23.9% in the Region as a whole. 16.5% of the people with no such qualifications are in rural parts of the Loddon and Eversley area⁴;
- Many residents suffer from rural isolation. 9.1% of households in rural Loddon and Eversley do not have a car or van available for private use. In urban parts the area it is 15%. There is significantly more public transport provision in the urban areas⁵;
- The average household income for the area is well above the South East Average⁶. This combined with close proximity to London and other nearby towns thriving from technology industries has driven house prices well above the national average⁷ and way beyond the reach of agricultural and forestry workforce income⁸. This is forcing both inwards and outward commuting and reducing the employment opportunities for local people and ultimately creating a skills and services shortage in the area.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

⁷ The Land Registry Database

⁸ The Hampshire Farming Study Review 2007

3. The Local Development Strategy (LDS)

3.1 Description of the process and activities undertaken by the LAG to engage their rural communities and businesses in the development of this LDS

The Loddon and Eversley working group consulted with specific groups in the rural area to gain a better understanding of the needs and barriers facing local people. The working group was able to identify a large number of contacts which encompassed a wide range of rural businesses, farmers, landowners, forestry workers, key organisations and members of the rural community. 195 landowners were sent letters and other key individuals received emails or telephone calls with an invitation to attend four workshops and a public meeting, which would give them the opportunity to discuss issues and potential projects relating directly to their businesses or community. Notices were also posted on the Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area website⁹ and in the local press. All parish councils in the area were invited via email or telephone.

Four workshops¹⁰ were held in November 2007: Rural Businesses, Livestock farmers and associated food producers, Access, tourism and recreation and Woodland and forestry. In addition to the working group members, there were 55 attendees in total. All of the workshops followed the same format and began with a presentation giving an overview of Leader and potential opportunities, followed by open discussion. The workshops were facilitated by members of the working group and all information gathered has been used to inform this strategy. Attendees were asked to say what barriers they felt they were up against, what their needs were and what projects they were considering undertaking in the future. A public consultation meeting was also held on 8th December 2007; this was a drop in session which provided the public and community groups a chance to find out more about Leader, and to feed in ideas and issues. In addition to the workshops, the working group received feedback and comments via email or telephone from many other individuals and groups.

As a result of the consultation, the following organisations have contributed to this LDS:

Auto Cycle Union	Hampshire Country Learning
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	Hampshire Economic Partnership Rural
Bramshill Riders and Drivers	Economy Task Group
British Horse Society	Hampshire Fare
Country Land and Business Association	Hampshire Museums Trust
e.Hampshire	Hart District Council
EBLEX	Herriard Estates
Environment Agency	Hidden Britain Tours
Eric & Jenny Denton – Farmers	Home Farm
Eversley Parish Council	Hampshire Coppice Group
Farm Fresh Dairies (Lyde Green Farm)	International Mountain Biking Association
Farmer Roy Best	Kidsrome mobile farm
Farmer Thackhams Farm	Millers Ark Animals
Farmer Totters Farm	Moundsmere Estate Management
Flavia Estates	Natural England
Forestry Commission	Newlands Farm
FWAG – Farming and Wildlife Advisory	Newlyns Farm
Group	North Hampshire Chamber of Commerce

⁹ www.loddon-eversley.org.uk

¹⁰ <http://www.loddoneversleyleader.org.uk/workshops.htm>

GK Benford & Co (Down Farm) Gorrick Mountain Biking Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Hampshire Cheeses Hampshire County Council	Rushmoor Borough Council Simmons & Sons South East Wood Fuels The Agricultural Mortgage Company TROT – Toll Rides (off-road) Trust
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3.2 Description of main themes and activities that will be addressed and the groups that will be targeted

There are four main themes and one cross-cutting theme that the Loddon and Eversley LAG will be focusing on to help address the two key issues identified in 2.5:

Theme	Key Issue	Rationale
1. Helping farming to become more sustainable and economically viable	1	<i>With 50% of Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area being farmed, farming is essential to maintaining its character. Farming's future, and hence the Loddon and Eversley's, must be secured through addressing its sustainable economic development</i>
2. Helping woodland management to become sustainable and economically viable	1	<i>The Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area contains almost 10,000 ha of woodland of which at least 25% is ancient. However, it is an unmanaged and under-utilised resource. Its local economic development must be supported in order to maximise its value to people and wildlife.</i>
3. Encouraging viable rural communities and improving quality of life	2	<i>In recent years the large towns of the area have grown and prospered often to the detriment of rural communities. Steps must be taken to ensure that rural Loddon and Eversley remains a living working countryside with the right skills to survive and a wide social mix of people.</i>
4. Enabling rural communities to benefit financially and socially from increased demand for access to the countryside	2	<i>The Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area is the 'countryside on the doorstep' for the urban populations of Basingstoke and the Blackwater Valley Towns. It has much to offer in terms of history, cultural heritage, biodiversity, educational and recreational pursuits. This must be carefully managed in order to benefit rural communities and avoid damage to the environment.</i>
Cross-cutting theme: Helping rural businesses to become "greener" and make a positive contribution to their local environment	1 & 2	<i>The threat of climate change affects everyone, so it is important that all projects minimise their carbon footprint. Because the natural environment is such a strong feature of the Loddon and Eversley area, it is important that projects are sympathetic to the landscape and wildlife assets of the area.</i>

Under each of these four themes a number of activities will be addressed through the delivery of projects, and specific groups will be targeted. All projects will be also considered against the cross-cutting theme to ensure that they have a minimal impact on the environment by demonstrating efficient use of resources and where appropriate, a positive contribution towards the biodiversity and landscape of the area.

Theme 1: Help farming to become more sustainable and economically viable	
<p><u>Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Grants for diversification into appropriate new enterprises b) Grants to help sustain existing enterprises and assist their expansion c) Grants to add value to local farm produce d) Support for projects that encourage procurement of local farm produce e) Support for projects that deliver collaborative working and skills development f) Support for projects that encourage public appreciation and awareness of the importance of farming g) Support for on farm renewable energy projects 	<p><u>Target groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers, landowners, their families and employees • Existing diversified farm enterprises • Farm shops • Members of the public • Businesses, social enterprises, charities and other formally constituted groups with links to farming <p><u>What we will fund</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment in equipment, machinery, materials, new technology, conversions etc. (up to 40%) • Fees and start-up revenue costs associated with developing added value, diversification, efficiency, quality, expansion, marketing, branding, retailing, awareness/education, environmental improvements etc. (up to 50% for businesses, up to 80% for charities) • Costs of training, skills development and networking activities required for the success of projects (up to 80%)
Theme 2: Help woodland management to become sustainable and economically viable	
<p><u>Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Grants for woodland and forestry businesses for expansion, equipment purchase and developing new products to access new markets b) Support for projects that encourage local procurement of forestry and woodland products c) Support for projects that promote wood fuel, address supply chain issues and develop markets (ideally in partnership with other LAGs) d) Grants for the installation of wood fuel energy systems, particularly in community buildings e) Support for projects that deliver collaborative working and skills 	<p><u>Target groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those making their living from woodland and forestry and woodland based enterprises of all sizes • Processing industry and/or third parties • Partners involved in cooperation projects • Businesses, social enterprises, charities and other formally constituted groups with links to woodland or forestry <p><u>What we will fund</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment in equipment, machinery, materials, new technology, conversions etc. (up to 40%) • Fees and start-up revenue costs associated with developing new products, improving

<p>development</p> <p>f) Support for projects that deliver sustainable management of woodlands</p>	<p>quality and efficiency, expansion, marketing, branding, supply-chain development, awareness/education, environmental management etc. (up to 50% for businesses, up to 80% for charities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of training, skills development and networking activities required for the success of projects (up to 80%)
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Theme 3: Encourage viable rural communities and maintain or improve quality of life

<p><u>Activities</u></p> <p>a) Grants to support new rural businesses and sustain/ develop existing rural businesses that will provide local employment</p> <p>b) Support for projects, activities, facilities and services that will provide clear social and environmental benefits</p> <p>c) Support for activities that celebrate local rural tradition and cultural heritage</p> <p>d) Support for projects that deliver collaborative working and skills development particularly in traditional rural trades</p>	<p><u>Target groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social enterprises, charities, parish councils, community groups and other formally constituted groups • Existing rural businesses • Potential new businesses <p><u>What we will fund</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment in small-scale infrastructure, interpretation materials, heritage improvements, equipment, machinery, new technology, conversions etc. (up to 40% for businesses, up to 80% for community groups) • Revenue costs associated with marketing and development, environmental management, community events, awareness/education etc. (up to 50% for businesses, up to 80% for community groups) • Costs of training, skills development and networking activities required for the success of projects (up to 80%)
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Theme 4: Enable rural communities to benefit financially and socially from increased demand for access to the countryside

<p><u>Activities</u></p> <p>a) Support for enterprises that provide educational access to rural activities and cultural heritage</p> <p>b) Support for activities that promote sustainable rural tourism, enable access to the countryside and promote awareness of biodiversity</p> <p>c) Support for activities that foster understanding between rural and urban populations and ways of life</p> <p>d) Support for projects that deliver collaborative working and skills development</p> <p>e) Develop an identity for the area</p>	<p><u>Target groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farms and other businesses providing educational and recreational access particularly where it leads to employment or is financially self supporting • Local tourism enterprises • Members of the public • Social enterprises, charities, parish councils, community groups and other formally constituted groups <p><u>What we will fund</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment in small-scale infrastructure, interpretation materials,
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	<p>equipment, machinery, new technology, conversions etc. (up to 40% for businesses, up to 80% for community groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue costs associated with marketing and development, tourism activities, environmental management, community events, awareness/education etc. (up to 50% for businesses, up to 80% for community groups) • Costs of training, skills development and networking activities required for the success of projects (up to 80%)
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3.3 Proposed objectives and priorities for the area

The objectives of the Loddon and Eversley LAG are:

- To help farming to become more sustainable and economically viable
- To promote local food
- To help woodland management to become sustainable and economically viable
- To help increase the use of wood fuel
- To encourage viable rural communities and improve quality of life
- To enable rural communities to benefit financially and socially from increased demand for access to the countryside
- To help rural businesses to become “greener” and make a positive contribution to their local environment
- To raise awareness and increase understanding of the value of the Loddon and Eversley area, the importance of farming and forestry and the benefits of buying local produce

The LAG’s priorities will be to widely promote Leader to encourage rural businesses and communities to come forward with projects that meet the objectives and help address the issues in the area. We will prioritise:

- Businesses and groups who are committed to the long-term future of the Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area
- Projects that fit best with the themes and activities we have identified
- Projects which clearly demonstrate economic and social benefits
- Projects which deliver environmental benefits
- Projects that demonstrate long term sustainability
- Projects that have the greatest chance of success
- Projects which deliver value for money
- Projects which provide sustainable local employment

3.4 How these proposals fit with the RDPE, Regional and National priorities, and how they align with local strategies and initiatives

Issues, themes and activities identified by the LEHA Leader Programme are cross cutting on all RDPE priorities. They will make a major contribution to the South East England and London Regional Implementation Plan and its principal objective ('protect and enhance the high quality and diverse environmental characteristics and natural resources of the South East region and London by encouraging an innovative and sustainable rural economy which improves everybody's quality of life') and are complementary to the long term goals of the Government's Strategy for Farming and Food.

Firstly, competitive and sustainable farming and forestry is fundamental to the high quality and diverse landscape and biodiversity of the area and will help both mitigate against and adapt to climate change. This is mainly addressed through Themes 1 and 2 that, amongst other things, grant aid appropriate diversification and expansion, schemes and procurement of local food and woodland produce. Collaborative projects will be encouraged particularly where they add value to food (especially meat and dairy) or woodland products. The area's proximity to London provides a significant opportunity for it to contribute to and benefit from the London Food Strategy.

Secondly, the programme's proposals specifically look to enhance the environment and countryside and people's enjoyment thereof. Proposals will not only provide financial benefits for rural communities but will specifically seek to reduce pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and other sensitive wildlife sites through supporting sustainable rural tourism.

Thirdly, the LAG recognises the need to enhance opportunity in rural areas both as above and also through supporting projects that provide local employment and/or environmental and social benefits.

A project sustainability checklist will be used to measure a proposed project against RDPE fit along with other local strategies. Highlighted below are the relevant local authority's community strategies and other relevant documents. The LAG aims to ensure all Leader projects compliment these plans, and will facilitate joint working wherever possible:

- *Hampshire County Council Corporate Priorities*
- *Hampshire County Council's Tourism Strategy*
- *Forest of Eversley Countryside Access Plan*
- *Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Community Strategy*
- *Rushmoor Borough Council Community Strategy*
- *Hart District Council Community Strategy*
- *Loddon Biodiversity Strategy*

The LDS meets the Hampshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities:

- 1) Deliver first class support for businesses, promote skills and workforce development and address barriers to employment;*
- 6) Promote and improve the health and wellbeing of people in Hampshire;*
- 7) Use material resources more efficiently and*
- 8) Empower local people to have greater voice and influence over decision making and delivery of services*

The LDS meets the SEEDA Regional Economic Strategy priorities:

- 2) Raise the quality of the offer to visitors, release the enterprise potential of the creative industries, leisure facilities and the visitor economy and expand cultural offer;*

3) Support enterprise and stimulate the creation of a wide variety of businesses

The LDS will help to support all of the priorities set out in the Defra Sustainable Farming Strategy, particularly in the livestock sector.

The LDS has been developed with the SEERA South East Plan in mind. In particular, the development proposals for new homes in north Hampshire over the next 20 years. The LDS considers the impacts of development as one of the key issues facing the LAG area.

The LDS supports the four key outcomes identified in the South East Regional Forestry Framework and contributes to all nine themes of the South East Rural Delivery Framework.

3.5 How we plan to use Leader and other funding streams to address these issues; how we plan to use non-RDPE funding streams to support and add-value to the Leader activities

Issue 1 recognises the need for economically sustainable farming and forestry in order to preserve the character of the area and the livelihoods of those that make a living from its natural resources. The existing Loddon and Eversley Project actively promotes uptake of EWGS, ELS and HLS, providing free advice and help at all stages. These schemes support countryside management but arguably do not address its long-term economic sustainability. The LAG intends to use Leader to address long term viability of farming and forestry by supporting schemes for diversification, adding value to produce and the expansion of existing successful enterprises. Every effort will be made to identify larger collaborative projects that could be directly supported by SEEDA and appropriate advice will be given.

Issue 2 identifies the changing nature of rural communities, and the social disadvantage that this brings to elements of the rural community. There is a range of existing local grants that can be used to address this and that will be promoted by the LAG. These include leisure grants for community buildings and locally managed play schemes, historic building repair grants, and environment regeneration grants. In general these apply only to communities in the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane, adding to the social exclusion of communities in other parts of the area. The Loddon and Eversley project, along with Hampshire County Council, is currently developing a Small Projects Fund that will be available to communities and individuals wishing to implement projects that deliver environmental or social benefits. All of these grants are reviewed on an annual basis and, while they last, have significant potential to add value to Leader activities. The LAG will make full use of these funding streams by directing applicants to appropriate grants. Basingstoke and Deane also offer small interest free loans for some community projects and these will be promoted by the LAG as a source of match funding. The LAG considers that some of the community projects currently coming forward could be funded via other local schemes.

Existing grant schemes tend to be unsuccessful in providing support for schemes that forge links between urban and rural communities and ways of life. The LAG intends to use Leader funding for this purpose by supporting enterprises that provide educational access to rural activities and cultural heritage.

There is also enormous need to provide sustainable local employment and this will be a important priority for the LAG, forming part of the appraisal process.

3.6 The proposed programme of activities that will deliver the LAG objectives and how facilitation resources will be focused

Programme of LAG and admin/facilitation activities		Year	Budget
LAG activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish LDS and promote widely • Agree terms of reference and dates of meetings (quarterly) • Appoint LAG members to the DMG • Receive expressions of interest and evaluate • Receive full project applications, score and recommend to the DMG • DMG to decide and award grants • Monitor ongoing projects and overall delivery of LDS. • Undertake regular project risk reviews and ensure any risks are managed • Review LAG skills mix and membership annually • LAG to undertake relevant training and participate in collaboration and networking • Publish end of programme report 	1 1 1 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 6	£11,000 per year*
Administration resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint project co-ordinator, administration officer and finalise details with HIWWT about the project development role • Set up admin and financial systems • Promote LDS through website and other media • Project co-ordinator to receive full project applications, check for eligibility and pass to LAG for evaluation • Project co-ordinator and admin officer to service the LAG and DMG and project applicants as required • Admin officer to process grant claims • Pay grants and make claims to SEEDA • Carry out all required reporting • Project co-ordinator to carry out monitoring and compliance checks • Project co-ordinator to organise networking and collaboration with other LAGs • Produce end of programme report 	1 1 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 1-6 6 1-6 6	£47,000 per year*
Facilitation resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development officer to contact initial project applicants to help them with expressions of interest • Promote LDS widely and encourage new projects to come forward • Support applicants through providing advice and guidance as required • Develop relationships with key organisations and groups to facilitate networking and collaborative projects • Contribute to end of programme report 	1 1-6 1-6 1-6 6	£15,000 per year*
*3% inflation added each year Total £472K over 6 years			

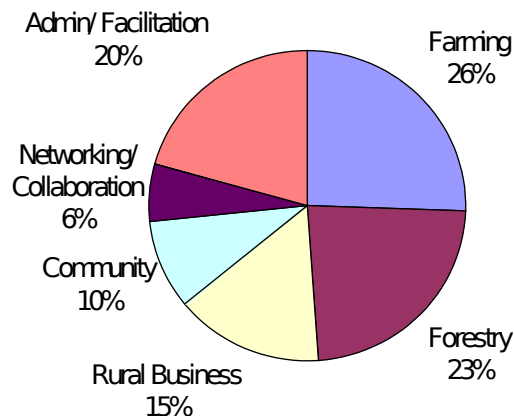
3.7 Breakdown of projects by type and sector with reference to the spreadsheet showing investment profiles and outputs.

The attached budget spreadsheet (Appendix iv) and the table below shows that we plan to spend £1.8M on projects over six years, split by type and sector as follows:

Sector (measures)	Projects and Outputs	Budget
Farming (121, 123, 311)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for diversification projects (311) e.g. waste recycling projects, educational/visitor use of farms, b&b's and others. Capital (40%) and revenue (50%) spend. Output = 6 diversification projects. Grants for projects that add value to farmed produce (123) e.g. chef tours, meat-marketing scheme for conservation grazed beef, chilli sauce business and local food trails. Capital (40%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 10 added value projects (farming). Capital grants for up to 40% for modernisation of agricultural holdings (121) where these meet the LAG objectives, e.g. installation of an anaerobic digester. Output = 2 modernisation projects. 	<p>6 grants of up to £25K</p> <p>10 grants of up to £40K</p> <p>2 grants of up to £20K</p> <p>Total £590K</p>
Forestry (122, 123)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital grants for up to 40% for improving economic value of forests (122) e.g. purchase of trailers, harvesting equipment, charcoal burners, and temporary wood fuel storage for in-forest use. Output = 14 capital projects. Revenue grants (50-80%) to improve economic value of forests (122) e.g. a study to provide "Forest Schools" in the area, and other recreational and marketing activities. Output = 4 revenue projects. Grants for projects that add value to forestry products (123) e.g. supply chain development, demand generation, scoping reports and investment in equipment and machinery. Capital (40%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 9 added value projects (forestry). 	<p>14 capital grants of up to £9K</p> <p>4 revenue grants of up to £12K</p> <p>9 grants of up to £40K</p> <p>Total £534K</p>
Other Rural Business (312, 313)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for rural tourism projects (313) e.g. development of cycling hubs, walking trails, green tourism linked to food production, open days on farms, etc. Small-scale capital (40%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 8 rural tourism projects. Grants towards the development of rural micro-businesses (312), which create local employment, provide social benefits or lead to environmental improvements, e.g. expansion of cheese business. Capital (40%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 6 micro-business projects. 	<p>8 grants of up to £15K</p> <p>3 grants of up to £50K, 3 grants of up to £25K</p> <p>Total £345K</p>
Community (321, 322, 323)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for community projects that conserve and enhance rural heritage (323) e.g. local trails, interpretation, 	<p>6 grants of up to £10K</p>

	<p>environmental audits and small-scale capital improvements. Capital (40-80%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 6 heritage projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants for projects which build community cohesion (322) e.g. parish festivals, community energy projects and projects that provide social benefits. Small-scale capital (40-80%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 6 community cohesion projects. • Grants for providing basic services (321) e.g. installation of wood fuel energy systems, plus grants to develop local food offering in retail outlets. Capital (40-80%) and revenue (50-80%) spend. Output = 2 wood fuel projects and 3 local food retail projects. 	<p>6 grants of up to £10K</p> <p>5 grants of up to £20K</p> <p>Total £220K</p>
Networking, Training and Collaboration (124, 331, 421)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants for developing producer networks (124), and in particular wood fuel supply chains and the development of joint marketing initiatives and a local brand for the Loddon and Eversley. Revenue spend only (50-80%). Output = 5 co-operation projects. • Grants to provide bespoke training and networking to help with the success of projects (331) e.g. training for farmers on planning issues, networking clubs for green tourism initiatives and the traditional trades. Revenue spend only (50-80%). Output = 12 networking and community training activities. • Contribution towards Hampshire-wide collaborative projects with other LAGs (421) in particular the development of joint marketing and promotion of wood products and wood fuel, and Hampshire-wide networking to further develop wood products supply chains and technical expertise. Revenue spend only (50-80%). 	<p>5 grants of up to £15K</p> <p>12 grants of up to £4K</p> <p>Budget of £20K for cooperation with other LAGs</p> <p>Total £143K</p>
Total £1832K over 6 years		

Summary of Budget and the proportion of spend:



3.8 Specifically how we plan to address disadvantage and economic regeneration in this area

The Loddon and Eversley LAG recognises that engaging with the local rural economy is the key to economic regeneration in the area. Partnership working and linking up rural projects and initiatives has been identified by the LAG as the best approach to tackle disadvantage and pump-prime the rural economy. It is important to recognise that the types and levels of disadvantage vary widely in the area, as they do in the South East regionally. By encouraging community empowerment and inclusive approaches to regeneration it is envisaged that deprivation in the area can be lessened.

One of the main barriers that has been fed back through the consultation process is the lack of affordable housing in the area, and the disparity between rural sector salaries and the high housing prices in the area. The disadvantaged in rural areas have moved out; they may still work in the countryside, but cost pressures have forced them to live urban. Many of the rural villages are occupied by those working in the city, so they have become ‘dormitories’. The LAG will be particularly supportive of initiatives that retain and increase employment in the rural areas, and of projects that help social cohesion and links between rural and urban communities.

Where relevant a condition of the LAG giving a grant will be that the beneficiary must be prepared to share knowledge and offer mentoring or training to interested parties. The LAG is keen to include educational activity into projects with a view to sustaining the rural economy for future generations.

The Loddon and Eversley LAG has been established to meet the challenge of protecting and enhancing all that is special about the wildlife, history and landscape of the area whilst promoting a healthy and sustainable rural economy. To ensure there is no conflict between supporting the economy and protecting the countryside all projects will be subject to environmental and sustainability checks.

3.9 Commitment to sustainability and how this will be delivered.

The LAG is committed to the future of the Loddon and Eversley area and therefore projects which demonstrate their long term sustainability will score more highly in the appraisal process. Applications will be analysed for their economic viability, ensuring they are financially sound and have a clear business plan. The LAG will bring in an accountant/financial expert from Business Link or the Hampshire Economic Partnership to help with the assessment process.

Project applicants will be asked to identify any training needs or skills development required to help the long term success of their project, and will be encouraged to network with other local businesses. In accordance with our cross-cutting theme, projects will also be required to demonstrate environmental sustainability, and a checklist will be used to ensure all sustainability issues are covered.

3.10 The funding resources needed to deliver the programme and the profile of funding required

As shown in the spreadsheet (Appendix iv) and the tables below, the funding resources and the profile of funding required is:

Investments by activity 2008-2013	Total RDPE funding
121 - Modernisation of agricultural holdings	£40,000
122 - Improving the economic value of forests	£174,000
123 - Adding-value to agricultural and forestry products	£760,000
124 - Co-operation for the development of new products	£75,000
311 - Diversification into non-agricultural activities	£150,000
312 - Support creation and development of micro businesses	£225,000
313 - Encouragement of tourism	£120,000
321 - Basic services	£100,000
322 - Village renewal and development	£60,000
323 - Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage	£60,000
331 - Training and information for micro businesses	£48,000
421 - Implementing co-operative projects between LAGs	£20,000
431 - LAGs facilitation costs	£168,179
431 - LAGs and accountable body administration costs	£304,015
	£2,304,194

Investments by year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	%
Investments in projects	£126,000	£315,000	£363,000	£358,000	£347,000	£303,000	£1,812,000	79%
Cooperation work	£4,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£4,000	£20,000	1%
Facilitation	£26,000	£26,780	£27,583	£28,411	£29,263	£30,141	£168,179	7%
Administration	£47,000	£48,410	£49,862	£51,358	£52,899	£54,486	£304,015	13%
Total	£203,000	£393,190	£443,446	£440,769	£432,162	£391,627	£2,304,194	100%
% of total spend over the 6 years	9%	17%	19%	19%	19%	17%	100%	

	£	%
Capital spend	£1,265,000	55%
Revenue spend	£1,039,194	45%
Total	£2,304,194	100%

3.11 How the LAG partnership will work with their constituency of rural businesses and communities to market the Leader

programme and achieve submission of good projects. How the LAG plans to facilitate and develop projects and the resources required, and plans to ensure value for money

The LAG will take advantage of existing programmes and contacts by working with key officers already in place to offer advice and support. The Loddon and Eversley Project already running in the area is in contact with the majority of farmers, landowners, foresters, parish councils and other groups in the area, and it would seem sensible to build on this existing network to act as a central point of contact. Therefore the task of promoting Leader, facilitating and developing projects and offering assistance with project Expressions of Interest (project development) will be delivered under contract by the Loddon and Eversley Project staff (currently employed by HIOWWT on behalf of a partnership of organisations). An advantage of this approach is that the Project also has links with other funding sources in the area (such as the LEHA small projects fund, and local authority grants), thereby being able to identify other sources of funding if necessary. A further advantage of doing this is that project development can be kept entirely separate from the overall management of the Leader programme, avoiding any possible conflict with project appraisals, approvals, paying claims, compliance monitoring or any other of the administrative tasks.

The LAG will also work closely with the Hampshire County Council Economic Development Office (EDO). The EDO can advise the LAG about alternative funding programmes available to applicants and help to deliver existing programmes to the LAG area to compliment the Leader programme. Where applicants are unsuccessful, they will be re-directed to the LAG or the EDO, who will advise on alternative funding if available.

To market the Leader programme the LAG plans to hold a number of events for identified target groups in the community, farming and forestry sectors. Experience from running other projects suggests that community groups may be harder to reach and so a number of small events will be held in partnership with parish councils and existing groups, to raise awareness. We plan to link in with farmers markets and other existing initiatives to make best use of local opportunities to promote Leader. Further details on the marketing, publicity and communications strategy are provided in section 7.

To achieve best value the LAG will ask applicants to demonstrate how they could compliment other activities and will require they show willing to work alongside other projects and organisations to demonstrate best practice and take advantage of collaborations. The LAG will expect to see evidence of how grants will benefit the wider community, either directly or indirectly through sustaining farming and woodland management to secure the necessary management of the landscape.

The LAG structure provides seats for representatives from different industries and sectors, local trade and business associations and community groups. These members will be tasked with championing the LAG priorities and projects to their specialist area. The local government members for the County, Districts and Parish councils will be required not only to promote the Loddon and Eversley Leader programme to their sector but also to actively market it throughout their regional coverage. Where appropriate, the LAG will communicate their priorities to local government and other governing bodies to ensure inclusion in local plans.

The Loddon and Eversley Leader website (www.loddoneversleyleader.org.uk) will be the main point of information for the programme and the LAG is engaging with post offices and village shops, parish councils and the local press to initiate and maintain interest from the public and target groups throughout the duration of the project.

3.12 The LAG plans for co-operation and networking

The LAG is committed to developing co-operation projects and recognises that developing links with other practitioners is an effective way of disseminating and encouraging the practical use of project information. Indeed, as a new Leader area, we will liaise with other LAGs to benefit from their experience. Following discussions with other LAGs, we intend to focus networking and the development of co-operation projects on three specific areas:

- **Networking and joint marketing of wood products and wood fuel within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight**
 - Working with other LAG areas in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to improve the promotion of local wood products and the expansion of the use of wood fuel. Measures may include a website and promotional material, linking with the Biomass Energy Centre and Woodnet wherever appropriate.
- **Networking and training to encourage the development of a sustainable wood fuel supply across Hampshire**
 - Networking with other LAG areas in Hampshire to co-ordinate the organisation of joint technical events, training seminars and workshops to encourage the development of wood fuel supply network (events and training will be organised through RBAT where appropriate).
- **Networking with other LAG areas within the region and other EC states to stimulate markets for farm and forest products**
 - Enabling the transfer of established expertise wherever it is relevant to specific projects for development and marketing of food, forest products and wood fuel.

3.13 How the LAG plans to deliver value for money outcomes using Leader funding

All project applications will be assessed for their value for money outcomes. In the case of capital projects, use of consultants, contractors or other fees, the applicant will need to provide evidence of an appropriate competitive tendering process (for example, three quotes). Guidance will be given by the LAG for competitive tendering procedures, utilising best practice techniques.

Applications will be analysed for their economic viability, ensuring they are financially sound and have a clear business plan. Project costs will be assessed to ensure they are realistic and represent best value. The LAG will bring in an accountant/financial expert from Business Link or the Hampshire Economic Partnership to help with the assessment process.

Value for money may also be demonstrated by the applicant's ability to bring in complimentary funding, the long term impact of the project, its sustainability and longevity. This will also form part of the appraisal process.

3.14 Complimentarity with other programmes

The existing Loddon and Eversley project, led by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, delivers a range of activities that protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage of LEHA, and local people's involvement therein. It is not intended that the Leader programme in any way displace this project but that both are fully complimentary to the other. The Loddon and Eversley Project will provide the project development function for the LAG, and, being well known in the area, will be the first port of call for potential applicants to the Leader programme, helping them to develop their ideas.

HIOWWT also runs a Grazing Project in the area which facilitates appropriate grazing of local heathland sites by local graziers. Full complementarity will be achieved with this project by securing the Project as an advisor to the LAG.

The presence of Natural England and Forestry Commission members on the LAG will ensure complementarity with other RDPE programmes. The presence of local authorities and parish council representatives on the LAG will assist complementarity with other plans and programmes for the area.

3.15 List of potential projects already identified

The following is a list of project ideas that have been promoted to the LAG from various sources. Not all of these will definitely come forward, and they will need to go through both an Expression of Interest and formal Application stage. Inclusion in the list below does not guarantee that the project will receive funding. The list is purely indicative.

Potential Projects already identified	Stage of development
Expansion of cheese making business	Ready to go
Renovation of farm building to provide for storage of woodland products	Ready to go
Purchase of charcoal burner	Dependant on success of above project
Anaerobic digester to enable farm waste management	Idea being developed
Educational farm expansion (toilets, disabled access)	Ready to go
Chef tours to promote local food to pubs and restaurants	Project been done elsewhere in Hants, model exists, costs known
Local food trail	Project been done elsewhere in Hants, model exists, costs known
Supply chain development for woodchip, including promotion and marketing, identifying storage and drying facilities etc.	Almost ready to go, two or three projects in development
Installation of woodchip boiler in community building	Almost ready to go
Honey extraction room	Plans worked up but depends on planning permission
Schools visiting farms	Several farms interested in this
Educational farm/ visitor complex	Two or three projects being developed
Marketing/ sale of beef from conservation grazing	Project plan being worked on
Collaboration between livestock farmers for	Project plan being worked on

local grazing scheme initiative	
Green tourism linked to Heritage sites	Project plan being worked on
Walks from urban areas into rural areas	Project plan being worked on
Hot desk office space in rural area	Ideas being developed
Rural tours linked to local produce	Ideas being developed
Community open space and children's playing area in rural community	Ideas being developed (BDBC funding may be available for this)
Woodchip boiler for rural office complex	Ideas being developed
Installation of kitchen to make chilli sauces from chillis grown locally	Ideas being developed
Rural nursery/ pre school facilities	Ideas being developed (BDBC funding may be available for this)
Provision of Forest Schools / establishment of a woodland education and training centre	Ideas being developed
Series of Parish festivals	Ideas being developed
Expansion of waste recycling business	Ideas being developed
Establishment of cycle networks and cycling "hubs"	Ideas being developed
Provision of land for use by off-road motorcyclists	Ideas being developed
Training for farmers about planning issues	Ideas being developed
Woodland apprenticeship scheme	Ideas being developed

4. The LAG partnership

4.1 Composition, structure, roles & responsibilities and key positions

The Loddon and Eversley Local Action Group comprises 26 members (plus two liaison/advisory members) made up of 33% public sector and 67% private sector. By liaising with LAGs already experienced in running Leader+ projects and from general consultation amongst the Loddon and Eversley stakeholder groups it was agreed that a LAG of no more than thirty people is manageable. The size of the Loddon and Eversley LAG works well, ensuring all sectors are well represented whilst not being too large and unwieldy. This size group provides the flexibility to bring in additional expertise if needed, and indeed we have already identified a few other individuals who would act in an advisory capacity to the LAG or DMG as required.

The table below shows the composition of seats and the private and public sector allocations:

Public (33%)	Private (67%)	
*County Council	*Dairy Farmer	*2 x Environment NGO
*2 x District/Borough Council	*Beef/lamb farmer	*Council for Voluntary Services
*Parish Council representative	*Other farming	*Local heritage group
Natural England	*Forestry	*Local youth group
Forestry Commission	*Wood fuel industry	Country Land and Business
Environment Agency	*Food Producer	Association
Elected Member for the area	*Trade association	National Farmer's Union
Ministry of Defence (liaison member only)	*Rural business	*Local food representative
	*Tourism/recreation representative	Leader project development officer
		South East Deer initiative (advisory role only)

Nineteen of these seats have been opened to public nomination (marked with *), to make the LAG as inclusive as possible. As part of the nomination and selection process LAG members were asked to give details of their experience and skills which would benefit the LAG. A list of the individual LAG members and the skills and experience they bring to the partnership is shown in Appendix v.

All members of the LAG will be involved in promoting the Leader programme and encouraging projects to come forward. A devolved group of no more than 10 LAG members including a representative from the accountable body will be elected by the LAG to form a decision making group (DMG). The DMG will make final decisions on project applications, liaising with the wider LAG for any specialist expertise required. The DMG is seen as a way to alleviate the issue of commercial sensitivity of project applicants by allowing fewer people to view certain details of applications and associated business plans.

A wider consultative group will have the opportunity to nominate themselves onto the LAG at the proposed Loddon and Eversley Leader AGM. Both the LAG and the DMG will be governed by the Loddon and Eversley Terms of Reference that refers to: Roles and responsibilities of the LAG and the DMG and their membership, the administration and management of meetings including quorums, the election of chair and vice chairs, dealing with conflict of interests, confidentiality of

meetings and data protection. This is shown in Appendix vi. All LAG members have been asked to sign and return the Terms of Reference to confirm their commitment to the LAG.

The position of chair and vice chair of the LAG will be decided at the first LAG meeting. LAG members will be invited to put their names forward and the rest of the LAG will vote on both positions. Elections for chair positions will be taken annually.

A diagram of the LAG structure is shown in Appendix vii.

Roles and responsibilities of the LAG:

- To deliver the priorities and objectives of the Local Development Strategy
- As a minimum, all LAG members will be required to attend quarterly meetings
- To act as a local representative for their nominated sector
- To champion the LDS priorities and stimulate interest in projects from their specialist area (working closely with the project development officer) and in turn feedback to the LAG
- To assist the programme co-ordinator in assessing project expressions of interest and full applications, and making recommendations to DMG
- To elect DMG members to appraise project applications
- To offer information and advice to the DMG where required and assist with the appraisal of projects in the instance DMG are unable to reach a decision
- To adopt partnership working with other LAGs to share best practice and to accommodate cross (LAG) border projects
- Partnerships with other organisations will be maintained and pursued to ensure local and regional priorities are met and that existing programmes compliment the work of Leader
- To monitor performance of projects and identify needs for training or up-skilling applicants to assist completion of projects

Roles and responsibilities of the DMG:

- To aid the delivery of the Local Development Strategy by making decisions on the more complex aspects of the strategy
- To appraise projects following recommendations from the wider LAG and provide feedback on approved projects to the accountable body
- In appraising projects the DMG will assess the needs, objectives and anticipated outcomes of individual projects. Additionally, financial viability and sustainability, risk assessment, environmental impact and equality of opportunities will be measured.
- To work with the accountable body to decide timetable for awarding grants.
- To assist with monitoring the overall success of the Leader programme in line with the outcomes identified in the LDS
- Assist the programme staff and accountable body in making claims to SEEDA

4.2 Staffing and other resources e.g. office. Plans for recruiting staff

To run the Loddon and Eversley leader programme effectively a full-time programme co-ordinator and a part-time administration and finance assistant will be employed by the accountable body and will report to both the accountable body and the LAG.

The programme co-ordinator post will be based at one of the accountable body's offices in North Hampshire and the option for home-working will also be considered. It is likely the administrator post will be based at the accountable body head office in Winchester.

The programme co-ordinator will be responsible for the general day-to-day running of the Leader programme, facilitating the LAG, co-ordinating stakeholders, checking project applications, resolving issues, reporting to the LAG and the accountable body on the progress of the project and maintaining records of each project.

The administrator will be responsible for co-ordinating claims to the accountable body and claims from the accountable body to SEEDA. They will also offer general administrative support to the co-ordinator and LAG. A senior officer at the accountable body will be responsible for checking and signing off all claims before submission.

In addition to the programme co-ordinator and administrator there will be provision for a specialist project development officer to assist with motivating applicants and developing projects. The project development officer will be a resource for project applicants and will offer support and guidance for applicants, champion projects, promote Leader in the area, and advise on levels of interest to the LAG. It has been agreed that this will be best delivered through contracting the services of the existing Loddon and Eversley Project staff (employed by HIOWWT) who are in regular contact with the majority of farmers and foresters in the area already.

Job descriptions for the programme co-ordinator and administrator will be scored and matched in line with current accountable body procedures. The accountable body is committed to securing genuine equality of opportunity and posts will be advertised at a local and regional level. The accountable body and the chair of the LAG will assess job applicants and be present at interviews.

4.3 Administration processes including project appraisal and selection, project management, ensuring compliance, monitoring and reporting, professional inputs (eg accountancy and legal)

The project development officer will work with applicants to develop projects. They will be unable to appraise applications, but their work will ensure that appropriate and quality projects come forward.

The programme co-ordinator will assess expressions of interest for eligibility and will feed back to the LAG and DMG with recommendations. The co-ordinator will inform applicants of their success or failure at this stage and offer advice for continuation to a full application.

The DMG will appraise final applications (based on the government appraisal processes called SPAG) and feedback to the project co-ordinator who will inform applicants of the result, and subsequently make a grant offer to those successful applicants.

Applications will be analysed for their economic viability, ensuring they are financially sound and have a clear business plan. The DMG will bring in an accountant/financial expert from Business Link or the Hampshire Economic Partnership to help with the assessment process. The accountable body will offer financial and legal services where appropriate

The programme co-ordinator will manage the overall Leader programme, ensuring deadlines are met (working with the development officer where appropriate to maintain project timetables). The programme co-ordinator will report regularly back to SEEDA.

The administrator will collate grants information and make all the relevant checks to allow claims to be paid, for example ensuring that all the paperwork, invoices, receipts etc. are in order.

An independent officer employed by the accountable body will make the final payment approvals.

Compliance monitoring will be undertaken by SEEDA

4.4 Costs for running the LAG partnership for facilitation, administration and reporting

The main costs for running the LAG partnership will be staff costs, and there will be a small operations budget. The office space for the co-ordinator and the administrator will be provided by the accountable body at no charge. The role of project development will be undertaken by HIOWWT on a consultancy basis through the existing LEHA Project.

The estimated annual costs (from 2008) including the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) are:

Item	Annual cost
Leader Programme co-ordinator (f/t) Salary + NI + LGPS	£34,000
Administrator (p/t) Salary + NI + LGPS	£13,000
Accountable body charge	£0
Project Development officer (consultancy basis)	£15,000
Operations budget (meetings, promotion, expenses, training)	£11,000
	£73,000

Staff costs include provision for incremental and cost of living pay increases over the course of the programme (added at 3% increase per year).

4.5 Skills needed by the LAG and plans for developing skills

A skills matrix has been developed to identify what skills the LAG members bring to the group, this is shown in Appendix viii. The LAG already provides a good mix of skills and experience, but there will be a need to fill any gaps and also ensure that the LAG understands Leader and RDPE properly.

We have already identified some skills shortages in project assessment and appraisal. At the LAG meeting in March, we plan to evaluate the skills mix of the LAG in further detail and come up with a training plan. LAG members will be provided with the list of training courses being offered by RBAT training providers, and we will link up with other LAGs or ask RBAT to provide bespoke training in the local area where this would be more efficient. Some training

needs will be met by the accountable body in-house, and the operations budget will also accommodate any additional training needs.

The programme co-ordinator and accountable body will offer training about the Leader programme and RDPE priorities and supply training and events to inform LAG members about other funding opportunities.

4.6 Timetable for establishing the LAG and for getting the LAG operational

Date	Activity
30/11/07	LAG Nominations submitted
19/12/07	Seats allocated
20/12/07	LAG members confirmed
18/12/08	1 st Full LAG meeting
14/03/08	LAG meeting discuss any feedback from SEEDA and the presentation (if required). Also evaluation of skills matrix and production of a training plan for the LAG.
02/05/08	HCC initiate Job Match & recruitment
09/05/08	Elect Chairs and DMG. Agree meeting dates for year. Agree staff Job descriptions
23/05/08	Advertise staff posts
20-27/06/08	Interviews and offer positions
25/07/08	Staff in post
01/08/08	LAG meeting & confirm duties.
August 08	LAG operational

5. The Accountable body

Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the legally accountable body for the Loddon and Eversley Leader programme and as such will be responsible for all matters relating to administration and financial control over the course of the programme. Contact details for HCC are:

Hampshire County Council (HCC)
(c/o The Economic Development Office)
The Castle
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8UJ

Tel: 01962 846487

Fax: 01962 878131

Email: chloe.atkins@hants.gov.uk (contact for Leader project)

5.1 Full details of the accountable body and how they meet the requirements of Leader

Hampshire County Council is a local government authority with a general fund revenue spend of some £559.5million (2006/2007). As such it is subject to rigorous financial procedures and controls. HCC has proven competence and experience in administration and financial management. The Economic Development Office (EDO) will be responsible for the Leader programme within Hampshire County Council and has effectively managed EU and SEEDA programmes on numerous occasions.

The EDO and HCC are committed to helping the rural economy and are keen to extend existing rural projects to compliment the work of Leader in the Loddon and Eversley area.

5.2 Functions that the accountable body will perform

HCC will be responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with RDPE operating procedures
- appraising, selecting (in collaboration with the LAG) and approving (issuing grant offers) for individual projects, and making subsequent payments against approved claims
- maintaining records of each project to provide an audit trail;
- monitoring the progress of the projects regularly and carrying out physical checks on project expenditure;
- annually rolling forward the Implementation Plan and submitting it to SEEDA for approval of activities and funding for the financial year ahead
- employment and management of LAG staff

5.3 Costs for delivering the accountable body functions

Hampshire County Council will provide the accountable body function at no charge.

5.4 Bank rolling arrangements

Hampshire County Council will bankroll all LAG and project costs. All expenditure will be made from and to a designated account. All HCC accounts are subject to internal audit and inspection from the Audit Commission.

Projects will be funded when they are completed or when phases are completed for larger projects on proof of costs. HCC will reimburse financial claims submitted by project applicants prior to the claim submission to SEEDA.

HCC will make claims to SEEDA following an agreed schedule. The Economic Development Office will work with the programme co-ordinator and administrator to ensure returns are made in a timely fashion.

6. Risks

All projects involve an element of risk, especially those which involve a large number of partners and a strict budget. Even the most rigorously planned projects contain uncertainties, or have elements which have the potential not to go as planned and unexpected events can and are likely to occur. Planning for and managing these unexpected events is thus a fundamental element of making the Leader programme a success. Our risk management strategy is based on two elements, and these will be regularly reiterated throughout the life of the Leader programme (Risk management will be a standing agenda item for all LAG meetings) :

6.1 Risk Assessment

Listing risks that might occur, assessing the likelihood or probability of these risks occurring, and then identifying their impact or effect on the success of the project.

6.2 Risk Management

Identifying techniques to manage the risks to avoid, eliminate, reduce, transfer or defer them, and then re-assessing the impact of the risks following management, to ensure the project is viable.

Risk	Prob	Impact	Risk management response	Revised
Difficulty in recruiting high calibre project staff	M	H	Clear job description, attractive salary and benefits, widely advertised in appropriate media, comprehensive interviews, taking up references	L
Ensuring project staff are motivated and deliver their objectives	M	H	Clear line management, regular performance-monitoring meetings, personal development plans and training opportunities, visits to project sites, networking with other LAGs	L
Ensuring the LAG functions well, and members remain committed	M	H	Identifying skills gaps and training needs and fulfilling them, regular communication, team-building opportunities, visits to project sites, networking with other LAGs	L
Dealing with conflicts of interest	H	H	Agreeing clear terms of reference, ensuring the principles are adhered to, utilising DMG properly, use a checklist for all potential conflict areas, ensure separation of duties in appraisal process	L
Lack of appropriate project applications coming forward	M	H	Sufficient and appropriate marketing and promotion (see 7), LAG members to promote Leader through their networks, project development officer's role	L
Projects not delivering their objectives	M	H	Applicants to produce clear milestones and deliverables, and their own risk management strategy, project staff will undertake regular progress checks, applicants to undergo training and skills development	L

7. Publicity and communications

The Loddon and Eversley Leader programme requires a communication strategy to ensure that the LAG receives good quality project bids, and that the programme delivers its overall objectives successfully. It is important that the right messages are delivered to the right people and places at the right time.

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Raise awareness of the Leader programme and encourage the target groups to come forward with appropriate and good quality project bids.
- Increase understanding and engender support for the Leader programme in general amongst the public, key stakeholders, decision makers and the target groups in particular.
- Raise awareness and increase understanding of the value of the Loddon and Eversley area, the importance of farming and forestry and the benefits of buying local produce.
- Make appropriate links with other related initiatives, to encourage networking and collaboration.

The target audiences are:

- Farmers, landowners, their families and employees
- Existing diversified farm enterprises
- Existing rural businesses
- Potential new rural businesses
- Farm shops
- Those making their living from woodland and forestry
- Woodland based enterprises
- Processing industries (wood and food)
- Partners involved in cooperation projects to do with farming, forestry or rural tourism
- Farms and other businesses providing educational and recreational access
- Local rural tourism enterprises
- Businesses, social enterprises, charities and other formally constituted groups with links to farming, forestry, rural tourism or other rural activities
- Enterprises which will provide sustainable local employment in the rural economy
- Enterprises which will deliver social and/or environmental benefits for the area
- Members of the public

All of the above must be within the boundary of the Loddon and Eversley Leader project area.

The key messages that will be used in publicity and communications are:

- The Loddon and Eversley area is important for its landscape, biodiversity, heritage and rural economy. It is a living and working landscape that depends on farming and forestry to maintain its character.
- The area forms an important “green wedge” between the conurbations of Basingstoke and Farnborough/Aldershot, it helps to provide quality of life for the communities of north east Hampshire and it is a valuable recreational resource for residents.
- The rural economy of the area is threatened and in decline, which will lead to an erosion of the quality of the area in terms of its landscape, environmental and social value.
- The huge development pressures and the economic focus on the towns have led to social and economic disadvantage for rural communities.
- Leader offers a significant opportunity for local people to address these issues in a manner that will benefit both individuals and the communities in which they live.

The communication tools we will use are:

Tool	Target audiences	Timing and deliverables
Talks/ presentations/ workshops/ events – tailored to specific groups	All – but tailored to each group. Priority will be community groups, farming and forestry groups	Year 1 – 4 talks/ events for community groups, and 1 each for farming/forestry Subsequent years – at least 2 per year, but will also respond to requests
Website (www.loddoneversleyleader.org.uk)	All – ensure format is user friendly to maximise accessibility	By start of programme aim to have LDS, project objectives and all application information on the web. Add links from all partners and other relevant websites, and submit to search engines. Thereafter aim to update website at least every quarter.
Linking with existing projects, networks, stakeholders and word of mouth	All – depends on project	Aim to link with existing projects and activities and use the opportunity to promote Leader (e.g. FWAG farmers events, Forestry Commission woodland training events etc.). All LAG members to promote Leader through their own networks and word of mouth.
Flyers and printed materials	All	Year 1 – produce a simple flyer to promote Leader and encourage applications, distribute through LAG members, existing networks, community buildings, pubs, farmers markets etc. Subsequent years – review to see whether further printed materials are required or not
Press releases	All – target both local papers and Hampshire-wide papers.	Year 1 – produce 2 press releases, one to announce the Leader programme and one two months later to remind people and encourage bids. Subsequent years – aim for at least 2 press releases per year.
Magazine and newsletter articles	All – but target sector specific publications	Year 1 – aim to get an article about Leader into the newsletters and magazines of LAG members’ organisations, e.g. NFU, CLA, FWAG, FC, NE, Parish newsletters, HWT, local authorities etc.
Radio and television coverage	All	Year 1 – aim to promote Leader through at least 2 broadcasts. Subsequent years – contact media regularly to provide project updates, and broadcast success stories at least annually
Exhibitions	All	Aim to provide information about Leader for use at relevant shows and events in the area.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

All projects funded by the LAG will be subject to a routine inspection at least once during the lifetime of the project and target inspections will also be undertaken if there are any concerns about the project progress.

Project applicants will be asked to set out milestones and measurable outcomes (deliverables) and these will form the basis of success monitoring. They will also need to produce a risk management strategy as part of their application. The project development officer will provide assistance with this. Project applicants will be asked to show how their identified outcomes will be met and what impact the project has had on the identified and/or additional beneficiaries. Project applicants will also have to demonstrate long term sustainability, to show that the RDPE funding has a long term benefit, and is not just a short term fix. The outcome of individual projects will be recorded centrally to input to the progress of the programme as a whole and will be used to monitor the identified programme outcomes.

The project co-ordinator will be required to report back to the LAG/accountable body on overall programme performance, so that any problems can be identified and resolutions sought and budget forecasts made accurately. Monitoring will be a standing agenda item for all LAG meetings.

The cycle of reporting responsibilities undertaken by the LAG/accountable body will be recorded using the on-line database to be supplied by SEEDA. All project activities (including claims, irregularities etc) will be recorded and the LAG will input detailed project data to this system.

The LAG/accountable body will submit quarterly progress reports with each grant claim made to SEEDA and will update the budget forecasts monthly

All records and business processes will be available electronically and in paper so that on the spot inspections, routine and compliance inspections and visits by external auditors can be accommodated.

The project co-ordinator will report annually to the LAG Annual general meeting following the annual formal performance review with SEEDA. Annual reports will be collated and supported by individual project progress report and quarterly updates to assess the overall success of the Leader programme.

Provision will be made in the final year to ensure that sufficient evaluation of the programme can be made. Evaluation will be based on number of beneficiaries supported, overall income generated and identified and additional outcomes met. This data will be used gauge success of the programme and to forecast future prosperity after the programme end date.

9. Equal opportunities and diversity

The LAG and all programme staff will be required to adhere to the equality policies of the accountable body. Training and documentation will be supplied to all LAG members.

The accountable body equalities policy states ‘All sections of the population will have equal access to jobs and services offered by the County Council, and no person will receive less favourable treatment than others because of gender, disability, age, ethnic or national origin, marital status, religion or belief, sexual orientation or responsibility for dependants. This policy and all council equality procedures are in line with the following legal frameworks: [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#); [Race Relations Act 1976](#); [Race Relations \(Amendment\) Act 2000](#); [Sex Discrimination Act 1975](#); [Equal Pay Act 1970](#).

The overall programme will be subject to a Race and Equality Impact Assessment:

- To ensure equal access for all by removing barriers to opportunities
- To meet the requirements of all current equalities legislation
- To document best practice and things we do well

Project applicants will be asked to demonstrate how their projects are accessible to all and where relevant how they meet equality legislation. For example, capital projects will need to demonstrate they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Where necessary the LAG will ask that applicants undertake specific equality of opportunity training.

The LAG/accountable body will be responsible for ensuring that the Leader programme is promoted in a fair and open way. By working with the local Council for Voluntary Services the programme will be promoted to groups that may not normally access rural funding and different media types will be used to engage with potential beneficiaries such as newspapers and radio. In some cases this may mean offering accessibility to alternative formats of communication.

All project applicants will be asked to identify specific groups of beneficiaries so that beneficiary type can be mapped throughout the course of the programme. The LAG/accountable body will monitor the beneficiary types to establish if a particular group (present in the Loddon & Eversley area) is under represented and will target these specific groups to encourage project applications.

10. Self-scoring of your application

Criteria	Score
1. Appropriateness of the partnership	4
All major groups represented on the LAG with a good mix of skills and experience. Large number of letters of support have been received.	
2. Coherence of the area	3
Full and clear description and definition including parishes and landscape features. Some fragmentation caused by urban areas.	
3. Quality of the Local Development Strategy	4
Clear and comprehensive SWOT analysis, strong evidential base and two major issues identified. Clearly linked through to the 4 themes of the LDS and the list of projects and activities which will be supported.	
4. Financial and administrative capacity	4
Hampshire County Council have a proven track record of delivering projects of this kind. A broad based LAG, flexible DMG and clear terms of reference have been agreed. Roles of the key officers have been defined, and a timetable for the recruitment has been set out.	
5. Fit with National Programme objectives	4
The LDS fits well within the national objectives of the RDPE and this is clearly set out in the text.	
6. Integration of sustainable development	4
The LAG objectives and priorities emphasise sustainability and environmental benefits, and these form a clear part of the appraisal process.	
7. Commitment to integration across the three axis	3
With NE, FC, FWAG and other key partners represented on the LAG, integration across all three axis of the RDPE can be achieved.	
8. Commitment to co-operation	3
Three cooperation projects have been identified and a budget included for delivering these. Links with other LAGs have already been established.	
9. Alignment with regional and local strategies	3
Key strategies are referred to in section 3.4 of the LDS. Letters of support from LAG members and other key stakeholders also refer to the links between Leader and other strategies.	
10. The RDPE funding addresses the needs of the area	4
The majority of funding is geared towards supporting farming and forestry which are the key sectors as being in most need.	
11. Skills	3
A skills matrix has been completed, and the LAG has a good mix of experience. A commitment to training and skills development to fill any gaps has been identified as a priority.	
12. Maintaining momentum/exit strategy	3
One of the criteria which will be used in project appraisal is the long term sustainability/ benefits of the funding to ensure Leader funds have a lasting benefit. The project appraisal process includes bringing in the appropriate financial experts to assess project viability.	
Total 42/48 = 87%	

Appendix i – Map showing Loddon and Eversley Leader Area (with the historic Forest of Eversley, the River Loddon Catchment, the SSSIs and SPA)

Appendix ii – Map showing Loddon and Eversley Leader Area (with Parish and District boundaries only)

Appendix iii – Table of Parishes and Population statistics included in Leader project

Parish	Code	Dwellings 2006	Population 2006
Basingstoke and Deane Borough			
1. Bramley CP	24UB005	1,401	3,250
2. Chineham CP	24UB008	3,322	7,710
3. Cliddesden CP	24UB009	214	500
4. Ellisfield CP	24UB014	130	300
5. Farleigh Wallop CP	24UB015	43	100
6. Hartley Wespall CP	24UB017	57	130
7. Herriard CP	24UB018	120	280
8. Mapledurwell and Up Nately CP	24UB024	166	390
9. Monk Sherborne CP	24UB025	157	360
1			
0. Mortimer West End CP	24UB026	155	360
1			
1. Newnham CP	24UB027	226	520
1			
2. Oakley CP	24UB031	2,198	5,100
1			
3. Old Basing and Lychpit CP	24UB032	3,057	7,090
1			
4. Pamber CP	24UB034	1,084	2,510
1			
5. Sherborne St. John CP	24UB037	574	1,330
1			
6. Sherfield on Loddon CP	24UB038	846	1,960
1			
7. Silchester CP	24UB039	380	880
1			
8. Stratfield Saye CP	24UB042	120	280
1			
9. Stratfield Turgis CP	24UB043	43	100
2			
0. Tadley CP	24UB044	4,952	11,490
2			
1. Tunworth CP	24UB045	39	90
2			
2. Upton Grey CP	24UB046	266	620
2			
3. Weston Corbett CP	24UB047	12	30
2			
4. Weston Patrick CP	24UB048	35	80
2			
5. Winslade CP	24UB050	36	80
2			
6. Wootton St. Lawrence CP	24UB051	253	590
Hart District			
2			
7. Bramshill CP	24UG001	96	220
2			
8. Crondall CP	24UG002	1,337	3,100
2			
2. Crookham Village CP	24UG003	1,621	3,760

3				
0.	Dogmersfield CP	24UG004	132	310
3				
1.	Eversley CP	24UG005	635	1,470
3				
2.	Greywell CP	24UG006	100	230
3				
3.	Hartley Wintney CP	24UG007	2,154	5,000
3				
4.	Blackwater and Hawley CP	24UG008	2,366	5,490
3				
5.	Heckfield CP	24UG009	138	320
3				
6.	Hook CP	24UG010	2,968	6,890
3				
7.	Long Sutton CP	24UG011	177	410
3				
8.	Mattingley CP	24UG012	235	550
3				
9.	Odiham CP	24UG013	1,986	4,610
4				
0.	Rotherwick CP	24UG014	215	500
4				
1.	South Warnborough CP	24UG015	219	510
4				
2.	Winchfield CP	24UG016	242	560
4				
3.	Yateley CP	24UG017	8,027	18,620
4				
4.	Fleet (unparished)	24UG0	13,211	30,650

Rushmoor Borough

No areas officially classified as rural, but there are a number of farms in the Borough, and there are various greenspaces, woodlands, heathlands and grasslands which may be included in access/recreation projects

TOTAL

98,680

Appendix iv – Budget Spreadsheet

Appendix v – List of LAG members

Seat	Name	Organisation	Skills
County Council	Nigel Smith/Chloe Atkins	Hampshire County Council	Rural tourism Country side access Involvement in community planning Knowledge of planning process Project appraisal
District/Borough Council	Susan Band	Hart District Council	Rural tourism Developing communities facilities Involvement in community planning Knowledge of planning process
District/Borough Council	Mike Bird	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	Impact assessment Ecology and conversation Knowledge of planning process
Parish Council	Cally Morris	Silchester Parish Council	Rural tourism Developing communities facilities Country side access Involvement in community planning
Natural England	Jonathon Newman	Natural England	Farming Forestry/Woodland management Impact assessment Ecology and conservation Business strategy and planning
Forestry Commission	Patrick Stephens/Robin Hendrie	Forestry Commission	Forestry/Woodland management Forestry/Woodland business advice Woodfuel production and marketing Forestry / Woodland skills development Renewable energies
Environment Agency	Alexandra Hazel/Dave Webb	Environment Agency	Forestry/Woodland management Renewable energies Impact assessment Ecology and conversation Integrated land management advice
Elected Member for the area	Cllr Jonathon Glen	Hampshire County /Hart District Councils	Developing communities facilities Business development Business Strategy and Planning Knowledge of planning process Knowledge and input into local and wider initiatives and strategies
Local food	Tim Brock	Hampshire Fare	Diversification Product development and distribution Promoting and branding of local produce Product development, marketing and distribution Produce retailing Business advice and support Project management
Dairy Farmer	James Hague	Farm Fresh Dairies	Diversification Farming Product development and distribution Product development, marketing and distribution Produce retailing Business Development
Livestock Farmer/ National Farmers Union	Robert Benford	R K Benford	Diversification Farming Product development, marketing and distribution Produce retailing Developing community facilities Country side access knowledge
Livestock Farmer/ National Farmers Union	Rob Janoway	Newlyns Farm	Diversification Farming Produce retailing Business advice / support
Other farming/ local Heritage society	Mary Saunders	Newlands Farm/ Odiham Society	Diversification Farming Produce retailing Country side access knowledge
Wood fuel industry	William Hamer	South East Wood Fuels	Forestry/Woodland management

			Forestry/Woodland business advice Product development and distribution Woodfuel production and marketing Forestry / Woodland skills development Renewable energies
Forestry	Simon Farndon	Hampshire Coppice Craftsmen's Group	Forestry/Woodland management Product development and distribution Forestry / Woodland skills development
Food Producer	Stacey Hedges	Hampshire Cheeses	Diversification Promoting and branding of local produce Product development, marketing and distribution Produce retailing Project management
Trade association	Valerie Cloke	North Hampshire Chamber	Rural tourism Business development Business advice / support Business strategy and planning
Rural business	Geoff White	Simmons & Sons	Rural tourism Business development Business advice / support Business strategy and planning
Tourism/recreation	Jonathon Lucas	Gorrick	Rural tourism Developing community facilities Country side access knowledge
Environment NGO	Debbie Tann	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Impact assessment Ecology and conversation Integrated land management advice Project management Project appraisal
Environment NGO	Debbie Miller	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	Farming Forestry / woodland management Impact assessment Ecology and conversation Integrated land management advice Business advice / support
Council for Voluntary Services	Caroline Winchurch	Hart Voluntary Action	Developing communities facilities Managing community facilities Developing community shops / enterprises Country side access
Local youth group	Colin Boniface	Off-Road Motor cycling club	Rural tourism Developing communities facilities Country side access Business development
Country Land and Business Association	John Jervoise	Country Land & Business Association	Diversification Farming Forestry/Woodland management Business development Business advice / support Business strategy and planning Knowledge and input into local and wider initiatives and strategies
Local resident	Alan Read	Country Watch	Developing communities facilities Managing community facilities Developing community shops / enterprises Countryside access
Leader project development advisor	Alison Cross	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Diversification Farming Ecology and conversation Integrated land management advice Business support / advice Project management
Advisor on deer management issues	Jamie Cordrey	South East Deer Initiative	Forestry/Woodland management Forestry/Woodland business advice Forestry / Woodland skills development
Ministry of Defence liaison contact	Jonathon Gasson	Defence Estates	Diversification Business Development Business strategy and planning Knowledge of planning process

Appendix vi – LAG and DMG Terms of Reference

LODDON AND EVERSLEY LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP AND DECISION MAKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE LEADER LAG

1. The Loddon and Eversley working group submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) in July 2007 as part of the application process for Leader funding. The working group was drawn from existing partnerships including the Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area Project, the Loddon Farm Advice Project and the Forest of Eversley Countryside Access Plan steering group.
2. The working group was then broadened and modified to become the Leader Local Action Group (LAG).
3. The Loddon and Eversley Leader Local Development Strategy (LDS) was agreed by the LAG and submitted to SEEDA in January 2008.
4. Leader is a six year European Union (EU) initiative to support small scale rural development projects.
5. The overall purpose of the LDS is summarised in Appendix 1; this shows the key issues for the Loddon and Eversley area together with the objectives of the project which will help address the issues.

2. THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP & THE DECISION MAKING GROUP

6. The partnership which is responsible for delivering the Loddon and Eversley Leader programme as set out in the LDS is known as the 'Local Action Group' (LAG).
7. The partnership has two tiers, the Decision Making Group (DMG) and the full Local Action Group (LAG).

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE LAG & DMG

8. Membership of the Local Action Group

- The LAG is made up of representatives of public, private and voluntary sector organisations along with community representatives as set out in the LDS (and shown in Appendix 2) and amended from time to time. The LAG is made up of a mix of individuals with the skills, knowledge and commitment to deliver the Leader programme.
- The number of LAG members should not fall below 20 at any time. The LAG includes the programme staff (see 12).
- Organisations outside of this initial listing of members may be invited to discuss specific issues on an ad hoc basis. Other non-voting attendees are also welcome to participate in meetings, where this is deemed by the Chairman to be helpful in providing advice on eligibility issues and project development activity. In particular the LAG is keen to involve specialists to act in an advisory capacity where required.
- Decisions shall be determined by a simple majority of the LAG members present at a meeting. A minimum of 50% of members are required to be present in order to constitute a quorum.
- The voting rights for LAG members will be one vote per member with the Chair having an additional vote in the event of an equal vote on any issue.

9. Membership of the Decision Making Group

- The DMG is formed from a subset of the Local Action Group and its members are elected by the LAG.
- DMG members will be selected on the basis of their skills and experience and with reference to the specific role of the DMG. The membership may be amended from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the local programme.
- The number of DMG members should not fall below 8 at any time. The Programme Co-ordinator attends DMG meetings but does not have voting rights.
- Decisions by the DMG shall be determined by a simple majority of the members present at a meeting. The voting rights for DMG members will be one vote per member with the Chair having an additional vote in the event of an equal vote. A minimum of 50% of members are required to be present in order to constitute a quorum.

4. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP & DECISION MAKING GROUP

IMPORTANT:

- **Members of the LAG are expected to act in the best interests of Loddon and Eversley Leader and be committed to securing the sustainable future of the Loddon and Eversley area.**
- **LAG members must recognise the collective nature of their decision-making.**

- **LAG members must be aware that they are not voting on behalf of their parent organisation or interest group, rather they vote as individuals with specialist knowledge of the Loddon and Eversley area and its communities and with regard to the overall needs of the area.**
- **The LAG is specifically set up to deliver the Loddon and Eversley LDS and the group has no wider function.**

KEY PRINCIPLES:

The LAG and DMG will be expected to operate following good practice guidelines for both public sector and voluntary sector organisations. The “Nolan Principles” are a useful basis for understanding the way LAG members will be expected to operate:

Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

The LAG & DMG will at all times have regard to the views of the Programme Co-ordinator or his/her substitute as to the conformity of proposed projects with the programme funding guidelines, eligibility for funding, and issues of probity.

10. The LAG has the following responsibilities:

- To oversee the successful delivery of the Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme as set out in the LDS over the period 2008 to 2013.
- To ensure all approved projects provide good value in their use of EU Leader funding and follow best practice in all their financial activities.
- To undertake the first stage assessment of projects requiring Leader funding and make recommendations to the DMG, through the consideration of the projects ‘fit’ with the aims and objectives of the Local Development Strategy and the undertaking of a simple scoring process.
- To provide advice and guidance to applicants submitting Expressions of Interest in order to gauge the LAGs view on the potential projects ‘fit’ with the aims and objectives of the Local Development Plan and before developing a full application.
- To monitor the overall performance of projects and identify needs for training or up-skilling applicants to assist completion of projects.
- To champion, promote and stimulate interest in the Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme, through their contacts with local stakeholder groups
- To set strategic priorities for the Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme and undertake an annual review of the Local Development Strategy
- To elect DMG members and review the group’s membership to ensure it remains effective
- Work to ensure there is co-ordination of activity with other strategies and the work of other agencies, and to reflect the view of the wider community.
- To respond to communication relating to LAG activities, outside of meetings, as and when required (liaising with the programme co-ordinator as required)

4.2 The DMG has the following specific responsibilities:

- To make decisions on the more detailed aspects of implementing the Loddon and Eversley Leader LDS and to provide support to the Programme Co-ordinator. The decisions of the DMG are final and cannot be referred elsewhere for arbitration.
- To appraise project applications based on considerations as to their financial viability, identified need, clear targets and objectives, sustainability, innovation, additionality and displacement, project management and delivery and risk assessment
- To make recommendations to the accountable body on project applications and sanction the release of grant offer letters
- To monitor the work of the LAG and review the parameters of the LAG's role, in the light of experience of the Programme
- To monitor the overall performance of Loddon and Eversley Leader against targets as set out in the Local Development Strategy and assist the Programme Co-ordinator in the submission of reports to SEEDA and other funders.

5. MEETINGS OF THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP & DECISION MAKING GROUP

The aim will be for the LAG & DMG to meet at least four times per annum. However additional meetings for each group, together or individually, may be called by the Chair as necessary.

11. The Minutes

- Minutes of all meetings, and any groups approved by this body, shall be kept and agreed at the next regular

meeting of this body.

- Minutes of both LAG & DMG meetings are confidential to the Loddon and Eversley Leader programme. They should not be disclosed to any other individual or organisation beyond those involved in the management of the Programme (i.e. Leader staff, LAG members and Leader Managing Authorities).
- LAG members wishing to report the activities of the LAG to their own organisation or group are requested to paraphrase the minutes and ensure they do not disclose any sensitive information, particularly relating to individual businesses.

12. Attendance

If a LAG member fails to attend three LAG meetings in succession, without good reason, the following procedure will be implemented:

- If appropriate, the LAG member will be asked to appoint a suitable replacement from the same organisation. This replacement must be approved by a majority of the LAG.
- If the LAG member is unable, or unwilling, to nominate a replacement they will be removed from the LAG/DMG membership list

6. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIRS

13. The position of Chair & Vice-Chairs of the LAG/DMG will be filled by invitation of the LAG members and from one of their number. Elections will be held at the first meeting of each calendar year and there is no limit as to the number of times a Chair or Vice Chair can be elected.
14. The Chairman will be supported by two Vice Chairs elected by Members of the Local Action Group from their membership, with one being a member of the DMG. Each of the two Vice Chairs will represent different sectors of the Partnership. Where possible, the ideal scenario is to have a Chair and two Vice Chairs each of which represent the public, private and voluntary sectors.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

15. LAG & DMG members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest at the beginning of the meetings and these shall be minuted.
 16. LAG members will ensure that their outside interests or affairs and those of their immediate family do not conflict with their responsibilities and duties as a member of the Leader LAG.
These conflicts of interest are considered to be financial (pecuniary) or personal (non-pecuniary).
A pecuniary interest is considered to be either direct such as a LAG member who is also a Leader grant applicant, or indirect, such as being the committee member of a club which has made such an application.
LAG & DMG members will be asked to declare any pecuniary conflicts of interest relating to specific agenda items at the beginning of the meetings and these will be minuted. The declarer will be required to leave the meeting room before that item is discussed, and take no part in that discussion or voting on that item.
Non pecuniary interests include instances LAG members, their family, friends or any organisation to which they belong could gain or lose (other than financially) from an act or decision of the LAG as a whole.
These declarations will also be minuted. However the member concerned will normally be able to remain for appraisal of a project or discussion of the item, unless a majority of the LAG/DMG indicates otherwise
- 7.3 These procedures will also be followed by LEADER staff where a conflict of interest may occur in relation to Leader activities. In addition all Accountable Body staff will be governed by Local Authority procedures.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

17. LAG/DMG members may be party to information contained on project application forms, or similar, which is of a confidential nature (i.e. personal details or sensitive financial information). This information should not be disclosed or discussed outside of LAG/DMG meetings.
18. Any member found to have done so will be requested to vacate their position on the LAG/DMG.

9. DATA PROTECTION

The Leader LAG should be aware that HCC as the Accountable Body may hold certain information about them and which may be used in connection with the publicising, administration, evaluation and monitoring of the Leader Programme.

The Accountable Body may also disclose this information to others including public bodies and other Government Departments. To publicise, administer, monitor and evaluate the Programme we may also disclose certain information to other organisations or consultants which we consider appropriate.

However the lawful and correct treatment of personal information is regarded as very important to the successful operation of all HCC business and to maintaining confidence with all individuals and organisations with whom the Council has contact.

The type of information relevant to LAG members and individuals held by the Accountable Body is as follows:

- LAG members & project operator home address, telephone number, fax and e-mail if they have not specified another contact address and/or;
- Their business address if preferred,
- Statistical information regarding their age, gender and ethnic origin,
- Details of LAG membership of organisations relevant to the delivery of Leader,
- Minutes of LAG meetings containing declarations of financial interest in project applications,
- Letters and other correspondence pertaining to the management of the Leader programme,
- Project applications and subsequent monitoring data,
- Other information relevant to the delivery of the Leader programme

1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Equal Opportunities in relation to the operation of the Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme primarily cover two main areas: equality of opportunity in employment and equality of opportunity in service provision.

10.1 Equality of Opportunity in Employment

Loddon and Eversley Leader is committed to equality in recruitment, selection, training, career development and promotion regardless of sex, marital status, race, religion, colour, age or disability, both for its own programme staff and for those projects it funds.

- All project applicants which intend to employ staff will be required to demonstrate how they will put this in to practice and specifically that recruitment has been undertaken with due regard for openness and fair competition.
- Loddon and Eversley Leader will take seriously any allegations of discrimination levelled against those projects which it funds.
- Loddon and Eversley Leader expects the projects it funds to take reasonably practicable steps to facilitate the employment of disabled people.
- All Loddon and Eversley Leader staff will be subject to the equal opportunities policy of Hampshire County Council.

10.2 Equality of Opportunity in Service Provision

Loddon and Eversley Leader will seek to ensure that all the people within the Programme's target area, irrespective of their age, disability, ethnic, cultural or religious background, gender, marital status or sexual orientation have equal access to, and quality of, service which will be provided to a consistently high standard. Specifically:

- The LAG will continue to involve the wider community both through community representation on the group and by widely publicising the Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme. This will be carried out using a variety of mechanisms outlined within the Local Development Strategy.
- That all potential applicants have equal access to support and advice throughout the project development process
- That all project applications will be subjected to an equal and transparent appraisal process
- That those involved in the appraisal process will declare a conflict of interest or financial interest where applicable
- All projects will be required to show that procedures have been put in place to ensure that they comply with Equal Opportunities. They will need to ensure that at the very least they comply with the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and its amendments).

2. THE ROLE OF THE ACCOUNTABLE BODY

19. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the legally accountable body for all administrative and financial control matters relating to the programme. It will be responsible for issuing offer letters on recommendation from the DMG and making consequent payments.

3. THE ROLE OF LEADER PROGRAMME STAFF

- 20. The Loddon and Eversley Leader Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for managing the delivery of the Leader programme and undertakes day-to-day programme management and financial control.
- 21. The Loddon and Eversley Leader Administration Officer provides day to day support for the LAG and the Programme Co-ordinator.
- 22. Both the above staff are employed by HCC.
- 23. The Loddon and Eversley Leader Project Development role will be delivered by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust through the existing Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area project.

4. REVIEW OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 24. This document will be offered for review by the LAG at the first meeting in each calendar year or more frequently if appropriate.

5. SIGNATURE OF LAG MEMBER

I have read and understood the above Terms of Reference of the Loddon and Eversley Leader Local Action Group and agree to adhere to its principles

Signed

Date

Loddon and Eversley Leader – Local Development Strategy (LDS)

KEY ISSUES

Economic decline of farming and forestry and its impact on the countryside and rural communities

Long dependant on farming and forestry, the rural economy of Loddon and Eversley underpins its biodiversity, landscape, tradition and quality of life and its continuity is vital to the character of the area. Yet farming has been pushed to the economic margins by soaring land values, competition of cheaper products from abroad and changing consumer preferences. Woodland management has become uneconomic due to market collapse and supply chain failings for woodland produce. The Hampshire Farming Study shows a 49% decrease in total farming income in the county between 1995 and 2007. **In particular, woodland management and pastoral farming systems are seen as essential to maintaining the character of the LEHA.** Without environmentally and economically sustainable farming (in particular livestock farming) and woodland management, the character of area and its wildlife value will be steadily eroded.

Declining quality of life for rural communities

Situated in the south east of England, the area has been subject to a huge increase in population. For example, the town of Basingstoke on the western edge of the LEHA has seen its population rise from 26,000 in 1961 to its current level of 90,000. Further planned development is likely to add to environmental, social and economic problems as a result of **urban-fringe pressures, demands for access and recreation, and congestion** from commuting. The rural area of Loddon and Eversley sits between the main conurbations of Basingstoke and Farnborough/Aldershot and it is somewhat taken for granted by those living in the towns that this attractive countryside will always be there. However, over the last 40 years the area’s economy has developed mainly around the high-tech industries and the towns, with comparatively **little investment to support the land-based industries** and a subsequent **shortage of labour and skills** for traditional countryside management. Rural communities offer few employment opportunities and rural jobs tend to pay much lower salaries. High house prices in the countryside push young people into the towns where housing is cheaper resulting in an ageing rural population. The profitability of rural business is threatened by all of this, and many village schools, shops and pubs have been forced to close.

THEMES – KEY OBJECTIVES

Themes (Objectives)	Key Issue	Rationale
Helping farming to become more sustainable and economically viable	1	<i>With 50% of Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area being farmed, farming is essential to maintaining its character. Farming’s future, and hence the Loddon and Eversley’s, must be secured through addressing its sustainable economic development</i>
Helping woodland management to become sustainable and economically viable	1	<i>The Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area contains almost 10,000 ha of woodland of which at least 25% is ancient. However, it is an unmanaged and under-utilised resource. Its local economic development must be supported in order to maximise its value to people and wildlife.</i>
Encouraging viable rural communities and improving quality of life	2	<i>In recent years the large towns of the area have grown and prospered often to the detriment of rural communities. Steps must be taken to ensure that rural Loddon and Eversley remains a living working countryside with the right skills to survive and a wide social mix of people.</i>
Enabling rural communities to benefit financially and socially from increased demand for access to the countryside	2	<i>The Loddon and Eversley Heritage Area is the ‘countryside on the doorstep’ for the urban populations of Basingstoke and the Blackwater Valley Towns. It has much to offer in terms of history, cultural heritage, biodiversity, educational and recreational pursuits. This must be carefully managed in order to benefit rural communities and avoid damage to the environment.</i>
Cross-cutting theme: Helping rural businesses to become “greener” and make a positive contribution to their local environment	1 & 2	<i>The threat of climate change affects everyone, so it important that all projects minimise their carbon footprint. Because the natural environment is such a strong feature of the Loddon and Eversley area, it is important that projects are sympathetic to the landscape and wildlife assets of the area.</i>

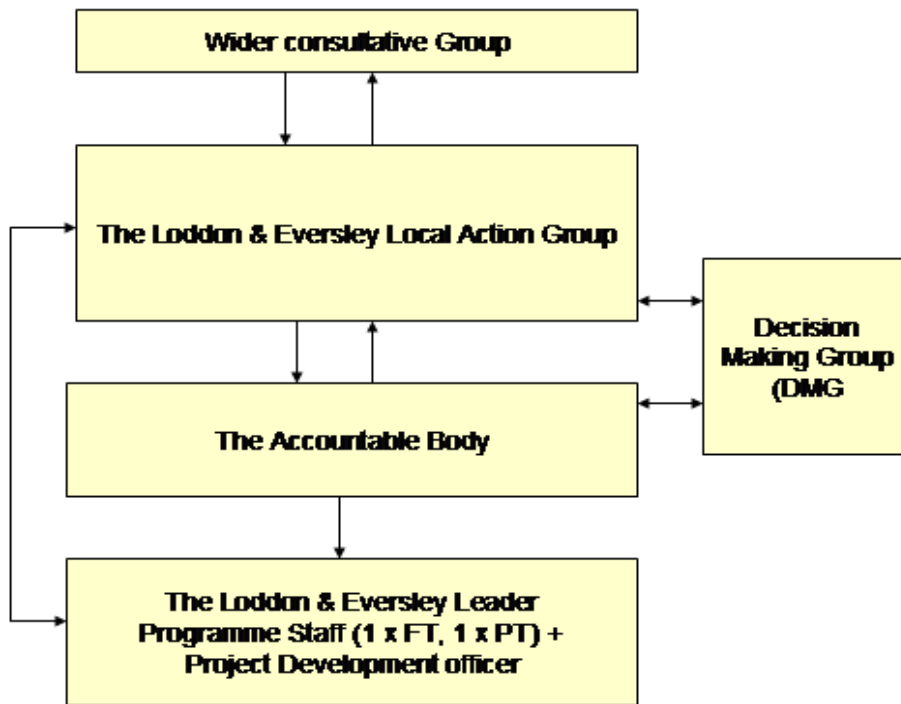
Loddon and Eversley Leader LOCAL ACTION GROUP list of members

Seat	Name	Organisation
County Council	Nigel Smith/Chloe Atkins	Hampshire County Council
District/Borough Council	Susan Band	Hart District Council
District/Borough Council	Mike Bird	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Parish Council	Cally Morris	Silchester Parish Council
Natural England	Jonathon Newman	Natural England
Forestry Commission	Patrick Stephens/Robin Hendrie	Forestry Commission
Environment Agency	Alexandra Hazel/Dave Webb	Environment Agency
Elected Member for the area	Cllr Jonathon Glen	Hampshire County /Hart District Councils
Local food	Tim Brock	Hampshire Fare
Dairy Farmer	James Hague	Farm Fresh Dairies
Livestock Farmer/ National Farmers Union	Robert Benford	R K Benford
Livestock Farmer/ National Farmers Union	Rob Janoway	Newlyns Farm
Other farming/ local Heritage society	Mary Saunders	Newlands Farm/ Odiham Society
Wood fuel industry	William Hamer	South East Wood Fuels
Forestry	Simon Farndon	Hampshire Coppice Craftsmen's Group
Food Producer	Stacey Hedges	Hampshire Cheeses
Trade association	Valerie Cloke	North Hampshire Chamber
Rural business	Geoff White	Simmons & Sons
Tourism/recreation	Jonathon Lucas	Gorrick
Environment NGO	Debbie Tann	Hampshire Wildlife Trust
Environment NGO	Debbie Miller	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Council for Voluntary Services	Caroline Winchurch	Hart Voluntary Action
Local youth group	Colin Boniface	Off-Road Motor cycling club
Country Land and Business Association	John Jervoise	Country Land & Business Association
Local resident	Alan Read	Country Watch
Leader project development advisor	Alison Cross	Hampshire Wildlife Trust
Advisor on deer management issues	Jamie Cordrey	South East Deer Initiative
Ministry of Defence liaison contact	Jonathon Gasson	Defence Estates

As at: January 2008

Appendix vii – LAG Structure

Figure 1. Structure of the Loddon & Eversley LAG



Appendix ix – Letters of Support

Attached are letters of support from the following:

Adam Green, Grounds & Countryside Manager, Hart District Council
Alan Read, Chairman of Countrywatch/ community rep/ local resident
Caroline Winchurch, Project Support Officer, Hart Voluntary Action & Volunteer Bureau
Debbie Miller, Farm Conservation Advisor, FWAG
Geoff White, Rural Practice Chartered Surveyor, Simmons & Sons
H E Mansfield, Countrywatch, community rep/ local resident
James Hague, Farm Fresh Dairies
Jamie Cordery, South East Deer Liaison Officer, The Deer Initiative
Jonathan Newman, Team Leader, Natural England
John Jervoise, Herriard Estates, CLA rep
Mike Bird, Senior Biodiversity Officer, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Nicola Sims, Ecology & Biodiversity Officer, Rushmoor Borough Council
Peter Dean, Managing Director, Hampshire Economic Partnership
Phil Allen, Northern Area Team Manager, Countryside Service, Hampshire County Council
Robert Benford, local farmer/ NFU
Robin Hendrie, Forestry Commission
Russell Cleaver, Funding Development Manager, Recreation & Heritage, Hampshire County Council
Sandra Nichols, Senior Policy Advisor, NFU
Stacey Hedges, Hampshire Cheeses
Tim Brock, Hampshire Fare Manager
Vicky Fletcher, Land Management Planner, Environment Department, Hampshire County Council
William Hamer, Forestry Consultant/ South East Woodfuels/ Hampshire Woodchip