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An evaluation of LEADER in Wales: Technical Report

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An evaluation of LEADER in Wales: Technical Report

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Table of contents

1. Introduction 4
2. An introduction to each element of the LEADER approach 5
3. The LEADER approach and its implementation in Wales pre-2014 11
4. List of Local Action Groups in Wales (2014-2020) 16
5. RDP 2014-2020 Strategic and Thematic Objectives 17
6. Academic literature review 19
7. Grey literature outside of Wales review findings 45
8. A Theory of Change for LEADER 54
9. The research questions set for the evaluation 57
10. Examples of projects funded by the current LEADER scheme in Wales 61
11. Case studies for projects funded by previous LEADER schemes in Wales 76
12. Research Tools 104
13. Breakdown of online survey responses 138

1. Introduction

1.1 This Technical Report should be read in conjunction with the final report of an evaluation of the implementation of the LEADER scheme as part of the Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014-2020, commissioned by the Welsh Government.

1.2 It provides a range of additional information that informs and complements the discussion in the main report. The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 projects an introduction into each element of 'the LEADER approach'
- Chapter 3 provides a brief history of LEADER and its implementation in Wales
- A list of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Wales for the current programme period can be found in Chapter 4
- The strategic objectives for the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme are set out in Chapter 5
- Chapters 6 and 7 include the academic and grey literature reviews undertaken as part of the evaluation
- Chapter 8 includes the theory of change of LEADER in general and specifically for the 2014-2020 scheme developed as part of the evaluation
- Chapter 9 sets out the research questions set for the evaluation
- Chapter 10 provides examples of projects in Wales funded under each theme of the 2014-2020 LEADER scheme
- Case studies for projects funded and/or linked to previous iteration of the LEADER scheme in Wales can be found in Chapter 11
- Chapter 12 includes the research tools used during the course of the evaluation
- Finally, a breakdown of the sample collected by the online survey of those involved on LEADER in Wales discussed in the main report is included in Chapter 13.

2. An introduction to each element of the LEADER approach[1]

2.1 The LEADER approach or method is based on seven specific features and is dependent on all of these being present and employed together. These seven features define LEADER as a methodology and separate it from being simply a funding scheme.

Bottom-up approach

2.2 The bottom-up approach is at the heart of LEADER. LEADER conceives that local people are the best experts to drive the development of their territory. This bottom-up approach means that the local community and local players can help define a development pathway for their area consistent with their needs, expectations and plans. Doing this through a collective approach with delegated decision making enables them to take charge of their own area's future. They make decisions about the local strategy and the selection of the priorities to be pursued. Active participation is encouraged at every stage throughout the process; during LAG and strategy development, implementation, evaluation and review. The involvement of local actors should be fair and transparent including the population at large, economic, civic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions.

2.3 This bottom-up approach is enshrined in the EU regulations with provisions for animation and for decision making ensuring that no one interest group can have a majority.

Area-based approach

2.4 LEADER and Community Led Local Development is based on a different way of doing things, linking the three elements of a local area, partnership and development strategy within a single approach. The area forms the basis for the development of the local partnership and strategy, creating a positive vision for what could be backed up by an active alliance of local stakeholders. Under the 'Area-based approach' LEADER funding targets the priorities of the area as a whole, not specific projects or groups of projects (thus it is distinct from a 'project-based approach').

[1] Source: Adapted from European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)

2.5 The area normally involves a small, homogenous, socially and functionally cohesive territory, often characterised by common traditions, a local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations. Having such an area focus enables the local partnership to work together to identify and address local strengths, challenges and opportunities, mobilising the area's endogenous potential and resources.

2.6 The area chosen must have sufficient coherence and critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable local development strategy.

2.7 The area must have clear and defined geographic borders, the LEADER principle is that these don't have to follow the administrative borders (perhaps rather following functional ones).

2.8 Areas must meet the LEADER population criteria (between 10,000 and 150,000 in most cases, as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation EU No 1303/2013) and may also be subject to further Member State specific criteria. The borders of the area may be revised as the strategy and partnership develops depending on the development priorities and who is involved.

The local partnership

2.9 The local partnerships for area development work through a specific and structured governance mechanism – in LEADER this is referred to as the Local Action Group (LAG). Involvement in the partnership means that the people who were previously the passive 'beneficiaries' of a policy become active partners and drivers of their area's development; this is a defining characteristic of Community-Led Local Development.

2.10 It is important to note that no two partnerships are the same in their origin or development and that no partnership is born perfectly formed. Partnerships must fit their area and the realities of their local context recognising that it takes time, effort and commitment to build the necessary trust and working relationships. It is normal for the membership of the partnership to evolve as the strategy and work of the LAG develops.

2.11 Understanding the broader 'programme eco-system' in which LEADER is implemented is also important and the changes in that eco-system from one programme to the next. For example, for the previous programme period, there was

close integration between Axis 3[2] and Axis 4 (LEADER) activities which is not the case for the current programme period. Further, the current scheme cannot provide any aid or other assistance that would constitute state aid. These differences will influence what LEADER can achieve in each programme period.

2.12 This issue is not unique to Wales. At a European level, during the 2007–2013 Rural Development Programme period concerns emerged that the LEADER approach was being compromised by 'mainstreaming'. The strong focus which emerged for LEADER on the defined measures under the RDP was considered limiting to the LAGs possibilities to implement integrated and innovative projects.

2.13 However, there are some essential principles enshrined in the EU Regulations. A LAG should comprise partners from public, private and civil society; it should be well-balanced and broadly representative of local interests and the different socio-economic sectors in the area. At the decision-making level no one sector can represent more than 49 per cent of the membership of the local partnership (Common Provisions Regulation EU No 1303/2013). The LAG's legal form may vary from country to country, but it is often a non-profit, registered organisation. Regardless of their legal form LAGs may nominate a suitable partner to act as their formal accountable body.

2.14 The assertion that continuity between programming periods is highly important has come to be regarded as a truism but in looking at the LAG as an entity perhaps this should be challenged? No LAG is guaranteed continuity as a LEADER LAG, in looking ahead why not look at the opportunity to refresh or renew the LAG? How does the LAG optimise the essential local experience, knowledge and analytical insight its members bring? An influx of new blood or a change of focus may provide vital new energy and momentum, a more representative and inclusive LAG will not only involve new people but may open up new opportunities, bring new resources, ideas and innovations and by strengthening local connections may encourage others to become involved.

An integrated and multi-sectoral strategy

2.15 The Common Provisions Regulation (EU No 1303/2013) specifies that CLLD be carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral area based local development strategies. This has been a feature of successive generations of LEADER

[2] Support for projects to improve quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

distinguishing the approach from traditional top-down sectoral agricultural policies. As the acronym LEADER suggests it aims to build the 'links between the rural economy and development actions'. Partnerships and their Local Development Strategies (LDS) therefore aim to capitalise on the links between local sectors to exploit the potential multiplier effects.

2.16 In doing so they explore and address the needs and opportunities of the area in an integrated way to achieve the desired common goals. The actions and projects contained in local strategies should therefore be linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. Integrated does not mean all-encompassing however, strategies should not try to tackle everything at once or give everything the same weight, some things lie out with local scope to influence or deliver. In their integrated LDS LAGs should make choices and focus on those objectives and actions that add value to support which already exists and have the greatest chances of contributing to the changes they want to achieve.

2.17 The consultation process in Local Development Strategy preparation and review provides LAGs with an ideal opportunity to reach and engage new people and organisations. It allows the exploration not only of what the development needs and opportunities are but also how people can contribute and how they can participate. If LAGs are to reach new constituencies, they have to think about the way in which they reach them and animate involvement. An open-door approach is not enough, there can be many barriers, distance, transport, timing, childcare, school hours, even language can discourage people. People need to be invited in, to have permission to contribute. Think it through, how can you help people to contribute, what tools, methods and mediums can you use?

2.18 These are just some of the approaches LAGs can use to help them to be as fresh and relevant as possible, seeking out and delivering added value, generating real bottom-up involvement. These are not one-off approaches however but, as with the Local Development Strategy they are dynamic approaches and tools which if properly managed feed the process of ongoing renewal.

Networking

2.19 Networking lies right at the heart of what LEADER is and how it works. The LAG is a network of local partners through which its strategy and activities promotes links between local actors and others in the development chain. The benefits of

networking in LEADER extend well beyond this local horizon; local, national and international networks have become ever more important linking rural people, places and actions. With the advent of CLLD wider networks involving links with non-rural areas can bring new possibilities. Networking brings those involved together in disseminating and sharing knowledge, their experience, innovations, ideas and information, developing peer support, overcoming isolation and building capacity. Networking plays an important role in stimulating and supporting cooperation activity.

2.20 National Rural Networks (NRNs) are established in all the Member States through the Rural Development Programmes. Although they target a wider range of rural stakeholders, their remit specifically includes support for LAGs; some involve LAG subgroups. The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) acts at the European level, directly helping both the NRNs, the LAGs and includes a LEADER / CLLD sub-group.

2.21 The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) is an international non-profit making membership organisation and cooperation forum. ELARD membership includes a large number of LAGs and many of the voluntary national and regional LEADER groupings.

Innovation

2.22 The quest for innovation remains one of the most exciting, ground-breaking and yet challenging parts of the LEADER approach. Seeking out and fostering new and innovative solutions to local problems or to take advantage of opportunities has been a core part of LEADER from its outset. Innovation applies to what is done, the types of activity supported, the products or services developed etc. but importantly it also applies to how things are done. In fact, in the beginning the LEADER approach itself was the main innovation.

2.23 Each LAG should aim to bring new elements and solutions to the development of its territory. This applies in its strategy, its delivery and animation structures and processes and in its decision making and project selection. Of course, not every innovative idea will succeed; there will always have to be careful project assessment but a permissible level of risk must be factored into LAG decisions. By creating the right conditions and carefully cultivating new and fresh ideas LAGs can

produce substantial and sustained changes and benefits for their territories, the real added value which LEADER is designed to achieve.

Cooperation

2.24 Inter-territorial and international cooperation adds a wider dimension to local development in rural areas. Cooperation goes further than networking by involving local people and Local Action Groups in working with others to undertake a joint project. This can involve other LEADER groups or with a similarly formed group in another region, Member State, under a different European Structural and Investment Fund (ESI), or even in a non-EU country.

2.25 Of course, cooperation is not an end in itself, there should be a clear purpose and benefit in working with others. Cooperation with other regions can be an excellent source of innovation and knowledge transfer for local people. LEADER cooperation allows rural areas to address and take advantage of their diversity introducing new perspectives and insights from other areas, importing and exporting successful approaches and best practices.

2.26 Although the benefits of cooperation can be considerable, so too can be the implementation challenges. It is therefore important to plan carefully, choose the right topics and the right partners and take advantage of the support offered through National Rural Networks and the ENRD.

3. The LEADER approach and its implementation in Wales pre-2014

3.1 Introduced as an alternative to conventional top-down support to the agricultural sector, LEADER originated in 1991 as an 'accompanying measure' to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). As a European 'Community Initiative' LEADER was concerned with finding new solutions and developing innovative ways of doing things. As such, it sat alongside (and complemented) the mainstream Structural Funds Programmes.

3.2 In **LEADER I (1991-93)**, the main innovation lay in the approach itself involving and supporting communities, drawing on the local populations' initiative and skills, promoting and supporting their acquisition of know-how and pursuing local development in an integrated way.

3.3 Four groups were funded in Wales in this period, working in the following areas:[3]

- Powys
- South Pembrokeshire
- Gwynedd
- Carmarthenshire

3.4 **LEADER II (1994–1999)** was applied more widely acting as 'a laboratory' extending the pursuit of innovation beyond the method alone to include the projects supported. Eight groups were successful in their bids to participate in LEADER II in Wales covering the following areas:[4]

- Anglesey
- South Pembrokeshire
- North Pembrokeshire
- Conwy, Denbighshire & south Wrexham
- Powys
- Gwynedd
- Cwm Taf, Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion and North Carmarthenshire

[3] It should be noted that LEADER does not necessarily cover the whole of the local authority areas listed with the actual areas involved changing from period to period and urban areas always excluded.
[4] Again, local authority areas are noted but the areas covered did not necessarily stick to those borders exactly working within traditional community boundaries and areas, such as the Teifi Valley for example.

3.5 The essential requirement of LEADER II in Wales was for it to be focussed on animating the opportunities for economic, environmental and social development that arose within the areas in question, drawn from a menu of activities:

- Training, Support for SMEs and craft businesses
- Rural Tourism
- Environment and Living Conditions
- Basic Services
- Adding value to farming, fisheries and forestry products

3.6 **LEADER+ (2000-2006)** was no longer restricted to a definition of 'disadvantaged areas', meaning that the area and number of LAGs across Europe expanded further and a far stronger focus on LAGs' preparation and delivery of Local Development Strategies emerged.

3.7 The approach was more focused than previous iterations with would-be LAGs in Wales required to choose one or two measures from a list of four:

- New knowledge and new know-how
- Making best use of natural and cultural resources
- Adding value to local products
- Improving the quality of life in rural areas

3.8 Whilst this specialisation helped to prevent LAGs from 'spreading the jam too thinly', it also had the unforeseen consequence of LAGs not being able to take a fully integrated approach.

3.9 There were seven LAGs in Wales in this period, selected from 14 applications for funding, covering the following areas:

- Anglesey
- Conwy
- Pembrokeshire
- Rural Wrexham (Northern Marches)
- Monmouthshire
- Clwyd (Denbighshire and Flintshire)
- Powys

3.10 The Welsh Assembly Government (as it was at that time) also introduced the **Rural Community Action programme (RCA)** during this period (in 2003). The RCA

programme ran until 2009 and was designed partly to address some of the issues resulting from failed bids for LEADER+ funding from several areas and introduced support to a greater part of Wales. It was also a reaction to the more focused/restrictive approach of LEADER+ compared to the previous scheme. The RCA was delivered in 12 local authority areas across Wales adding Gwynedd, Ceredigion, the Vale of Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire to the list of LEADER+ groups.

3.11 It is also noteworthy that **Article 33 of the RDP programme for 2000-2006** was also delivered via some of the RCA groups. Article 33, invested in the infrastructure of rural communities in East Wales via projects delivered by the LEADER/RCA groups in that region and had three priorities: (a) provision of basic services, (b) renovation of villages, and (c) tourism and craft activities. Similar support was provided in West Wales via the Objective 1 (ERDF) Programmes in which the LAGs were not directly involved. RCA provided revenue funding which was useful for areas benefitting from Article 33, which was a capital only fund.

3.12 The **2007-2013 programme** saw the introduction of the four Axes designed to provide a more integrated approach. It foresaw **LEADER (via Axis 4)** being 'mainstreamed', that is to say, integrated into the Rural Development Programmes rather than a stand-alone initiative. No longer governed by its own regulatory framework, LEADER now sat within the RDPs as a complementary methodology contributing to the objectives of the three 'mainstream' Axes through Local Development Strategies, and also pursued the horizontal priority of improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas.

3.13 The Welsh Government managed and implemented Axis 1 (the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry) and Axis 2 (environment and countryside) activities nationally. Axis 3 (quality of life in rural areas) and Axis 4 (the LEADER approach) were implemented on the basis of local authority areas, by accountable and representative local partnerships (the RDP Partnerships and LAGs).

3.14 During this period, 18 LAGs were operating in Wales (alongside the Rural Partnerships in each area) introducing the LEADER method to several more areas for the first time.[5]

- Anglesey
- Bridgend
- Caerphilly
- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion
- Conwy
- Denbighshire
- Flintshire
- Gwynedd
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Monmouthshire
- Neath Port Talbot
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys
- Swansea
- Torfaen
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Wrexham

3.15 Based on the thematic approach being implemented as part of the RDP, Axis 4 (LEADER) activity and the work of the LAGs had to contribute to the objectives of the other three Axes. Most LAGs however concentrated their LEADER work around Axis 3 themes (Diversifying the Rural Economy and Improving the Quality of Life in Rural Areas) although a number LEADER projects hooked to Axis 1 Measures.

3.16 This was at least partly as Axes 3 and 4 were delivered side-by-side in Wales on a local authority area basis and led by Local Partnerships, aiming to promote cross-Axis working and to mainstream the LEADER approach. The Welsh Government was responsible for providing support and guidance to the Partnership Lead Body (usually the local authority), appraising project application submissions and the financial administration of the scheme, as well as the subsequent monitoring of the schemes. The focus of Axis 3 was on:

- Providing a broader range of better-paid employment opportunities.

[5] It should be noted that only the rural areas in these local authority areas were eligible as part of the scheme with urban areas excluded.

- Helping to raise economic activity rates.
- Enhancing or providing additional mainstream services for the rural economy.
- Providing openings for future economic development, including tourism and craft activities.
- Improving the physical environment of villages and conserving the rural heritage.
- Addressing social exclusion by improving access to a range of services developing better links between remote and more densely populated areas.

4. List of Local Action Groups in Wales (2014-2020)

1) Anglesey – known as ‘Arloesi Mon’ and administered by Menter Môn

2) Bridgend – known as ‘reach’ and administered by Bridgend CBC

3) Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent – known as ‘Cwm a Mynydd’ administered by Caerphilly CBC

4) Carmarthenshire – Know as ‘RDP Sir Gâr’ administered by Carmarthenshire CC

5) Ceredigion – known as Cynnal y Cardi and administered by Carmarthenshire CC

6) Conwy – known as ‘Conwy Cynhaliol’ and administered by Conwy CBC

7) Denbighshire – administered by Cadwyn Clwyd

8) Flintshire – administered by Cadwyn Clwyd

9) Gwynedd – known as Arloesi Gwynedd and administered by Menter Môn

10) Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taf – know as the “Rural Action Cwm Taf LEADER Programme”, administered by Merthyr Tydfil CBC

11) Monmouthshire & Newport – delivered by Monmouthshire Business & Enterprise, administered by Monmouthshire CC

12) Neath Port Talbot – known as Regenerate Neath Port Talbot, administered by Neath Port Talbot Council

13) Pembrokeshire – known as Arwain Sir Benfro administered by PLANED

14) Powys – known as Arwain, administered by Powys CC

15) Swansea – Swansea RDP, administered by the City and County of Swansea

16) Torfaen – administered by Torfaen CBC

17) Vale of Glamorgan – Creative Rural Communities, administrated by Value of Glamorgan CBC

18) Wrexham – administered by Cadwyn Clwyd

5. RDP 2014-2020 Strategic and Thematic Objectives

5.1 Activities under the LEADER measure must address at least one of the Programme Focus Areas. Under Article 5 of Commission Regulation 1305 / 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, 18 focus areas have been identified under six priorities for rural development which are as set out below. For monitoring purposes, the LEADER scheme in Wales is programmed against Focus Area 6b “Local Development”, although it is possible to record secondary focus areas.

5.2 **Priority 1 – Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas** with a focus on the following areas: a. fostering innovation and the knowledge base in rural areas; b. strengthening the links between agriculture and forestry and research and innovation; c. fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors.

5.3 **Priority 2 – Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability, with a focus on the following areas**: a. facilitating restructuring of farms facing major structural problems, notably farms with a low degree of market participation, market-oriented farms in particular sectors and farms in need of agricultural diversification; b. facilitating generational renewal in the agricultural sector.

5.4 **Priority 3 – Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture, with a focus on the following areas**: a. better integrating primary producers into the food chain through quality schemes, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organisations; b. supporting farm risk management.

5.5 **Priority 4 – Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry**, with a focus on the following areas: restoring and preserving biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas and high nature value farming, and the state of European landscapes; b. improving water management; c. improving soil management.

5.6 **Priority 5 – Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors**, with a focus on the following areas: a. increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture; b. increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing;

c. facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by products, wastes, residues and other non-food raw material for purposes of the bio-economy; d. reducing nitrous oxide and methane emissions from agriculture; e. fostering carbon sequestration in agriculture and forestry;

5.7 **Priority 6 – Promoting social inclusion poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas**, with a focus on the following areas: a. facilitating diversification, creation of new small enterprises and job creation; b. fostering local development in rural areas; c. enhancing accessibility to, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas.

6. Academic literature review

Introduction

6.1 In the three decades since its inception, LEADER in Wales has periodically been the focus of study and discussion in the academic literature, predominantly as an example of bottom-up, territorially-focused rural development and delivery through partnership-working and community engagement. A number of studies and papers examining or referring to LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Wales were published relatively early in the life of LEADER, during the LEADER I or LEADER II programming periods (Asby and Midmore 1996; Bristow, 2000; Edwards et al. 2000; Midmore 1998; Moseley 2003; Müller 2001; Shucksmith 2000), with a few later discussions also engaging with LEADER+ (Asby et al. 2007; Bickerton 2004; Gardner 2011); but there has been very little academic research published relating to LEADER or Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) in rural development in Wales in the last decade, the notable exception being Navarro et al. (2016).

6.2 Several early studies drew primarily on the first-hand experience of the authors in establishing, managing or evaluating LAGs, including Asby and Midmore (1996), Bickerton (2004) and Midmore (1998). These accounts, together with articles in the non-academic 'grey literature' helped to position Welsh LAGs including Antur Teifi, working in South Ceredigion and North Carmarthenshire, and SPARC (South Pembrokeshire Action with Rural Communities) as prominent case studies of the LEADER approach within the rural studies literature. Consequently, these Welsh cases have also been discussed as examples in broader discussions of the LEADER approach at a European or UK scale, including by Moseley (1995, 2003) and Shucksmith (2000), drawing on secondary sources.

6.3 Only a few academic studies have involved primary data collection and analysis relating to LAGs in Wales, including PhD studies by Müller (2001) and Bickerton (2004), Edwards et al.'s (2000) research on rural partnership-working, and most recently Navarro et al.'s (2016) comparative analysis of LEADER in Wales and Andalusia. In addition to being the most recent study of LEADER in Wales, Navarro et al. (2016) is also one of the most comprehensive systematic analyses, involving questionnaire survey responses from managers of 11 of the 17 LAGs in Wales and reflecting on experiences of LEADER from 1991 to 2013.

6.4 The LEADER approach and individual LAGs in Wales have both also been examined as part of broader discussions of rural community engagement (Day 1998; Edwards 1998; Gardner 2011), integrated rural development (Bristow 2000) and partnership working (Derkzen 2008; Edwards et al. 2000). Whilst the contributions of Bristow, Day, Edwards and Gardner are mostly based on secondary sources, the research by Edwards et al. (2000) on partnership working in Mid Wales and Shropshire involved primary data collection from Welsh LAGs as part of a survey of 33 partnership organisations and interviews with 63 partnership representatives and participants, with the latter focused on Menter Powys as one of six case studies (which also included the Oswestry Hills LAG in Shropshire). Derkzen's research primarily focused on the Rural Community Action programme, but indirectly engaged with LEADER through case studies where the RCA partnership had emerged from earlier LEADER activity or included a LAG as a partner (Derkzen 2009, 2010; Derkzen and Bock 2009; Derkzen et al. 2008).

6.5 In addition to research undertaken directly on LEADER in Wales, an extensive academic literature has developed on the implementation of LEADER in other parts of Europe. Studies of LEADER and LAGs can be found for most EU member states, though a disproportionate number have been focused on Poland or Spain. The evidence and findings from such studies can help to fill gaps in the evidence base for LEADER in Wales, especially with respect to issues around participation, evaluation and economic impacts, however care should also be taken to note variations in the form, practice and experience of LEADER in different parts of the European Union (Konecny 2019) – as also highlighted by comparative analyses of LEADER in Wales and Spain by Navarro et al. (2016) and Wales and Germany by Müller (2001) as well as Derkzen's wider comparison of rural partnership-working in Wales and the Netherlands (Derkzen 2008).

The Trajectory of LEADER in Wales and Key Issues

6.6 Early studies of LEADER in Wales emphasised the novelty of the approach and its stress on innovative methods and highlighted four attributes that were perceived to mark a break from previous more top-down and inward-investment-focused strategies for rural development. First, the centrality afforded to community engagement and participation; second, the requirement for partnership working across public, private and voluntary sectors; third, the framing of action around territorial identities and priorities, thus recognising the differentiated character of

rural Wales; and fourth, the significance placed on integrated rural development cutting across conventional economic sectors (Bristow 2000; Day 1998; Edwards 1998; Edwards et al. 2000; Müller 2001; Shucksmith 2000).

6.7 Collectively, these features were presented as constituting an approach to rural development that was led by rural communities themselves and their self-identification of problems and priorities, enacted by Welsh LAGs in LEADER I and LEADER II by the use of community appraisals and similar techniques to shape their programmes (Asby and Midmore 1996; Edwards 1998; Müller 2001). As Asby and Midmore (1996) and Edwards (1998) both documented, this approach had been developed through several iterations of community action in Wales before the introduction of LEADER, mostly notably by SPARC, but was well suited to the principles of the LEADER initiative. The scoping of problems and priorities through community appraisals and the engagement of community groups in planning provided LEADER I and LEADER II with a robust evidence base for action that contrasted with Moseley's (2003) observation that elsewhere the hasty introduction of LEADER I led to "many cases where the initial survey of needs and resources was skimped or was, effectively non-existent" (p 152). Accordingly, generic discussions of the LEADER programme by Moseley (2003), Midmore (1998) and Shucksmith (2000) all promoted SPARC as a role-model, contributing to SPARC gaining "a reputation across Europe as a commendable model of the LEADER approach" (Moseley 2003, p 16) (though Müller (2001) also noted the use of similar methods by the Antur Teifi, Menter Powys and South Gwynedd LAGs).

6.8 The emphasis placed on community empowerment and capacity building in LEADER I and II in Wales, as well as the active participation of community representatives and other partners in LAGs, was further characterised by researchers as a strong commitment to using LEADER to strengthen bottom-up planning, democratisation and inclusive governance that was again noted to be less evident in other states. Müller (2001), for example, reported that attention to bottom-up approaches was more extensive in Welsh LAGs than in German LAGs, whilst Derkzen (2010) considered rural partnership-working in Wales more broadly to exhibit a stress on legitimacy and the inclusion of civil society in rural development that was absent in the Netherlands. Yet, in a later comparison of LEADER in Wales and Spain, Navarro et al. (2016) reach the reverse conclusion, finding that LAG managers in Wales were less likely than their counterparts in Andalusia to consider

that LEADER had contributed to the decentralisation of decision-making in their area (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Responses of LAG managers in Wales and Andalusia to the question 'Has the Local Action Group (LAG) contributed to the decentralization of decision-making in its area?', from Navarro et al. (2016)

	All responses	%	Wales	%	Andalusia	%
Yes	24	55.8	4	36.4	20	62.5
No	10	23.3	3	27.3	7	21.9
No opinion	5	11.6	3	27.3	2	6.3
No answer	3	7.0	0	0	3	9.4
'Yes & No'	1	2.3	1	9.1	0	0.0
Total	43	100.0	11	100.0	32	100.0

6.9 It is notable that the positive attributes of LEADER in Wales commended in early academic studies concerned *process* rather than *outcomes*, despite Shucksmith's (2000) observation that "most UK LEADER groups have pursued job creation and other similar outputs and only a few have emphasized process goals" (p 212) (though Shucksmith cites SPARC as one of the exceptions). This tendency in the literature may be explained in part by timescales, with most of the papers concerned published during the first few years of LEADER when material impacts may not have been evident, but it also reflects the difficulty presented by the innovative methodology of LEADER for evaluation.

6.10 The challenge of evaluation was elaborated by Midmore (1998) in a paper that discussed the LEADER approach as a transnational scheme but was largely illustrated by Welsh examples. Reflecting on LEADER I, Midmore argued that whilst the scheme "may be deemed a success on the basis of the remarkable diversity of local rural development activity that it involved, networking and (more markedly) monitoring and evaluation was much less effective" (p 413). Issues arose from the inclusion of process goals that could not be easily tracked with quantitative metrics, the absence of appropriate small-area statistics for socio-economic indicators that mapped on to the territories of LAGs, and difficulty of disentangling the causal effects of LEADER from those of other interventions and broader socio-economic processes (exacerbated, it could be added, by the fact that several organisations hosting Welsh LAGs in LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER+ obtained funding from multiple programmes, as Derkzen (2010) notes for Cadwyn Clwyd).

6.11 In response to these challenges, Midmore advocated a dynamic approach with evaluation ongoing throughout the period of LEADER funding, not only at the end, and involving a wider range of engagement activities that including qualitative assessments. For example, Midmore noted that experimental approaches to evaluation of Antur Teifi and SPARC in LEADER I had included recording and analysis of documents, observation at meetings and interviews with participants and beneficiaries (Midmore et al. 1994; Venus 1995). These methods, Midmore suggests, allowed "both insight into the process of rural development and interaction with it, improving the management of the project and its effectiveness whilst remaining effectively external, and thus credible" (p 421). As such, Midmore recommended that "evaluation should be integral to local rural development projects" (p 409).

6.12 Subsequent LEADER schemes have integrated evaluation and dynamic and qualitative methods have been used in evaluation of other LAGs in both Wales and elsewhere (Bosworth et al. 2016; High and Nemes 2007; Moseley 2003), however the problem of adequately assessing the material impact of LEADER projects has persisted and has resonated with experiences in other parts of Europe. Márquez et al. (2005), for instance, in Spain have remarked that "rural development policies in LEADER areas have had mixed results, a fact that has been perceived but not sufficiently evaluated" (p 138, quoted by Navarro et al. 2016), and Navarro et al. (2016) reported that the "perceived mixed results of LEADER contributed to the redefinition of its role in EU rural development policy from 2007" (p. 274).

6.13 Beyond issues of evaluation, research on LEADER in Wales during the early programme periods identified a number of limitations with, or constraints on, the approach. First, it was noted that the limited-term funding created discontinuities in support between programmes (Gardner 2011) and that requirements for match funding had been met through local government, which had constrained LAG autonomy by tying them more closely to local authority priorities (Shucksmith 2000). Moreover, both Bristow (1998) and Shucksmith (2000) commented that the restrictions following from reliance on match funding via local authorities had been exacerbated by cuts to council budgets, with Bristow for instance reporting that "local authority funding constraints [had] curtailed innovative food business activities" by SPARC (p 29).

6.14 Second, the capacity to act and efficacy of LAGs was also observed to be hindered by the complex institutional structure of Welsh local and regional governance. Thus, although Day (1998) argued that SPARC had acted as a facilitator for rural development by "placing itself at the centre of an institutional web, which crosses … sectoral divisions, connecting the local, and locally based concerns, with the wider regional, national and European frameworks of governance and regulation" (p 101), Midmore (1998) was more cautious, noting that,

> One major obstruction encountered by the LEADER scheme has been, paradoxically, as a result of their horizontal, integrated orientation. In the context of state and regional administrations, organised in predominantly hierarchical, sectoral order, this has caused difficulties in unravelling complexities and also generating insecurity. (p 423)

6.15 Edwards et al. (2000) similarly warned that "much has been made of the capacity that partnerships have to blend 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' initiatives", but "tensions do remain in the working out of statutory and community involvement" (p. 35), with Derzken (2008) concluding that "the possibility of influencing Welsh rural development was highly dependent on the willingness of the local authority to share knowledge and decision making within … rural partnership[s]" (p 132).

6.16 Bristow (2000) in particular highlighted the absence of a single coordinating body for rural development as a limiting factor in the capacity of LEADER I and LEADER II, leading to divergent priorities being introduced by different streams for match funding:

> No single agency within the region has the authority to direct and fund the actions of all the other agencies, such that there exists both fragmented financial sponsorship and a competitive culture for bidding for the necessary funds. The problem is particularly acute for the LEADER groups in Wales which, since local government reorganization, have seen a higher proportion of their funding handed over to local authority control. (p 29).

6.17 This issue was however alleviated by devolution and the strategic role subsequently played by the Welsh Government and its agencies, as anticipated by Bristow (1998).

6.18 Third, the academic literature has also identified unevenness in the delivery and impact of LEADER in Wales, at least during its early periods, with Gardner (2011)

observing that “the majority of rural Wales has not benefitted from all of the successive programmes” (p 99). The competitive format of LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER+ led to targeted coverage, with for example only four out of 14 applications from Wales for LEADER I being awarded funding, and also advantaged bids from established organisations already active in rural development activity (a factor also observed for LEADER in England by Moseley 2003). Asby and Midmore (1996) and Edwards (1998) describe how the successful operation of Antur Teifi and SPARC as LAGs in LEADER I was enabled by their previous community development work prior to LEADER, with Shucksmith (2000) commenting that “when LEADER arrived SPARC was clear in its vision and confident in its ability” (p 212).

6.19 Furthermore, the presence of a LEADER LAG and the capacity-building work undertaken with local communities further reinforced the competitive advantage of communities and organisations in LEADER areas in bidding for further rural development funds. Edwards et al. (2000), in their review of partnership-working and rural regeneration in Mid Wales and Shropshire found that groups in areas that had been involved in LEADER I were better equipped to bid for funding and to adapt to partnership-working than those in other rural areas, and quoted one funding agency representative who commented that,

> LEADER areas are notorious for this … you can almost plot them on a map in terms of applications that they make to a whole range of bodies because they are confident, and they have also developed ‘style’ and experience. (Director of a funding body, quoted by Edwards et al., 2000, p 15)

6.20 Midmore (1998) similarly contended that “the emphasis on grant giving by some LAGs, at least initially, benefits those already advantaged and able to make investments” (p. 423), thus consolidating inequalities within LEADER areas. Accordingly, Edwards et al. (2000) concluded that the competitive policy mechanisms promoted by LEADER and similar schemes, “results in ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ – some areas become rich in regeneration schemes, others are poor – and the process is cumulative and reinforcing” (pp 45-46).

6.21 Fourth, whilst LAGs in Wales were commended in the academic literature as role-models in relation to their approach to community engagement and capacity-building, researchers also noted that other aspects of the LEADER methodology were less fully embraced, notably transnational networking. Although Moseley

(2003) and Müller (2001) both provide examples of Welsh LAGs participating in transnational exchanges and visits, Müller's research found transnational networking to be a low priority for LEADER I groups in Wales, noting the view of one LAG representative that "local projects offer better value for money and should thus be considered as the key means to achieve the best results for local development" (p. 210). However, networking between LAGs in Wales has in contrast been identified as best practice in the academic literature, especially following the mainstreaming of LEADER in 2007 and expansion of coverage, with Brown (2010) commenting that "Wales was quick off the mark" in forming the Wales Rural Network in 2009 and facilitating learning between established and new LEADER participants.

6.22 Many of the issues and limitations identified in early academic studies focused on LEADER I and LEADER II were subsequently addressed in modifications to the programme in LEADER+ and especially following mainstreaming in 2007, but arguably at a cost. As early as the late 1990s, Bristow (2000) had warned that an increased role for local authorities in managing bids from LAGs for (then) Welsh Office funds was "threatening to institutionalise LEADER activities through pressure to conform to and deliver local authority priorities" (p 29). Shucksmith (2000) similarly argued that "a 'capturing' of LEADER by other agencies and authorities has been a feature of LEADER II in many parts of the UK" and that this was "hindering truly endogenous development" (p 213). A review by the Wales Rural Observatory (2004) further concluded that a strengthening of top-down controls in LEADER had constrained local discretion, such that "communities are not as involved as they wanted to be" (p 34).

6.23 The mainstreaming of LEADER after 2007 introduced more strategic coordination and consistency of approach and extended coverage to all parts of Wales eligible for support from the Rural Development Programme (RDP). However, it also more firmly embedded LEADER in the public sector, introduced greater top-down steerage and added to the complexity of bidding for funding (Brown 2010). As a Welsh Government official cited by the Carnegie UK Trust report acknowledged, the new programme exhibited a "tension between the flexibility of the LEADER approach and the regulations governing the Rural Development Plan" (Brown 2010, p 13).

6.24 LAG managers surveyed by Navarro et al. (2016) identified the mainstreaming of LEADER as a watershed that had shifted strategic emphasis away from participation and local autonomy, with one quoted as remarking that decentralised decision-making had been supported “only for LEADER I, II and +, and less so far the [Rural] Development Programme in the period 2007/2013” (p 277). Navarro et al. noted that eight of the 11 LAG managers in Wales responding to their survey had mentioned “excessive interventions” by the Welsh Government in open comments on a question on perceptions of the operation of the RDP, and that “seven respondents criticised the loss of the characteristics and philosophy of the LEADER approach since integration into the RDP” (p 280).

6.25 These comments should however by qualified by recognition that there is very limited empirical evidence available from academic research about the operation or impact of LEADER in Wales after mainstreaming in 2007, with Navarro et al. (2016) being the only notable study. Moreover, in spite of the concerns expressed about the perceived dilution of the LEADER philosophy, respondents to Navarro et al.’s survey were broadly positive about the autonomy enjoyed by the LAG to make decisions and the contribution to local decision-making (Table 6.2), as well as about their ability to engage participants from different bodies and backgrounds.

Table 6.2: Perceptions of LAG managers in Wales and Andalusia on autonomy and contributions to local decision making, from Navarro et al. (2016) (Wales n = 11, Andalusia n = 32)

	How much autonomy has the LAG had to make decisions? Scale 1 (none) to 5 (total)	To what extent had local decision-making been enhanced by your LAG? Scale 1 (none) to 5 (total)
Mean: all responses	3.8	4.1
Mean: Welsh LAGs	3.6	3.7
Mean: Andalusian LAGs	3.9	4.2
Standard deviation	0.8	0.8
Mode	4	4
No answer	5	0

6.26 One of the most notable achievements of LEADER in Wales that is apparent from the academic literature is in capacity-building, not only of rural communities but also of the organisations involved in the delivery of LEADER. Derkzen (2008), Edwards et al. (2000) and Gardner (2011) all provide examples of organisations hosting

LAGs that expanded the scope of their operations through bidding to additional funding sources; supporting, joining or leading other partnerships; and in some cases achieving sustainability to continue independently of LEADER funding after a programme end. The Carnegie UK Trust report highlighted this as a distinctive feature of LEADER in Wales, drawing a contrast with England where "very little use was made of a capacity building approach" (Brown 2010, p 5). In particular, the report identified Menter Môn as an "outstanding example of a LAG's development into a multi-functional local development group that delivered more or less the complete range of community-based and rural economic development services – including LEADER – on contract to the Welsh Assembly Government and other bodies" (pp 4-5), but lamented that "very few LAGs in the UK went down the exemplary road trodden by Menter Môn" (p 4).

Aspects of the LEADER approach most necessary for addressing problems faced by rural communities in Wales

6.27 The LEADER approach was introduced by the European Commission in 1991 to address concerns that the structural conditions of rural regions, including peripherality and decreasing employment in agriculture and other primary sectors combined with slow growth of alternative employment, limited their capacity to compete within the newly created Single Market. As such the aim of LEADER was to increase the competitiveness of rural areas through an experimental approach that considered rural development mainly as territorial development (Van Depoele 2003). In contrast to previous sectoral and regional development policies, the LEADER methodology was built around seven major innovative components (Van Depoele 2003, p 82):

- The bottom-up approach;
- The establishment of a territorial strategy;
- The integrated and multi-sectoral approach;
- Enhancing the local potential;
- The horizontal and private-public partnership;
- A decentralized and complete management of funding;
- Networking

6.28 The innovative approach embodied in these principles was subsequently characterised in the academic literature as 'neo-endogenous rural development',

utilising external funding to stimulate development using and adding value to resources found within a territory according to locally-determined priorities (Moseley 2003; Ray 2000, 2006). In this it contrasted to the exogenous approach to development that relied on attracting inward investment and which formed a key component of mainstream regional development strategies that were criticized for poorly serving rural areas.

6.29 The framing of the challenges facing rural regions and the critique of exogenous approaches resonated strongly in rural Wales. Rural parts of Wales had experienced long-term structural challenges from the decreasing significance of farming and traditional industries, poor infrastructure and out-migration (Woods 2010). From the 1960s, the UK Government had attempted to address these challenges through top-down interventions, with an emphasis on attracting inward investment. Although this strategy had achieved some success, especially for localised growth poles, it also attracted criticism for introducing "new, and often poorly interconnected, forms of employment, which may bear no relation to pre-existing activity" and which "rather than meeting the needs of local people directly … led to the in-migration of newcomers who have been more immediately adapted to the requirements of the new economic order" (Day 1998, p 99; see also Day and Hedger 1990, Lovering 1983). As such, LEADER and its emphasis on community-led endogenous development was welcomed by commentators such as Day (1998) as a more *appropriate* form of development for rural Wales.

6.30 The emphasis in the LEADER approach on integrated rural development also spoke to increasing recognition in Wales of the interconnection of social, economic, cultural and environmental problems and the need for cross-sectoral perspectives (Bristow 2000). Over the period since the introduction of LEADER, academic research has further elaborated the challenges facing rural Wales encompassing not only economic adjustment and competitiveness, but also issues around access to services, demographic change, deprivation and hidden rural poverty, housing, the pressures of in-and out-migration, and transport, as well as environmental sustainability and the resilience of Welsh language communities (Burholt and Sardini 2018; Cowell 2011; Day 2011; Doheny and Milbourne 2017; Higgs and Langford 2013; Kitchen and Marsden 2011; Milbourne 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Moles and Radcliffe 2011; Shergold and Parkhurst 2012; Wales Rural Observatory 2005, 2006, 2007, 2013; Williams and Doyle 2016). Studies have also emphasized the

differentiated character of rural Wales, including the particular challenges faced by small towns and by 'deep rural localities', requiring place-based interventions that fit with the territorial approach of LEADER (Wales Rural Observatory 2009; Woods 2011).

6.31 More recent academic studies and literature have identified new challenges arising from the UK's withdrawal from the European Union and, latterly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and control measures. Projected potential impacts of Brexit arise from changes in policy regimes, including farm support, changed market conditions with restricted access to EU markets and potential increased competition for domestic markets following subsequent trade deals, and disruption to labour supply in sectors including care, hospitality and food processing resulting from new immigration policies (CWPS/CRE 2018; Dwyer 2018; Woods 2020a, 2020b). The COVID-19 outbreak has further reshaped questions about the future of rural Wales, both through the direct impact of the lockdown(s) on businesses and the projected increase in unemployment. This has highlighted inequalities such as access to digital infrastructure and healthcare and raised issues about affordable housing and dependency on tourism and revived old debates about the accountability of economic development strategies to local communities (Woods 2020b).

6.32 Whilst the academic literature has not directly discussed the role of LEADER with respect to these challenges going forward, the evidence presented in the literature on LEADER in Wales allows a number of key facets of the approach to be identified as important principles or strategies for effectively addressing the problems facing rural Wales identified above.

6.33 First, the emphasis on **endogenous development** in the LEADER approach is a necessary response to the uncertainties of global economic networks, capital flows and trade connections in the context of both Brexit and a post-COVID global recession. Endogenous development projects supported by LEADER not only in Wales but throughout Europe, as documented by Bristow (2000), Brown (2010), Moseley (2003) and others, offer numerous examples of initiatives that can add value to local agricultural and craft products, support business development in more remote rural localities, strengthen the benefits to rural communities of tourism, and develop creative industries that may provide more opportunities for retaining young people in rural areas. In particular, the long record of LEADER LAGs in Wales in supporting local food production and promoting local produce (Bristow 2000;

Moseley 2003) connects with renewed calls to rebuild local food systems as response to changing market conditions post-Brexit, the precarities of global food supply chains revealed by COVID-19 and as a core element in the foundational economy.

6.34 Second, the centrality of **capacity-building** to the LEADER approach, may be considered to be critical to addressing rural problems, whether understood as; strengthening community resilience to adapt to future pandemics, climate change impacts or economic shocks, at the level of business development and individual skills enhancement that reflect needs to diversify rural economies away from dependency on single employers, the public sector or industries such as tourism; to enable rural businesses and residents to take advantage of opportunities from new technologies; and to provide more routes for young people to remain in rural communities or to return after education. Previous schemes run by LAGs in Wales focused on business advice and training, IT networking, and refurbishing buildings for community use recorded by Gardner (2011) and Moseley (2003), as well as the early community capacity-building work of groups such as Antur Teifi and SPARC reported by Asby and Midmore (1995), Midmore (1998) and Shucksmith (2000), provide evidence for this prospective contribution.

6.35 Third, the **territorial** focus of the LEADER approach resonates with emphasis on the need for place-based approaches in rural and regional development and with the principles of The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Jones et al. 2020). Powell et al (2018), in a review of evidence on ‘what works in tackling rural poverty’ for the Wales Centre for Public Policy, flag the territorial approach of LEADER as an example of area-wide strategic programming that can achieve poverty alleviation and social inclusion goals through targeted investment. In particular, the territorial approach offers an important mechanism for addressing the specific challenges faced by majority Welsh-speaking rural communities in relation to the appropriateness of economic opportunities, competition for housing and dilution of local culture, building on previous LEADER-supported projects including work by South Gwynedd LAG in LEADER II highlighted by Moseley (2003) and the correspondence of endogenous development and territorial culture emphasized by Day (1998).

6.36 Fourth, although not a core principle, LEADER has since its inception consistently incorporated the integration of economic and **environmental sustainability**, as

represented in projects by Wales LAGs recorded in the literature including maintenance of footpaths and farm environmental audits, and local conservation initiatives (Day 1998; Moseley 1995, 2003). Mechanisms to support such community-focused environmental projects are important to aligning future rural development with imperatives to reduce carbon emissions and enhance sustainable land management, and with policy objectives to promote a 'green recovery' and 'nature-based solutions'.

6.37 Fifth, the underlying core principle of **bottom-up development and community engagement** in the LEADER approach remains important and has been given renewed significance by recent debates over territorial inequalities, tourism and the accountability of economic development strategies prompted by experiences in the COVID-19 crisis. Debates around tourism in parts of rural Wales, identified in recent research on rural-urban dynamics (Woods 2020a, 2020b) exemplify a tension that has developed from imbalances within the LEADER model: the growth of tourism in rural Wales has been a notable success of endogenous development, supported by projects implemented by LAGs, but the perception that local communities have no influence over the promotion or regulation of tourism arguably reflects the dilution of local autonomy and direction within LEADER noted by Navarro et al. (2016) and Shucksmith (2000). The restoration of the emphasis on community engagement that was prominent in Welsh LAGs in LEADER I and II, and the revived use of community appraisals or surveys to identify priorities for rural development, may be regarded as a necessary step to ensure inclusive responses to the problems facing rural Wales.

Aspects of the LEADER model that are difficult to implement in rural Wales

6.38 As noted above, the academic literature on LEADER in Wales whilst broadly positive about the LEADER approach and its achievements in rural Wales has also identified issues with implementation, obstacles and limitations. However, no case has been made in the academic literature that there are aspects of the LEADER model that are not applicable or less relevant in rural Wales, with evidence documented of the application of all the key principles outlined by Moseley (2003) and Van Depoele (2003) in examples from Welsh LAGs. Müller (2001) observed that less priority was afforded by Welsh LAGs to transnational networking, which was perceived as resource-intensive and less directly effective in achieving objectives than local action. However, Müller's evidence related only to activities in

LEADER I and she noted that the LAGs studied intended to increase transnational engagement in LEADER II with exploratory links made with LAGs in countries including Germany, Ireland and Sweden, and no assessment has been made in academic research of transnational networking by LAGs in Wales in subsequent programming periods.

6.39 Many of the constraints and shortcomings reported in the academic literature, especially in relation to LEADER I and LEADER II, followed more from the structural context in which LAGs operated rather than limitations of the LEADER approach itself, and some were addressed through the refinement of the scheme in subsequent rounds. However, Bristow (2000), Shucksmith (2000), Brown (2010) and Navarro et al. (2016) all identify a tension within the LEADER model between principles of local autonomy and bottom-up planning and governance requirements for strategic coordination, consistency of delivery, and accountability for match funding. This tension has been addressed in Wales over time through the strengthening of top-down coordination and regulation, which has arguably compromised adherence to the principles of local autonomy and bottom-up planning but does not necessarily mean that these principles are no longer present in the LEADER approach in Wales or that they are not relevant.

6.40 Other reported issues with the implementation of LEADER in Wales and its impact are not necessarily limited to the LEADER model, nor to the context of rural Wales, but reflect broader challenges for the application of endogenous development and partnership-working in rural regions. Three key issues stand out from the literature.

Breadth of representation

6.41 A partnership approach is identified as a key component of the LEADER model by Moseley (2003) and Van Depoele (2003), and LAGs in Wales in LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER+ operated according to a tripartite framework, with representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors. However, maintaining breadth of participation has been challenging. Navarro et al. (2016) found that LAG managers in Wales reported uneven involvement by different social groups (Table 6.3) and LAG managers in Wales were less likely than their counterparts in Andalusia to agree that LEADER had helped to increase the participation of marginalized groups in local decision-making, with only three out of eleven respondents concurring. Moreover, five of the 11 Welsh LAG managers stated that there were additional participants who should be represented, “with target groups

cited including young people, women, entrepreneurs, small businesses, the private sector, county voluntary councils, public sector organisations who can be enablers for change, young farmers, social associations, new settlers, owners of large forestry estates, educational, cultural and sport sectors, and groups at risk of social exclusion" (Navarro et al. 2016, p 279).

Table 6.3: LAG Manager assessment of the significance of involvement of different groups in local action groups (on a scale of 1 (no involvement) to 5 (significant involvement)) from Navarro et al. (2016)

	Average (all LAGs)	Average Welsh LAGs	Average Andalusian LAGS
Farmers	3.3	3.3	3.3
Non-agricultural professionals	3.2	4.3	2.8
Entrepreneurs	3.9	3.6	4.0
Retired and unemployed people	2.5	4.2	1.8
Young people	2.3	1.6	2.5
Women	3.7	4.1	3.6
Co-operatives	3.0	2.4	3.2
Local societies and associations	3.9	4.0	3.9
Others	4.4	5.0	4.4

6.42 The issue of representation in partnerships has not been confined to LEADER, with Derkzen and Bock (2009) and Edwards et al. (2000) both also identifying imbalances in the composition of other rural partnerships in Wales. Neither are the issues limited to rural partnerships, however the rural context is reported to exacerbate some problems. Edwards et al. (2000), for example, note that achieving business representation can be hindered by the fragmentation of the private sector with many small businesses, such that as a partner representative on a LEADER group observed, "to say you can get somebody to 'represent' the business sector is actually a different issue … because they represent *their* business and there aren't necessarily the [wider] structures there" (p 17).

6.43 Moreover, as Edwards et al. (2000) comment, "there is no automatic means by which the simple act of forming a partnership produces benefits of coordination, shared resources, greater legitimacy or enhanced capacity to act" (p 11). Both Derkzen and Bock (2009) and Edwards et al. (2000) observe inequalities in the roles and influence of partners, as well as their capacity to engage, which again

may be accentuated in rural contexts by the pull of demands from different partnerships on a limited number of sectoral representatives as well as the costs and time involved in travelling to partnership meetings. These factors, Derkzen and Bock (2009) and Edwards et al. (2000) concluded, ultimately served to reinforce the influence of public sector representatives in partnerships.

Community amination

6.44 The engagement of local communities and articulation of community-led strategies of development have been emphasised in the academic literature as key attributes of the LEADER model, yet papers have also drawn attention to difficulties in mobilizing inclusive community participation. Gardner (2011), for example, comments that LAGs are "commonly described in some evaluations of LEADER as 'owned by the community' [but] have in practice been characterized by only very limited 'community participation' … with accountability largely flowing upwards to administrators and state bureaucracy rather than downwards to ordinary citizens" (p 97). Navarro et al. (2016) relatedly identified several social groups, including young people and groups at risk of social inclusion, but also in-migrants, as being under-represented in LAG activities. Bosworth and Atterton (2004), in work in England, have argued that the limited participation of in-migrants means that LAGs can miss out on their skills and expertise, though the same case may be made for other under-represented groups. The mobilization of communities can also uneven geographically, with Edwards et al. (2000) noting the greater engagement of more middle-class commuter villages in rural partnerships (potentially including LAGs) compared with remoter communities, which may indicate middle class over-representation.

6.45 Asby and Midmore (1996), reflecting on the experience of SPARC in and prior to LEADER I identify a number of key issues that SPARC attempted to address and put into practice:

> Firstly, in order to become involved and to have confidence in a process, people need to understand fully the process and where they fit in to it. Secondly, people want involvement on a village basis, as groupings of villages have been perceived to dilute efforts. Thirdly, public meetings alone are not a satisfactory way of involving the community because of various aspects of the group dynamics involved. Participating in and manipulating public meetings is a skill which favours the articulate and those with time on their hands; people working

shift work, young mothers and others can be excluded ... Fourthly, a wide range of people, with energy and enthusiasm, are required to ensure that at different stages of projects, as many local skills as possible are available." (pp 115-116)

6.46 Nevertheless, SPARC also encountered problems of inclusive community animation in LEADER I, as Midmore (1998) revealed in quoting as an example of qualitative evaluation a community member complaining residents of council housing in the village had not engaged with the process. Furthermore, the form of intensive and detailed community engagement outlined by Asby and Midmore (1996) relies on conditions that have arguably been compromised in subsequent development of LEADER in Wales, including the dilution of local autonomy as central coordination has tightened, but also the expansion of the territories covered by LAGs, particularly with the realignment of LAG areas with county council boundaries after 2007 (Navarro et al. 2016). The geography of rural Wales with a dispersed pattern of small settlements can be seen to militate against the intensive village-specific mobilization described by Asby and Midmore (1996), which is easier to implemented in smaller, more tightly-defined territories covered in LAGs in LEADER I and LEADER II than in the larger territories of LAGs after 2007.

Territorial limitations

6.47 The area-based approach is a further key aspect of the LEADER model that has been highlighted in the academic literature as an effective mechanism for community empowerment, stimulating economic development and tailoring strategies to local needs. However, Bristow (2000) also identified limitations to the territorial focus, including constraints on coordinated strategic action across rural Wales, hindering connections to resources and markets outside the area, and an emphasis on relatively small-scale actions that may be restricted in their effect in countering larger structural process. Thus, Bristow (2000) argues, "a bottom-up emphasis based on local empowerment is likely to lead to more diverse and embedded activities, but may not be sufficient on its own to buttress the rural economy against the pressures of globalization" (p 29). This observation can be suggested to have gained heightened significance with subsequent research pointing to increased vulnerability of the economy of rural Wales to global restructuring, including the relocation of manufacturing plants from small rural towns to east Asia (Woods 2010), with potentially further exposure possible from the

adoption of more *laissez-faire* trade policies following Brexit (CWPS/CRE 2018; Dwyer 2018).

The extension of Community-Led Local Development beyond rural Wales

6.48 LEADER is the best known and most extensive application of the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach in the European Union Structural Funds, but the CLLD methodology has also been implemented in two programmes which are the URBAN community initiative (1994-1999 and 2000-2006) and the EQUAL initiative (2000-2006), and since 2014 has been mainstreamed in the delivery of EU Cohesion Funds (European Commission 2014; Servillo 2019). In the 2014-2020 programming period, CLLD has been implemented through LEADER local action groups under the EAFRD and Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAG), but also as a generally available mechanism within European Regional Development Funds and the European Social Fund (European Commission 2014). The approach has been delivered in the programming period through over 3,300 local action groups across Europe, around a third of which are located in urban or industrial areas not covered by the EAFRD (Servillo 2019).

6.49 In Wales, CLLD has only historically been implemented in rural areas through the Rural Development Programme. In more recent years however the approach has been introduced into the sea fisheries sector in Wales with the creation of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) programme (2007-2013) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) programme (2014-2020).

6.50 The potential to extend the CLLD approach to urban areas and the Valleys has been floated as part of the preparation of a new post-Brexit regional economic framework. CLLD has not been studied through academic research in non-rural parts of Wales, and no academic literature has to date directly engaged with the possibility of extending its coverage. However, a number of considerations can be extrapolated from the literature on LEADER in Wales, academic studies of CLLD in urban contexts elsewhere in Europe, and research on other community-focused initiatives in Wales such as Communities First (though noting these such schemes have not strictly applied the CLLD model).

6.51 Several of the key attributes of CLLD as embodied in the LEADER approach could equally benefit urban areas, and indeed in some case have previously been

adopted in urban policy, including bottom-up planning, an integrated and multi-sectoral approach, horizontal partnership-working and networking. Studies of projects in other states as part of the URBAN initiative observed positive outcomes for focusing community action and addressing issues of urban deprivation and social exclusion (Carpenter 2006; Murtagh 2001; Murtagh and McKay 2003).

6.52 Equally, research on the URBAN initiative has also identified similar challenges in the application of CLLD in an urban context as reported for LEADER, including in the literature on Wales, with effective partnership-working, inclusive participation and coordination with other agencies and institutions (Carpenter 2006; Murtagh 2001; Murtagh and McKay 2003). Carpenter (2006), for instance, argues that a critical evaluation lesson of the URBAN I programme was that local action groups should be part of city-wide strategies to address urban deprivation.

6.53 Similarly, issues observed with the mobilization of community animation in LEADER are also likely to be encountered in urban development (as research on Communities First projects in urban areas also indicates (Dicks 2014; Murphy et al. 2018), and may indeed be exacerbated by the urban context. For example, urban neighbourhoods may be less cohesive than rural communities and the greater spatial separation of social groups in urban areas may reinforce inequalities in the capacity of communities to engage with the opportunities of CLLD.

6.54 The territorial aspect of CLLD may also present challenges when translated to urban environments, especially if applied at sub-city scales where communities may be less clearly defined and delimited than rural communities, and where social and economic networks are arguably more integrated. Although Communities First has been delivered at ward level within urban areas of Wales, studies have concluded that it has been most effective in building social capital and achieving goals around social inclusivity, and less successful in terms of enhancing economic development (Adamson 2010; Dicks 2014; Hincks and Robson 2010).

6.55 Relatedly, Bristow's (1998) critique of the capacity of the LEADER approach to counter the impacts of globalization are amplified in relation to the urban economy. Indeed, of the various components of CLLD, it is arguably the emphasis on endogenous development that might be most difficult to replicate in urban contexts. Endogenous development projects by LEADER LAGs recorded in the academic literature have tended to valorize distinctively rural resources, such as agricultural produce, landscape, the natural environment and cultural heritage, and it is perhaps

not immediately apparent whether an equivalent range of endogenous resources may be available for mobilization in urban neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the potential economic impact of small-scale projects of this nature (for instance in job creation) are likely to be more significant in rural communities than in more populous urban areas, where deprivation may be linked to the loss of major employers that had been embedded in national and transnational networks. As such, whilst Day (1998) presented LEADER as an antidote to the tendency of inward investment to create jobs in rural areas that were ill-matched to the skills of local residents, the reverse may be true in urban areas where the skills and experiences of residents may be better attuned to the opportunities afforded by inward investment by large employers rather than the mobilization of endogenous development.

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7. Grey literature outside of Wales review findings

Summary of Evaluation Findings in Other Parts of the UK

England

7.1 An evaluation of the application of LEADER in England between 2007 and 2013 was carried out by the University of Lincoln on behalf of the Rural Communities Policy Unit at Defra (Annibal et al, 2015). The evaluation found that the majority of LEADER activity in England during this period fell under Axis 3, focusing on social and economic development, tourism and quality of life in rural areas.

7.2 The evaluation concluded that measuring the contribution of LEADER to national rural development is extremely challenging, largely due to the absence of a common approach for measuring the outcomes resulting from LEADER. Measuring LEADER's contribution to rural development was further exacerbated by the LEADER scheme under evaluation "straddle[ing] two different national strategies for economic development", and there is an absence of consistent national rural economic development targets in England. Despite the challenges of assessing impact, an unpublished Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study for the 2007-2014 LEADER Axis programme in England found that every £1 spent through LEADER generated £3 of value (ADAS et al. 2016).

7.3 Reflecting the paucity of evidence around outcomes, the evaluation focused primarily on process, and the determinants of effective delivery. The research found that self-determination in terms of areas of activity and reporting procedures have a big impact, and the continuity of structures and LAG membership from previous programmes are also key determinants of success. Maintaining Local Delivery Strategies as 'live' documents and seeking financial support from accountable bodies were also identified as producing better outcomes.

Scotland

7.4 An initial process evaluation for LEADER 2014-2020 in Scotland was published in 2018. The evaluation drew on data collected through programme management processes and qualitative engagement with LAGs to assess the performance of the programme at an interim stage.

7.5 The evaluation found that LEADER has had an impact in a number of outcome areas. Culturally, LEADER has had a positive impact on community life, traditions

and heritage, social infrastructure and cohesion, and the provision of services for cultural and leisure activities. In other areas, the evaluation also found that the programme has contributed to the preservation of Scotland's natural environment, and contributed to the economic development of rural areas of Scotland, including investing in tourism, crafts, farm diversification and small businesses. There is also some evidence of projects leading to better knowledge and skills, innovation and cooperation among rural community and business networks.

7.6 In addition to the process evaluation for LEADER 2014-2020, the Scottish Government commissioned a report considering the impact of LEADER since its introduction in Scotland in 1991, and the potential role of the programme post-Brexit. This research found strong agreement among stakeholders that "the bottom-up approach, the LAGs and the area-based LDS are the key components of the LEADER approach" and had been fundamental to the successes of the programme in Scotland (Atterton et al. 2020). The research found that these structures have enabled and empowered local communities, built local capacity among rural development networks, and supported a broad and deep range of projects that would not have happened otherwise. Longer-term benefits of these projects include creating and safeguarding employment, local economic and community development, improved connectivity and wider community impacts.

7.7 At the same time, the report identifies a number of perceived weaknesses of the programme's delivery in Scotland. There is a strong perception that as LEADER became part of the Scottish RDP in 2007, the bureaucratic burden of the programme became heavier, with the bureaucratic burden disproportionate to the size and nature of LEADER applicants and projects. There is also a perception that accountable bodies were left in a vulnerable position, taking on all the risk of the project, discouraging innovation and decreasing local animation. Another challenge identified was that LEADER can be a 'closed shop' with funding repeatedly being allocated to the same organisations and others feeling that they cannot apply. Finally, staff turnover and changes to programme conditions between programmes was identified as a factor that limited the long-term learning achieved by LEADER in Scotland.

7.8 The report produced a set of recommendations for the future delivery of LEADER in Scotland. Short-term recommendations included:

- Giving as much control as possible to the LAGs and reducing top-down bureaucracy
- Increasing the emphasis placed on networking and sharing best practice
- Adopting an appropriate and consistent monitoring and evaluation approach across the programme
- Increased local participation in the development of the Local Development Strategies and regularly updating them as a 'living document'
- Clearer divisions of responsibility and working relationships between governance levels
- Better succession planning for LAGs and more engagement of young people by LAGs
- Multi-year funding cycles and flexible, clear match funding requirements.

7.9 Longer term recommendations for developing future CLLD programmes to succeed EU-funding in Scotland include:

- Retaining the LEADER approach, with the potential for stronger place-based working and strengthening links to Scottish Government's commitment to 'inclusive growth'
- More closely aligning CLLD objectives to Scottish Government priority areas
- Retaining a stress on 'bottom-up' development, while more effectively leveraging resources available to local areas though external networks, as well as local and central government
- Continuing to make the most of transnational networks (particularly the ENRD) and the Europe-wide expertise that has been generated during the history of LEADER
- Increasing the emphasis on capacity-building and animation, ensuring that CLLD does not become the sole preserve of actors and groups who already have social capital
- Focusing on community and enterprise development, as many stakeholders felt that adding farm diversification to LEADER has not been successful
- Maintaining innovation as a core principle underpinning CLLD.

Northern Ireland

7.10 In Northern Ireland, the LEADER programme has been evaluated as part of the Ex-post Evaluation of the 2007-2013 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2017). The report for the 2007-2013 programme period found that LEADER has added value to rural development in Northern Ireland in the following areas:

- Access to local knowledge and experience in membership of LAGs
- Leverage of voluntary inputs – the valuable investment of the LAG members in providing their time, expertise and local knowledge on a voluntary basis
- Building relationships between the public, private and voluntary/community sector and between partner councils
- The structure adopted brought local government involvement directly to the programme
- LEADER funding has enabled projects to go ahead that would not otherwise have done so.

7.11 However, the report found that the structure for delivering LEADER during the 2007-2013 programme period was overly bureaucratic, and that "the three-tier structure hindered rather than helped in terms of the effectiveness of delivery and also that the process did not allow for a "true" implementation of LEADER as the level of control and bureaucracy detracted from this" (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2017, p. 204). As a result of this, Local Development strategies were not always updated or treated as LAGs struggled to take true ownership of LEADER. Other factors negatively impacting delivery included struggles with recruitment for LAGs, and the changing economic circumstances during the programme period.

International literature on the effectiveness of LEADER

7.12 There is a considerable literature that identifies LEADER as a successful rural development initiative (Atterton et al 2020), although the same literature also identifies that measuring outcomes and understanding how value is generated over time remains a challenge across the EU (Bosworth et al. 2015).

7.13 The challenges of quantifying outcomes resulting from LEADER has resulted in a more qualitative approach to generating evidence and there is consensus around recognising the broader achievements and legacy of LEADER in this research

(Atterton et al, 2020, Bosworth et al, 2015). As a consequence of the relative paucity of evidence around outcomes and impact on rural development, much of the evaluation activity around LEADER has focused on the structures through which rural development is delivered. Annibal et al. (2013, p. 21) identified the true benefits of LEADER as "building capacity and triggering a 'mind shift' among local actors which, in turn, can help to improve the economic sustainability of rural areas over time". Other structural changes resulting from the investment in LEADER involve increasing awareness of rural development needs (Teilmann 2012) and cross-border and international co-operation between regional rural development networks (Atterton, 2020).

7.14 More negatively, the literature has also identified a number of criticisms of the way that LEADER has been operationalised in practice. Many of these criticisms have revolved around how genuinely LEADER has functioned as bottom-up rural development initiative. Barke and Newton's (1997) study of the application of LEADER in Andalucia questioned the extent to which governance structures and projects are truly endogenous to the regions in which they are taking place. A body of research has found that while the actors operationalising LEADER at different levels share a basic understanding of LEADER for the economic and social development of rural communities, many see LEADER as a tool for self-legitimisation (Perez, 2000). Drawing on Esparcia and Buciega's research into the application of LEADER in Spain, Perez identifies several actors, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and regional governments, have - in the absence of local leadership markedly shaped what are intended to be bottom-up processes.

7.15 Likewise, there is a body of research that questions the extent to which LEADER's structure itself mitigates against genuine bottom-up development. For example, Bruckmeier's (2000) study of the application of LEADER in a German context found that the context, operationalisation and evaluation of innovation was largely imposed on local actors by the EU rather than being an expression of meaningful local action or governance. Böcher (2008) suggests that this is a dynamic further exacerbated by the lack of democratic accountability of LAGs to local communities.

7.16 EU-wide evidence also indicates that there is a considerable degree of variation in how representative LAGs are of their communities. Storey's (1999) study of LEADER in Ireland found that "the level of 'community' involvement is spatially quite

variable" even within the Irish RDP (p. 314). Storey's research also raised questions about how genuinely 'bottom up' LEADER delivery in Ireland is. Consistent with Barke and Newton's suggestion that LEADER does not produce truly endogenous governance structures, Storey suggests that "what is vaunted as 'bottom-up' is perhaps more a top-down incorporation of local activism" (1999, p. 314). Other literature suggests that although intended to represent the diversity of the areas in which they operate, they typically exclude more marginal members of society (Scott 2004, Kola-Bezka 2020). Shucksmith (2000, 2012) has suggested that LAGs should engage specifically with excluded and marginal groups to ensure that LEADER does not exacerbate inequality in social capital within rural areas.

7.17 Atterton et al. (2020) identifies EU-wide evidence that excessive control and bureaucracy has presented a challenge. This reinforces criticisms that LEADER and other CLLD initiatives do not build capacity among less developed areas, and benefits organisations and areas that already have the capacity to engage with such initiatives (Bosworth et al. 2015). Moreover, there is an apparent mismatch between encouraging innovation at the local level and managing risk from above (Atterton et al. 2020). As a consequence, CLLD encounters something that Lukesch (2018) describes an 'an innovation paradox', where a programme that is by and large considered a success story, "has lost some of its vibrancy, having either become 'part of the furniture', e.g. in rural development and LEADER, or having been more or less forgotten in other fields". The more that LEADER and the LAGs delivering it become institutionalised, the greater the risk that they become the equivalent of local development agencies, and stifling innovation, both in terms of the projects supported by CLLD and the potential of the approach to foster innovation in governance.

7.18 Consistent with this point, there is EU-wide evidence that LAGs with the greatest self-determination in terms of areas of activity and reporting procedures have the biggest impact in developing local skills, local potential and strategic thinking (Atterton et al. 2018, Metis GmbH 2010).

Conclusion

7.19 The evaluation material generally shines a positive light on the LEADER process and progress, particularly in terms of areas meeting aims and spending against themes. However, these evaluation reports often come with a number of

recommendations for implementation either within the same LEADER period or moving forward into the next.

7.20 From this there are some key aspects highlighted within this review. Firstly, the ability of LEADER to meet its aims particularly in engaging harder to reach groups. Suggesting that more could be done to integrate diversity into strategic planning and implementation. Further to this, the unevenness of funding allocation to the various themes, particularly towards theme 4 within this current LEADER period again demonstrates a need to an even approach to all aspects within LEADER.

7.21 The effectiveness of the LAG was another key point within this review, with many areas noting a reduced interest or engagement from LAG members and often a reduced representation of sectors through LAG vacancies. As noted above this is of importance to the strategic implementation of LEADER and can impact on the delivery of the programme. There is also a need for further cooperation between LAGs and areas to ensure that LEADER is encouraging the sharing of best practice and learning.

7.22 Leading further into the governance of the LAGs, the approach of bottom up and top down working in combination can often take away the autonomy of the LAG and area to implement projects it feels are most suitable. This along with the perception that there are elements of risk aversion within LEADER which can lead decisions to often be based on more tried and tested schemes or projects, can affect the true nature of what LEADER is and what it stands for.

7.23 Another key aspect of LEADER is the difficulties often in measuring outputs. With impacts felt on a micro rather than macro scale and the ability to effectively measure impact within its current reporting and monitoring methods.

7.24 What this tells us is that although LEADER is a positive part of RDP and rural development more widely, moving forward there are a number of aspects to be developed and improved to ensure that rural communities are most effectively supported and allowed to develop.

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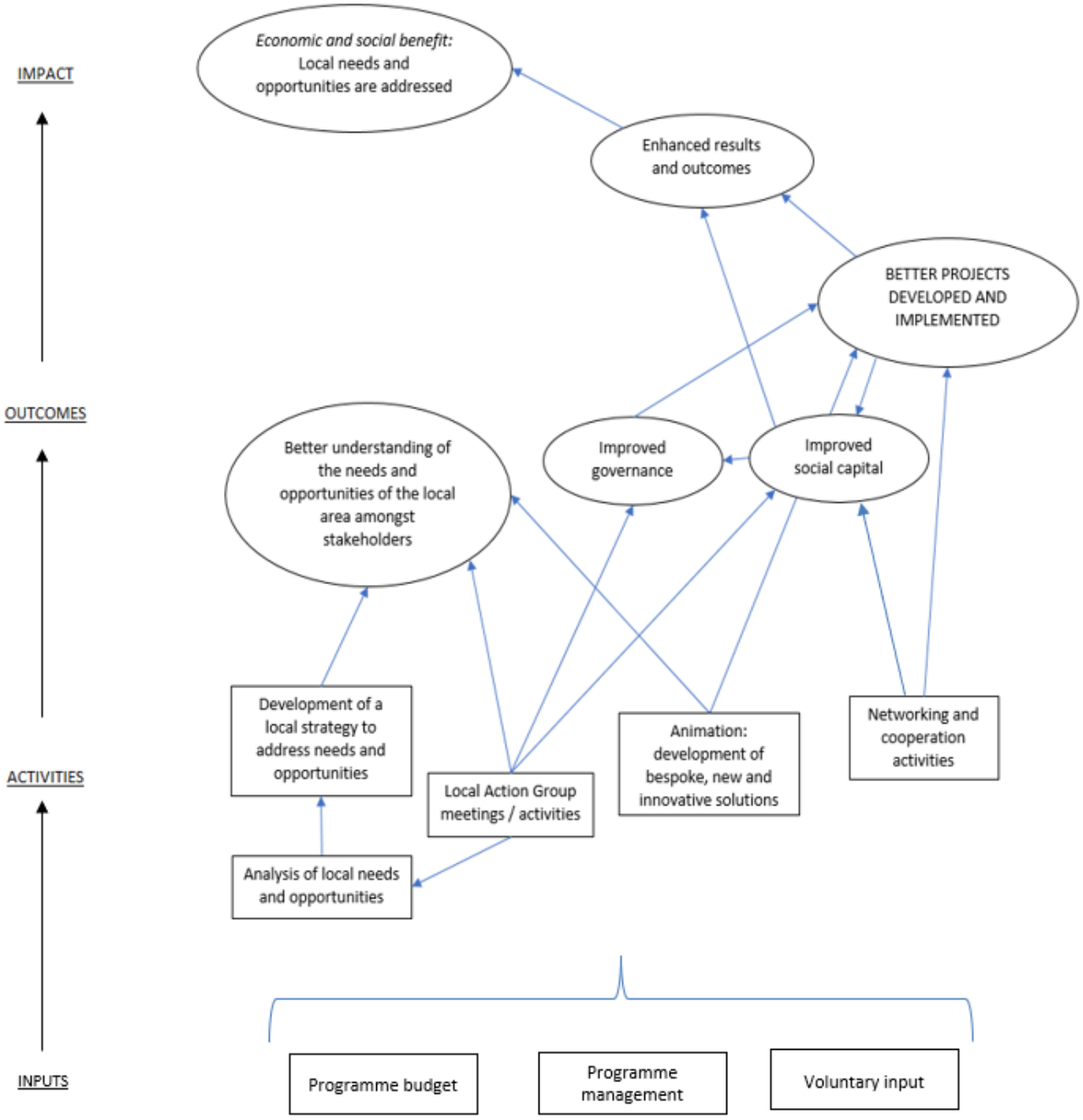
8. A Theory of Change for LEADER

8.1 A theory of change was developed for the LEADER approach in general as well as the 2014-2020 scheme as part of the evaluation process. Both the literature reviews and the findings of the scoping interviews fed into the development of the theory of change. In particular, the development of the theory of change drew upon the European Commission guidance on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD. [6]

[6] Guidelines Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD; European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, European Network for Rural Development (2017)

A basic theory of change for the LEADER approach in general



A linear theory of change for the LEADER scheme under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme

	↓ **Contextual factors and external influences** ↓ Programme budget | Programme themes | State aid restrictions | Match funding availability | Other support mechanisms (local and national) | Prevailing economic conditions | Prevailing local funding conditions (austerity, etc.)		
Inputs →	**Outputs (activities) →**	**Outcomes (results of activities) →**	**Impact (longer-term results)**

18 LAGs operating across Wales
 	
Total budget/investment: £47million
 	
Plus:
• Voluntary input by LAG members, etc.
• Welsh Government officials time and resource
	• LAG meetings and member activities outside the main meetings
	• Community and local stakeholder engagement/consultation
	• Animation activities - including idea/project development, sharing of learning and local networking
	• Delivery of and/or funding of projects (broken down by scheme theme)
	• Programme management/monitoring activities
	• Networking activities with other LAGs
	• Cooperation activities with other LAGs
		• Improved social capital
		  ○ Improvement in mutual support and trust
		  ○ Enhancement in participation
		  ○ Improved communication
		  ○ Enhanced capacity (knowledge, skills and information)
		• Improved local governance
		  ○ New governance practices
		  ○ Improved coordination
		  ○ Improved quality of interactions between institutions and between public and non-public stakeholders
		• Better projects → better results (in each scheme theme)
		• Project KPIs (see scheme themes)
		• Innovative thinking/piloting of projects and activities
		• Learning (and then sharing that learning (output)
			Improvements in the quality of life of the rural population as a result of 'fostering local development in rural areas' by enhanced:
			
			• Economic opportunities
			• Services and local infrastructure
			• Access to services
			
			Projects and ideas tested/piloted by LEADER are 'mainstreamed' generating the impact above.

Assumptions, barriers and enablers →	• Community/individuals willingness and ability to engage with activities • Community's ability to develop innovative project ideas/proposals • Awareness of the LEADER scheme/delivery organisation • Local and national key stakeholder support for the scheme • Knowledge and experience of the support team (delivering animation activities, etc.)	• Knowledge and experience of LAG members • 'New thinking' at a LAG level • Capacity in the local area to manage and deliver projects effectively • Knowledge and experience of the support team (delivering animation activities, etc.)	• Mainstream funding is available • Mainstream policy/funders have an awareness of projects and ideas piloted/tested as part of LEADER

9. The research questions set for the evaluation

Achievements of the programme

- What has the intervention achieved? What has been the nature, scale, timing and durability of any identified outputs, outcomes and impacts?

Strategic Fit

- To what extent does the use of the LEADER method fit strategically with the aims for this measure?
- To what extent do LEADER projects support Welsh Government's overall vision for Wales?
- How often and how centrally are Wales' LEADER themes addressed in LDSs and project proposals?
- Are LEADER projects consistent with the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015)?
- To what extent have LEADER projects successfully addressed the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes as part of their intervention (1. Equal Opportunities, Gender Mainstreaming and the Welsh Language).
- To what extent have LEADER projects supported the Welsh Government's Welsh language strategy commitments in Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers? In particular in mainstreaming the Welsh language within LEADER projects as well as supporting the socio-economic infrastructure of Welsh-speaking communities? (2. Sustainable Development and 3. Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion)?
- To what extent have LEADER projects addressed the European Commission's cross-cutting themes (1. Innovation 2. Environmental Sustainability and 3. Climate Change)?

Management of the programme

- Does the Welsh Government perform effectively as a Managing Authority for the scheme in the present period? In particular:
    - Have finance management decisions (such as the removal of State Aid cover) assisted in the achievement of LEADER's aims?
    - To what extent has the shift from a cross-Wales competitive process led to changes in project selection and outcomes / value for money?
    - Are existing monitoring and evaluation arrangements for LEADER fit for purpose?
    - How effective is the system for communication around LEADER? Does it facilitate timely and accessible information exchange? In particular, to what extent has the systematising of communication about projects (via

the Wales Rural Network's webpage and interactive map) led to enhanced opportunities for networking?
    - Are the responsibilities of the project coordinators, partnership, LAG, paying agency, and policy implementation teams within the MA clearly defined, understood and complementary to one another, including, to what extent has the payment and claims system assisted administrative bodies in making timely, straightforward and compliant payments?

Delivery of the programme

- How effective are the LAGs in delivering the LEADER principles? Including, but not limited to:
    - Are they of a suitable scale to identify the needs and opportunities specific to an area?[7]
    - Do suitable mechanisms exist for ensuring that they are competent and competitive?
    - Are they trusted by and open to all sectors of the community, including how often, and in what way they engage?
- What is the profile of individuals / bodies and of projects that are typically unsuccessful in gaining LEADER support? Do they succeed in gaining support elsewhere?
- Do the relationships between LAGs and the relevant administrative bodies function productively (for example in terms of facilitating innovation)?
- What has been the impact of requiring match funding? How much match funding has been secured from different types of sources, and what scale and types of project have these supported?
- Has the allocated budget for each of the four tasks (animation, implementation, running costs, cooperation) been utilised effectively? In particular:
    - Have cooperation projects of a suitable number and scale been carried out in each area? To what extent have these projects contributed to the aims for the LEADER measure?

Added value of the LEADER approach

Effect on social capital

- Given the limited scope of the evaluation to be procured, we acknowledge that it would be difficult to accurately assess the extent to which LEADER has increased social capital in local areas. We therefore suggest focusing on whether it has successfully led to:

[7] Including how the scale of LAGs was determined for the current programming period, and how differences in the scale of LAGs between funding periods in Wales affected the number, scale and profile of projects supported

- engagement of members of the community who wouldn't otherwise be engaged at a number of levels (including participation in governance structures (see below), being awarded support for projects and taking part in or benefitting from the projects themselves)
- enhanced levels of trust in bodies delivering services (e.g. by having project staff based within the communities they serve)
- the formation of new networks (particularly those that can be described as 'linking' or 'bridging' (rather than 'bonding') social capital

Contribution to improved local governance

- Does the scheme improve local governance? Has it created capacity for governance that could outlive the funding period?
- Have LAGs made adequate efforts to recruit members of, or those with, extensive relevant knowledge, including that of under-represented groups (the latter might include third sector organisations with expertise in issues affecting minority groups, as well as members of those groups themselves)?
- To what extent does the partnership structure succeed in creating shared decision-making?
- To what extent does the partnership structure lead to support for projects that would not succeed otherwise?

Enhanced outcomes

- Does animation lead to involvement of individuals and groups uniquely placed to address the area's needs and opportunities?
- Does LEADER in its current form act successfully as a tool for innovation, or a 'laboratory for change'? In particular:
  - Are projects that have met the criteria for 'innovation' within the measure truly innovative in the broader sense implied by the WRDP's focus on this aspect?[8]
  - Are projects used effectively as a tool for trialling approaches that could be implemented beyond the local area? How frequently are successful projects mainstreamed in the RDP?
- Where LAGs have trialled new approaches, have opportunities been taken to learn from these experiments (e.g. by communicating results to other LAGs)?
- Does the LEADER model lead to the creation of projects that have enhanced sustainability (by identifying projects for which there is a real need in the local area, and / or by creating projects in which local actors are more invested)?

[8] Previous research has noted that 'innovation' has a wide range of interpretations, which are adopted by different groups of stakeholders. While the European Commission defines it relatively broadly, including use of solutions that are new to the territory (i.e. might have been used elsewhere), lay understandings tend to focus on novelty in a more wide-reaching sense (Wavehill 2019) and to focus on technologies rather than, for example, social structures (Christoforou 2017: 51).

- Does the LEADER model lead to projects which are better integrated into the local setting?

Long-term view of the measure

- To what extent is the added value provided by the method (improved governance, social capital and enhanced outcomes) sustained beyond the funding period?
- Is there sufficient scope for contributing to added value via the measure in the future? For example, if the measure has increased capacity for local governance in an area, will this continue to provide the same level of return on investment in the future?
- How do relevant stakeholders view aspects that have changed between programming periods (for example, the removal of State Aid cover)?

10. Examples of projects funded by the current LEADER scheme in Wales

10.1 One of the challenges of evaluating the LEADER scheme is the substantial range of projects that have been funded. This appendix provides examples of the types of projects that have been supported in each theme. They have been selected by the evaluation team to reflect the range of activities undertaken and supported drawing on the information about the project provided via the WRN website. The number of projects selected under each theme or the order in which they have been presented below is inconsequential and there is no sampling of projects involved. The purpose is purely to provide a list of projects that provides a good indication of the range of activities undertaken as part of the scheme.

10.2 The list of examples provided is long. However, the only way in which to truly appreciate the range of activities being supported by LEADER is to review such a list.

Theme 1: Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources

- **Dark Skies, Anglesey**: The pilot will proactively engage with the tourism sector to demonstrate how 'astro tourism' can be packaged and presented to tourists. The aim is to work intensively with a small number of businesses, prior to sharing lessons learnt with a wider audience.
- **North Anglesey Hop on Hop off tour**: The pilot intends to introduce a joint ticketing initiative between visitor attractions in the area. The sites will be linked by a bus tour which will be 'hop on hop off' running three days a week for three months.
- **Tourism Training Study, Anglesey**: This study looked at: What is the best way to deliver tourism information on the Island? Who are the best people to deliver this information? Is there an existing training course that can be used? Do new training modules need to be created? Who would be the best delivery body? Does this course need to be accredited?
- **Bridgend Welsh Place Names Pocket Book**: This project worked across the rural county borough holding workshops with children, young people and adults to develop a reference book on the history and heritage of Bridgend through its place names.

- **3,000 BC – Lets Rock! Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent**: The aim of the project is to develop an innovative, practical two-day programme that engages and helps build self-confidence amongst vulnerable groups and is based on Welsh prehistory.
- **One Planet Feasibility Study, Carmarthenshire**: This study looked into the feasibility of developing a pilot One Planet Community of 6-25 affordable zero carbon homes plus workshops/offices plus land for horticulture/agriculture/ forestry activities on the edge of Llandovery, Carmarthenshire.
- **Digital Heritage Interpretation, Carmarthenshire**: A pilot project to look at innovative ways to interpret heritage, through digital technology.
- **Upland Tourism Development, Ceredigion**: Building on the findings of a study funded by the LAG, this project funds a part time development officer over 2.5 years to develop and deliver the recommendations set out in the report.
- **Community Leadership Academy, Ceredigion**: The purpose of the pilot project was to establish a Community Leadership Academy for 18–30-year-olds working in partnership with various agencies in Ceredigion. The aim was to increase local capacity to ensure Welsh speaking neighbourhoods and sustainable bilingual communities in Ceredigion.
- **Teaching Trees, Ceredigion**: The project aims to provide children with an opportunity to gain an appreciation of woodlands, a value for wildlife, timber and for enjoyment whilst stimulating scientific, geographical, and historical skills as well as promoting creative skills and conservation awareness.
- **Rural Shows, Conwy**: A project working with the shows in the Hiraethog area to develop a toolkit with useful hints, tips and guidance on relevant topics such as health & safety, recruiting volunteers, etc.
- **E-bike Charging Network, Conwy**: With the growing demand for cycling and increasing presence of e-bikes in the area Conwy can benefit from developing both mobile and permanent charging points within its rural areas.
- **Trevor to Llangollen multiuser path study, Denbighshire**: A feasibility study into the establishment of a multi-user path between Trevor and Llangollen, utilising the disused railway line.
- **Llangollen Railway Engineering Feasibility Study, Denbighshire**: A feasibility study to look at innovative ideas to expand the engineering capability at a rural heritage railway.

- **Robocut Habitat management pilot, Denbighshire**: A pilot to establish potential benefits of remote-controlled machinery for habitat management in upland areas not suitable for the use of standard machinery
- **Gateway to 'Destination Holywell' Signage Plan, Flintshire**: To undertake a signage plan for the town of Holywell that will explore, innovate and create ways in which to create and develop the 'Destination Holywell' theme and brand.
- **ARGO NAVIS – Follow the Stars, Gwynedd**: This project to work with partners in Gwynedd, Lithuania, Austria and Estonia to undertake a range of activities including setting up a Dark Sky Academy with young people.
- **Slow Holidays, Gwynedd**: The review of the idea of developing Pen Llŷn as an area for 'slow holidays' with a focus on the recreational and walking activities and connecting communities and visitors to the Coastal Path.
- **Unique Streets, Gwynedd**: The pilot will identify ways in which the high street and town centres can compete with shopping centres and online retailers to increase visitor numbers to the area.
- **Snowdonia Giving, Gwynedd**: A pilot scheme where visitors are invited to contribute a small amount in addition to their bill at attractions, restaurants or accommodation.
- **Connect To Wellbeing Programme, Merthyr**: Developed as a response of the COVID-19 pandemic, the aim is to support vulnerable people, who are isolated and/or in poor health or in hardship to improve their wellbeing.
- **Tintern Abbey Trail, Monmouth and Newport**: This project will develop and install an iBeacon trail around Tintern. Locations, with stories relating to Tintern Abbey, will be identified for a short walking trail outside the Abbey site and into the village.
- **Working with Nature, Neath**: The aim is to build the capacity of volunteers and community groups to take a more active role in the management of local sites, whilst fostering a greater understanding and connection with the natural environment.
- **Community Foundation Trust Fund for Pembrokeshire**: Research into models for the development of an investment fund with regular donations and legacies to offer a LEADER–style pot of funding once EU funds have ended.
- **Local Energy Action Force (LEAF), Pembrokeshire**: Engaging five local communities aiming to generate and trade sustainable energy.

- **Drawn Together, Pembrokeshire**: A participatory arts project exploring in practice how the shared creative activity of drawing can celebrate identities and contribute towards community cohesion.
- **Pembroke Dock Tourism Feasibility Study, Pembrokeshire**: A feasibility study exploring the potential for tourism in Pembroke Dock.
- **Women of West Wales, Narberth Museum, Pembrokeshire**: A project to research and start to collate the diverse histories of local women in new and innovative ways.
- **Elan Virtual Eco museum, Powys**: Developing a virtual tool to underpin the development of an 'eco-museum' concept for the Elan Valley.
- **Home Grown Homes, Powys**: A feasibility project into the viability of making Welsh homes from Welsh wood. This is a beginning part of a much larger project funded by the Co-operation and Supply Chain Fund of the RDP.
- **Reaching out, Drawing in, Powys**: A two-year pilot designed to test the impact of long-term work through the arts and in the environment with people living with (a) dementia and mental ill health; and (b) adults with learning disabilities.
- **Nature Area for Outdoor Learning, Swansea**: The pupils of Bishopston Primary and local community want to encourage outdoor learning. The plan is to create a nature area which can be used every day as a working area for children.
- **Food Tourism Events, Hubs and Markets, Torfaen**: A project to organise and deliver a series of food tourism events in Torfaen including a food festival in Big Pit, a variety of community events, food markets and food / produce related activities.
- **Wildleft Monitoring and Guidebook, Torfaen**: A feasibility study to gather, analyse and consolidate all existing wildlife monitoring data for the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site and surrounds, present the information in a report, produce a volunteer wildlife monitoring plan and assess the feasibility of a multi-author Blaenavon World Heritage Site wildlife guidebook.
- **Craft Network, Vale of Glamorgan**: Piloting opportunities for artists/ crafters to network and co-operate, explore opportunities for innovative sales opportunities and developing new workspaces.
- **Naturefix for Health and Wellbeing, Cooperation project**: Bringing together a partnership of organisations working in the field of outdoor nature-based health,

with health care providers interested in green social prescribing. The aim is to pilot the development of new digital resources as a tool for sharing experience and learning, over geographical distance and in times of isolation or lockdown.

- **Reaching for the (Dark) Skies, Cooperation project**: This project will pilot the Dark Skies initiative in Northeast Wales by implementing the recommendations made in a study previously commissioned.
- **Heritage Digital Skills Training, Cooperation project**: A package of training opportunities using innovative techniques on aspects of heritage interpretation to heritage and community groups across
- **The BEES project, Cooperation project**: Brings together beekeepers from across South East Wales to explore and develop a local/regional programme to work towards sustaining pollinator population and improving ecological resilience in bees, raise awareness of bees, beekeeping and its importance to biological systems and diversity with organisations, schools and the general public.

Theme 2: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains

- **Mon Growers, Anglesey**: A project to produce guidance on the 'Top 10 horticultural crop ideas for Anglesey' detailing crops that have a proven demand/route to market or about to increase in demand through food trends.
- **Pop Up Shop Kit, Anglesey**: Providing a modular kit for setting up a local food shop whether within a vehicle, portacabin or shop. In order for the producers on the island to take advantage of events, honey spots and identified areas of demand.
- **Parc Cwm Darran Larch Camping Pods, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent**: Developing a prototype camping pod to offer a unique woodland-stay experience, in tune with the parks' ethos of sustainability, enjoyment, relaxation, and inspiration. A cost analysis of the development process will be created and made available to interested manufacturers.
- **Rural Craft and Alternative Diet Networking Groups, Carmarthenshire**: The creation of business networks across the rural area, specifically looking at the arts & crafts and alternative diet sectors.
- **Yr Egin, Carmarthenshire**: A project aiming to maximise the social and economic benefit of the relocation of S4C to Carmarthen in 2018 with the

creation of a creative exchange/cluster in Carmarthen as a national hub for the creative industries.

- **The Academy of Tomorrow, Ceredigion**: Pilot workshops in a number of priority sector areas for young people. The aim is to develop innovation and creativity, promoting entrepreneurship, and cultivating confidence and resilience.
- **Welsh in the Workplace, Ceredigion**: A two-year pilot study to engage and work with rural employers and organisations to support, facilitate and increase the use of the Welsh language in employment.
- **Electronic Payment Project, Conwy**: Trailing the use of mobile electronic payment systems on rural businesses to determine the benefits, strengths and weaknesses of using this method of receiving payment.
- **Eat, Drink, Be Local, Denbighshire**: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains for food local to Denbighshire and the Dee Valley by increasing collaboration between farmers, food producers, the hospitality sector, the retail sector and local education/training institutions.
- **Teagasc Farm Visit, Ireland, Denbighshire**: An educational visit to Shinagh Farm Dairy Research Unit, Cork, Ireland, a commercial spring calving unit producing milk from grass.
- **A Welsh Welcome, Flintshire**: A pilot project testing three initiatives – napkins, activity sheets and a digital platform – that promote the Welsh language as a unique selling point and improve the visitor tourism experience.
- **Ffiws – Maker Space, Gwynedd**: A project to set up ‘maker spaces’ in towns in Gwynedd in order to demonstrate the technology and develop a community of makers across the county.
- **Gwynedd Data**: A project to demonstrate: (1) Data can be collected via community digital infrastructure (for example, community Wi-Fi and television white space); (2) Communities can use data collected via digital infrastructure to share information with stakeholders, customers and other groups.
- **Supporting Rural Assets & Services, Merthyr**: Providing flexible, tailored support to community groups who may be looking to take on an asset within the rural communities of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr.
- **Catering Education Study, Monmouth and Newport**: A scoping study into the catering education needs in the Vale of Usk area, with a view to developing it as

a centre for culinary education excellence, building on its reputation as the “Food Capital of Wales”.

- **Gilwern Schools Cluster Education, Monmouth and Newport**: Developing a circular pilot project which will encompass all phases of produce/cooking /composting /growing /planting / vegetable harvest. The project will add and enhance the school education curriculum, focusing on growing, cooking, farming and producing food in a practical way, working with farmers, growers, producers, chefs and businesses
- **Creative arts Co-working Space, Monmouth and Newport**: A co-working space for the Vae of Usk could become a natural hub for tech, digital and creative businesses, entrepreneurs and freelancers within a rural area of Wales.
- **Future Economies Study, Monmouth and Newport**: Research which will help Monmouthshire to identify economic opportunities and growth sectors that will provide jobs for our communities in the future.
- **Tourism Development in Neath Port Talbot**: A Business Development Officer to provide advice, guidance and development support to tourism related businesses within the rural wards of Neath Port Talbot.
- **Community Regeneration & Innovation Hub Scoping Study, Pembrokeshire**: To pilot a community regeneration hub in the Old Post Office, Haverfordwest. With professional help to undergo all site surveys, drawings and specifications to project manage the renovations. When the hub is up and running to collate all research and learning into a shareable road map.
- **Pembrokeshire Community Cooperative Share Offers Scheme**: A 2-year pilot with the aim of developing a Community Shares Support Service for Pembrokeshire.
- **Slipper Limpet Feasiblity Study, Pembrokeshire**: A research study into the extraction of hemocyanin from the Slipper Limpet and comparing it against existing hemocyanins used in pharma products.
- **Sustainability Skills Cluster for Powys**: The project brings together six partners (Mid Wales Manufacturing Group, Centre for Alternative Technology, NPTC Group of Colleges, Black Mountains College, Skill Shop & Young Farmers Cymru) to work collaboratively to establish a Sustainability Skills Cluster for Powys. The Cluster will triangulate three of the county’s strengths in

order to forge a USP that will be of benefit to employers, learners, and the wider economy.

- **Deorfa Wledig, Powys**: Establishing specific structures to support and promote the development of enterprise and entrepreneurship through the medium of Welsh. It will create a package that will include a suitable space for small enterprises, business advice, mentoring, placement opportunities with businesses/matching service, access to finance and a tailored course/workshop package.
- **Ty Coch Waterway Park, Torfaen**: A feasibility study to develop proposals for the Ty Coch Waterway Park concept which forms part of the regeneration strategy for the canal which will be an exemplar of sustainable development in practice.
- **Redundant or underused buildings in the rural Vale of Glamorgan**: Exploring opportunities to develop new workspaces from redundant and underused buildings as well as assessing the demand for different types of workspaces.
- **Business Pop-Up School**: A co-operation project between Wrexham & Flintshire, this pilot provides an opportunity for individuals who may never have considered running a business before to engage in this process and to stimulate their entrepreneurial spirit.
- **Managerial Skills for Small Business Start-ups, Cooperation project**: Investigating the failure of small businesses within the food industry and providing methods of enhancing competitiveness of small business owners and starters within the rural food sector in North East Wales.
- **Wrexham Social Enterprise Network**: The network will be a platform for Social Enterprises to develop and grow and increase the opportunities offered to SE's, sharing knowledge and best practice.
- **Rural Business Networks, Wrexham**: Bringing the business community together to share best practice, develop short-supply chains, stimulate entrepreneurship, encourage inter-trading and improve business sustainability within the rural economy.

Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services

- **Make the Space, Anglesey**: Piloting a number of different ideas that will generate income, help towards sustaining new services / assets within the communities, offer new services and attract new users to libraries.
- **Sustainable Community Sports Hubs, Bridgend**: Exploring the possibility of sharing sports facilities and co-managing them. Such a model has been successfully implemented in many where rugby, football, cricket, tennis and bowls have come together take over ownership from the local authority and manage resources.
- **The 5 to 9 Enterprise Club, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent**: The 5 to 9 Club is a structured after workspace for people to attend in order to develop their business ideas by fostering and creating conditions to support entrepreneurship within rural areas.
- **Homeshare, Carmarthenshire**: The project will adopt and develop the 'Homeshare' model with the primary objective of supporting older people to remain and live for longer in their own homes and for other disabled adult groups to receive support, which whilst being unobtrusive maintains a person's independence at home.
- **Un Sir Gar, Carmarthenshire**: The purpose of the project will be to improve and expand upon the way in which the services offered at the Hub location in Llanelli, are replicated to people all across Carmarthenshire, and especially to those in rural areas.
- **Cardi Care, Ceredigion**: A pilot project to investigate whether a tool kit, developed by the award-winning Solva Care, is able to be used by other rural communities as a basis of emulating and duplicating the successful community care model that is currently in place in Solva, Pembrokeshire.
- **On your Bike, Ceredigion**: The intention of this project is to work with young people across Ceredigion by engaging with children and students to survey their opinion on having a variety of outdoor static "bikes" situated across Ceredigion that will charge mobile phones and which could also generate electricity for the national grid in the longer term.
- **Pre-school Rural Support Scheme, Conwy**: Piloting a new way of delivering support to children with additional learning needs and their families to access early years education and childcare provision in a local setting.

- **Mobile Recycling Pilot, Conwy**: A pilot project to see if this non-statutory but highly valued service can be delivered on a mobile basis without the capital and revenue investment required for a fixed, permanent site.
- **Tackling Social Isolation through Dance, Conwy**: Working with Care Homes to demonstrate that dance can act as a powerful tool in tackling social issues that occur within communities including social isolation, loneliness, developing social relationships, maintaining positive attitudes to language and culture, and strengthening self-identity and equality.
- **3Rs: RESET, RESUME, REBOUND, Flintshire**: Piloting a project providing support and resources for Community Centres, Village Halls and other such 'gathering' venues that are at the heart of the community to enable them to rebound from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Rural Advice & Digital Skills Enhancement, Flintshire**: A pilot project running an outreach advice and information service to residents of rural Flintshire complimented by a training and awareness raising programme to enhance their digital skills.
- **Cegin Noddfa, Gwynedd**: Following on from the Communities First programme in the Peblig area of Caernarfon, there is a desire to set up a Community Initiative that provides multi-purpose nutritious food via a mix of fast-food takeaway and a restaurant service at weekends, together with food preparation for occasional off-site events.
- **Green Prescription, Gwynedd**: A project seeking to prove the value of a Social Prescription and outdoor exercise within the County, and the economic and social opportunities that can be developed from it.
- **Rogiet Community Shop & Café, Monmouth and Newport**: To prepare to implement a permanent Community Shop and Café in Rogiet and to ensure all the community, legal and statutory requirements are met associated with the pre-funding bid stages of providing a new build community shop and café.
- **Creative Communities Toolkit, Monmouth and Newport**: Funding to employ a part time community enabler who will work with rural communities, creating a guide on how to capture ideas and turn them into working schemes, outlining goals to achieve within a given area.
- **Welsh Language Youth Club, Neath**: Piloting a 'virtual' youth club through the medium of Welsh and provide opportunities for young people to improve their

Welsh language skills through activities which will help them with team building, problem solving and personal development (with an added option of gaining formal qualifications) in a safe and supportive environment, staffed by qualified youth workers.

- **Amplify: Trowch e Lan, Neath**: A series of activities targeted to engage and recruit local young people delivered by a local theatre company. Once on board, young people will play a key role in creating, managing, delivering and participating in the project's youth led events.
- **Inspiring Pathways, Pembrokeshire**: A project engineered to open pathways between different generations amongst contemporaries who feel socially excluded. It will encourage participants to express their thoughts and feelings through the medium of art.
- **Muddy Care, Powys**: An innovative educational rehabilitation programme and a lifelong support community for people of working age (18- 65) with chronic conditions. It provides tools and strategies in relation to all six facets of holistic health and wellness to enable people to manage their chronic conditions more effectively and independently and is building a community to help support those with chronic conditions through a variety of mediums such as the Arwain LEADER Programme.
- **Bronllys Well Being Park, Powys**: An Eco Garden Village that cares for its rural Powys community by supporting and enhancing but not replacing the Community Hospital at its heart.
- **Gower Sunday Explorer, Swansea**: The provision of a revised and improved bus service between Swansea and Gower on Sundays in mid and high season, building on the success of similar services over the past five years.
- **Making Sense of Well Being, Vale of Glamorgan**: A project to pilot a range of wellbeing activities in the rural Vale as well as a wraparound service providing digital and employability skills. A research study will run alongside to find out participants views on health and wellbeing.
- **Moving with Teddy, Cooperative project**: The development of online videos for young children and parents using Magi Ann characters and focusing on play, exercise and dance. This is a cooperation project between Flintshire and Wrexham.

- **Rossett Community Hub, Wrexham**: A study to look at the potential of the space and provide a business case that will provide a facility to increase community engagement and involvement.
- **Penycae Community Learning Project, Wrexham**: Trialling a new community services and activities in the Football Club building. It will install WiFi internet access and computer facilities, which will allow ICT training and mentorship for young and older people.

Theme 4: Renewable energy at community level

- **Community Buildings Energy Study, Anglesey**: Exploring how communities can participate in energy saving and harnessing clean renewable energy by coming together to work collaboratively on the use of the community run and owned buildings by accessing appropriate expertise and through joint purchasing of their energy supply.
- **EV Network Coordinator, Carmarthenshire**: The appointment of an Electric Vehicle (EV) Network Coordinator for a 2-year period. The role will coordinate and facilitate the development of an electric vehicle charging network across rural Carmarthenshire.
- **Powering the Valley, Ceredigion**: Assessing the feasibility of options for the development of renewable energy in the Aeron Valley and the surrounding area, that will contribute not only to the energy needs in an environmentally sustainable manner, but also contribute to the economic and social development of the area.
- **Steora Benches, Conwy**: A project to install solar powered benches with multiple functionality – a wireless charging pad, charging ports for wired phones (and other smart devices), night illumination, energy saving main controller and data collecting.
- **Local Energy Club Pilot, Denbighshire**: A local energy club is a club of households that group together in an area where there is also local energy generation (for example, hydro or solar schemes). These households use energy meters that accurately track how much energy they use and when they use it. They are then charged different rates for the energy consumed depending what time of the day it is used. Each club member has a ‘share’ of the energy generated locally. At times of low demand, and where energy is also generated locally, club members will be charged a lower rate. The model fosters a

connection between energy users and local energy generation, and tackles fuel poverty by allowing lower electricity prices.

- **Community Car Club, Derbyshire**: A pilot study that uses an electric vehicle for a car club scheme to enable self-resilience, support independent living and improve health and wellbeing for residents of local area.
- **Electric Communities, Denbighshire**: Electricity monitors provided to community buildings across the rural area to monitor consumption and costs. After the monitoring period, advice and assistance will be provided to the community group based on the data so that they can run their facility more economically, saving money, and make investments for energy efficiency aimed at long-term sustainability.
- **Electric Car Scheme, Gwynedd**: A pilot looking at the potential to place electric vehicle in businesses in order for them to be used by the business and tourists. This would enable people to experience driving an electric car, raise the profile of electric cars, as well as offering a fun and novel way to explore the area.
- **Energy Wizard, Gwynedd**: Trialling two approaches to reducing electricity use in the home. The first will involve matching usage to local consumption, and the second will allow the householder to have greater control over the use of appliances.
- **Off-grid sustainable energy feasibility study, Monmouth and Newport**: A feasibility study for an off-grid property which will become a small centre for residential and day outdoor education activities. This study is a small, but crucially important, foundation stone of a much larger project.
- **Village Hall Energy Make Over, Monmouth and Newport**: The basic premise of this project is to select an energy deficient rural village hall and assist hall management with the securing of capital funding to improve its energy efficiency to achieve a reduction in running costs with improved comfort and higher utilisation thereby providing a better asset for the local community.
- **Supporting Resilient Renewable Communities, Pembrokeshire**: The project will work with 10 communities to: (1) Develop community renewable enterprises (2) Use of low carbon technology within the business sector (3) Support local people with household energy improvements (4) Develop energy storage initiatives on a household and community level.

- **Saving The Planet One School At A Time, Powys**: Working with schools to help them build a long-term vision and to begin to make the changes required to set themselves on a path to become a zero emissions school.
- **Feasibility Study to investigate viability of Community Carbon Offset Project, Swansea**: A study to support the first stage in the development of a community led, not for profit social enterprise offering carbon offsetting through planting of community grown, local provenance trees.
- **Green School Challenge, Vale of Glamorgan**: A project to work with schools in the rural Vale to develop an interest in green energy, whilst raising the profile of the 'Green Community Energy' theme in the wider community.
- **Power from the Deep – Stage 2, Wrexham**: A project to explore the possibility of using mine water to provide heat for a district heating scheme. The work included the drilling of boreholes and experimental testing as a follow up to an initial feasibility study.
- **From Coal to sun, Wrexham**: A feasibility study to develop the concept and design of a Solar Park (PV) on the Wonderbank, within the land boundaries of Brymbo Steelworks in Wrexham.

Theme 5: Exploitation of digital technology

- **Wi-Fi Enabled Towns, Carmarthenshire**: A pilot project to install and lease Wi-Fi access points to four market towns in the area. The project will not only provide free Wi-Fi to end users but most importantly the system will capture valuable data from the Wi-Fi users in order to aid the participating towns with regeneration.
- **4G Router Pilot, Ceredigion**: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there is a greater reliance on digital connectivity. However, there are some properties within Ceredigion without access to fast, reliable broadband. This project therefore trialled the provision of 4G routers (mobile broadband connectivity) in such situations.
- **Augmented Reality (AR) Development Project, Denbighshire**: A project to develop and pilot a number of AR platforms which could be rolled out across the North East Wales area. The objective is to increase the dwell time of visitors to the region.
- **Data Aberdaron, Gwynedd**: A project to demonstrate how digital data collected via open access wi-fi can be harnessed, analysed and exploited.

- **Precision Farming, Gwynedd**: Raise awareness of digital technology opportunities among the agricultural industry that are traditionally reluctant to engage.
- **Robotics in the Community, Monmouth and Newport**: A pilot for an outreach community education programme to help technologically vulnerable people adjust to new technologies. The pilot will gauge whether greater familiarity with robotics and AI can help people's future employment prospects by inspiring them to embrace robotics and AI and to develop much-needed digital skills.
- **Television White Space (TVWS) Broadband Trial, Monmouth and Newport**: The aim of the project is to investigate and trial a newly available broadband technology which will enable rural communities to enjoy the same digital connectivity as in urban areas and, if successful, will be replicable in other rural areas. We will trial the technology known as Television "white space" in one area of Monmouthshire.
- **Llanover Community Halls Cluster, Monmouth and Newport**: The aim is to trial the digital exploitation of community hubs by focusing on four villages within the Llanover ward of Monmouthshire. The internet facility in each hall will provide doorstep opportunities for the local community to access high quality ICT for a wide range of uses.
- **Llandrindod Wells Wellness and Digital Exploitation Project, Powys**: The project will encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship by making the Presence Analytics data available to businesses and potential businesses and using that technology to gauge the effectiveness of business activity and events in the town.
- **Community Rural Voice, Swansea**: To improve on community consultation and engagement of the eight geographic rural communities. This will be achieved by establishing a Swansea Rural Community Voice project using VocalEyes Digital Democracy tools and other methods to engage local people.

11. Case studies for projects funded by previous LEADER schemes in Wales

Morlais Tidal Energy Project and Menter Môn

11.1 Menter Môn is the administrative body in the current programme period for LAGs in Gwynedd and Anglesey. It has however held that role in Anglesey since the 1990s and is able to draw on the knowledge and experience that has developed within the organisation since that time.

11.2 Morlais is a Menter Môn project which aims to benefit local communities, the economy and help tackle climate change by using renewable energy to generate clean low carbon electricity.

11.3 The project manages a 35 km2 area of seabed off the coast of Holy Island, Anglesey and aims to put Ynys Môn on the map in terms of tidal stream energy.

A short video introducing the Morlais project

11.4 With funding support from Welsh Government, ERDF funds through the Welsh Government, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the private sector, Morlais has the potential to scale up over time to a maximum electricity generating capacity of 240MW.

11.5 The first stage of the project has focussed on securing consent. Community and stakeholder consultation and engagement has been a key part of this process. The consent application was submitted in the autumn of 2019 and a decision is expected by Welsh Ministers during the second half of 2021. Subject to achieving consent and approval, the second stage will put the necessary infrastructure in place for developers of tidal stream energy converters to deploy their technology in the zone. Implementation will be phased which means devices will be installed gradually and on a small scale, to begin with, to ensure that the development does not negatively impact marine wildlife.

11.6 As well as helping to tackle climate change by generating clean electricity from renewable energy, Morlais is said to have the potential to create around 100 well-paid jobs in the first ten years. Other anticipated economic benefits to the local area include:

- Improving local skills with apprenticeships and training opportunities
- Working with developers for guaranteed maximum local spend
- Creating new supply chain opportunities for local businesses during construction and operation

11.7 As a Menter Môn project, they will support local businesses to secure contracts. All profits will be reinvested locally through a new community benefit fund and via environmental and community projects delivered by Menter Môn. This is an important aspect of the project which amplifies the potential impact of the development on the local community by maximising the local benefit and the level of reinvestment in the local area.

11.8 Morlais is not a LEADER project. However, the roots of the Morlais project can be traced back to a study of the potential for turbines in the Menai Straits supported by LEADER in a previous programme period. Former Menter Môn Managing Director Gerallt Llewelyn Jones is the Senior Responsible Officer for the project and said: *“nowhere is the journey from test project to full-blown development better illustrated than through Morlais”.*

11.9 Current Managing Director Dafydd emphasises that the delivery of LEADER has demonstrated the value of early engagement with the local community in order to secure the benefits that are generated later. Menter Môn have approached the Morlais project in the same way. The approach has risks, potentially leading to

tensions within the local community as those in favour and against a project become engaged. For example, there were tensions when coastal footpath projects were initially being developed in the 1990s with some being opposed to them due to concerns about their impact on wildlife. Identifying such concerns as early in the process as possible was however ultimately beneficial and led to the impact of the developments to be maximised once concerns had been overcome.

11.10 The fact that Morlais is being delivered by Menter Môn is important in terms of maximising the local impact of the development. Importantly, the existence of Menter Môn as an organisation is also an outcome of LEADER in Wales. Originally set up as a project within the local authority to deliver LEADER in 1995, Menter Môn was set up as an independent community-owned company in 1996 and has since evolved into a social enterprise that works across north Wales to deliver a range of regeneration, environmental and cultural projects for the benefit of local communities. They currently employ 70+ people in offices in Llangefni and Porthmadog making them an important employer in the local area in their own right.

11.11 Since it was established Menter Môn has attracted in the region of £100 million of funding to the area. The funding has been invested in projects such as the Anglesey Coastal Path, supporting new food products, renovating old buildings and protecting native species. In the majority of cases, the funding would not have been invested in the area had Menter Môn not developed and presented the applications. Dafydd Gruffydd said:

> "The LEADER approach is fundamental to everything that we do as an organisation going way beyond the LEADER programmes and projects that we deliver… it's part of everything that we do and our ethos as a company.
>
> The fact that we're now developing and running projects of the scale of Morlais demonstrates how far we've come as an organisation and how confident we now are in ourselves. We're willing to compete for projects at this scale and can demonstrate how effectively we can deliver them and the added value that we can provide as an organisation. This confidence and track-record comes from delivering the LEADER programme and then other projects and programmes over such a long period of time."

Halen Môn

11.12 This case study draws on information provided on the Halen Môn website and an interview with partner and founder David Lea-Wilson in July 2021.

Image source: Halenmon

11.13 After graduating from Bangor University, Alison and David started looking for ways that would allow them to continue to live and work in the Anglesey area they had fallen in love with during their time at university.

11.14 They had supplemented their income whilst students by growing oysters and that small oyster enterprise evolved into a wholesale fish and game business which they ran for 12 years. In 1983, they set up The Sea Zoo in Anglesey which ended up becoming Wales' largest aquarium. When the seasonality of both those businesses became a serious problem, they sat down to brainstorm ideas of ways to generate an income over the winter coming up with the idea of making sea salt. So, in 1997, they left a saucepan of seawater to boil in the family kitchen and watched as the salt crystals started to form.

11.15 David described the experience (and lessons learnt) of starting two other businesses as being very important to their ability to start and then build Halen Môn. A range of support has however been accessed over the years including support provided by Menter Môn and LEADER in the very early days of the business in the late 1990s in the form of two small grants - £3,000 to undertake product development work and £3,000 to help develop a brand for the product. This support is described by David as having been "completely essential" to the setting up of the business.

11.16 They started by supplying Halen Môn Sea Salt to the local butchers in Menai Bridge on the Isle of Anglesey. Today the business employs over 20 people from the local area and Halen Môn can be found in more than 22 countries across the globe as

well as on the tables of some of the world's top restaurants like The Fat Duck and is a vital ingredient in Green & Blacks chocolate and Piper's Crisps. Along with over 100 of the nation's best delicatessens in the UK, Halen Môn supply Marks and Spencer, Waitrose and Harvey Nichols. Importantly, it is also still for sale at the butchers in Menai Bridge.

11.17 Their relationship with Menter Môn and LEADER has continued from that early support, with a range of support provided over the years (David is also keen to point out that several applications for support were also turned down!). This included supporting the business to visit a food festival in New York in 2001 which David identified as being "a real eye-opener" and critical in the development of the business; "no one else was providing such support to food businesses at that time". But it could be argued that the business would not be where it is today, without the small-scale grants provided by LEADER in the very early stages of its development. Critically for David, the support that Menter Môn could provide was also quick and easy to access which he described as being essential to any developing business. David does however question why there aren't more examples of businesses like Halen Môn across Wales; "Why are there so few examples of businesses like ours across Wales? Why have so few businesses developed in the same way?"

11.18 Alison and David have also developed a relationship with Menter Môn outside of the business getting involved with several community and tourism projects being developed and delivered by them.

Alison and David (source: Halenmon website)

Credit Unions

11.19 A Credit Union is a member-owned, not-for-profit mutual financial organisation. In the mid-1990s they were beginning to gain recognition in urban parts of Wales as an ethical alternative to high street banks, more in tune with the needs of the communities which they serve.

11.20 Although establishing in urban Wales, in rural Wales in the mid-1990s credit unions were unheard of. Menter Powys, the local LEADER group became aware of the work of credit unions in rural Ireland. LEADER's transnational dimension helped to establish a connection with credit unions in Mitchelstown County Cork and Tallow in County Wexford.

11.21 Menter Powys took a proactive role and worked with the Wales Co-operative Centre to explore the benefits credit unions could bring to rural communities. It explored the feasibility of setting up a rural credit union model and challenged the understanding of what a credit union should and could be. At that time, the unknowns included how the common bond requirements would work in a rural setting. The initiative also explored what a credit union could do. Robert Owen Credit Union went on to develop the first credit union links with schools in the UK for example.

11.22 Through LEADER, Menter Powys employed a development officer who undertook research and produced a feasibility study. A Steering Group was established, made up of local people with an interest in exploring rural credit unions. This was important because it was "bottom up" not the parachuting of a concept into an area. The new knowledge and skills were embedded by this approach in communities.

11.23 The Robert Owen Credit Union based in Newtown was the first rural credit union in the UK. Credit unions went on to be formed in Brecon, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells and Knighton (Marches).

11.24 The link to Ireland, facilitated by LEADER, was vital. Credit unions were well established in rural Ireland and thus an inspiration as to what was possible. This included the potential of credit unions such as the work of schools already mentioned and the importance of a high profile in communities. The Robert Owen Credit Union learnt from the latter and established itself with a shop front in the middle of Newtown. Other lessons have been harder to emulate. An early warning was not to ally credit unions to the anti-poverty agenda and thus establish the

perception of them being a bank for poor people. Unfortunately, in Wales and throughout the UK, this has been the predominant narrative.

11.25 Mick Brown was the Menter Powys Development Officer and the main driver of the initiative. He went on to work with the New Economics Foundation and to joint author a range of reports and studies.[9] Later Mick led a study tour to the USA to investigate Community Development Credit Unions and was able to bring this learning back to the UK[10] by establishing the first community banking partnerships with the emerging CDFI sector. Robert Owen Community Banking Fund was set up in Newtown as a sister player to the credit union, providing finance to micro-businesses across rural Wales.

11.26 Mick highlights the legacy of LEADER. "The Menter Powys LEADER approach was bottom up. It embedded skills in communities and created a legacy of innovative thinking which continues today." Mick is currently a Director of Banc Cambria, the new Community Bank for Wales.

[9] A selection of these reports can be found at New Economics Foundation
[10] Funded by NatWest

Out to Learn Willow

11.27 Micro-businesses are often described as being the 'life-blood' of rural areas and previous LEADER schemes have provided extensive support to them. Out to Learn Willow is a business based in Ogmore-by-Sea. It was one of the early projects financially supported by Creative Rural Communities, (CRC) under LEADER (2007-2013) in the Vale of Glamorgan.

11.28 Established by Clare Revera, a fully qualified teacher and Mel Bastier (pictured on the right), a graphic designer, the business specialises in training adults and children in the traditional craft of willow weaving and teaching traditional Welsh basket designs. It also helps organisations such as schools and community groups to develop their outdoor spaces. The business has delivered large scale bespoke commissions for prestigious clients such as the Royal Windsor Rose and Horticultural Society, the Royal Horticultural Society, and the BBC. Courses now include teaching advanced and accredited courses across Wales and the UK.

11.29 Out to Learn Willow started as a hobby business but, as the business grew, Clare and Mel were able to gradually go part-time in their main jobs. They sought funding to run more and longer courses, including a residential coffin making course. CRC was able to fund this development with a grant of £9,272 from LEADER. The grant enabled the business to move to a full-time footing.

11.30 Importantly, through LEADER, CRC has also been able to stay in touch with the business and support ongoing developments. This has included other small grants from the Coastal Activities pilot project and the Slow Tourism pilot project under subsequent LEADER schemes.

11.31 Support for Out to Learn Willow has generated a 'ripple-out impact' to the wider economy. Course participants have gone on to set up their own businesses, for example, Hatton Willow, West Wales Willows, Mortimer Willow.[11] Both Clare and Mel have also gone on to set up their own individual businesses (as well as continue with Out to Learn Willow). Clare set up 'Welsh Baskets' which teaches basket making across the country. Mel set up Lily Willow Coffins (as a partnership

[11] Hatton Willow; West Wales Willows ; Mortimer Willow

with Sarah Hatton, also a willow weaver), providing willow coffins and ashes caskets made to order.

11.32 The business has had a positive impact on local employment. In 2017 Clare took on an apprentice who has been trained to run workshops. Mel takes on seasonal staff for events with her business.

11.33 Clare attended a two week 'pop up' festival supported by CRC in 2016 to test the potential for holding events at Dunraven Bay on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. The festival highlighted a need for a crafts network in the Vale and led to the formation of The Vale Craft Network pilot project, once more funded by LEADER through CRC. (Now known as Vale Makers[12] and run by a volunteer committee independent of CRC, and ran its own Vale wide makers festival in 2019 funded by CRC[13]).

11.34 The case study demonstrates how small-scale support to a new business from LEADER has had a positive economic spin-off impact over time. This includes support for new start-ups, local employment and collaborative activity with other craft producers. The ongoing relationship with the CRC team has been an important factor in the positive outcomes that have been achieved.

11.35 "The support of CRC and associated funding was vital through various stages of development for the business. The CRC support and funding was a complete turning point in our journey. Without this we may not have done any of the work to build up Out to Learn Willow as it was a big leap going from a full-time job to establishing and working in our business. The grant was a catalyst to enable us to take this step. If we progressed our ideas without this support, it would have taken much longer to do. More recently the support of CRC has been vital in helping to establish the Crafts Festival. CRC helped establish the festival in its early development stages and also supported us practically with information and help on hiring gazebos for events, marketing etc." Clare Revera (Out to Learn Willow)[14]

[12] Vale Makers
[13] Vale Makers Festival Film
[14] Taken from Vale of Glamorgan Local Action Group (2019). LEADER Programme: Legacy Report. p18

Telematics: TeleCabana

11.36 In 1991 Antur Teifi was one of four organisations in Wales chosen to pioneer the then-new European Commission Community Initiative called LEADER. The local enterprise agency had been established in 1978 by local people concerned about high levels of unemployment and depopulation and the consequent impact on the Welsh language.

11.37 During the first two phases of LEADER I and LEADER II, Antur Teifi was able to test a range of innovative projects in the Teifi valley and could be described as being at the forefront of the application of new technologies within the economy of West Wales.

11.38 Antur Teifi had already opened a telecentre in Newcastle Emlyn in 1986 with three members of staff.[15] This followed research from Lampeter University identifying the technology needs of the local area and demand for training in new technology. That centre was, however, not attracting farm businesses. Options for a mobile solution that would take resources out to deeper rural areas were therefore explored.

11.39 The result was a Mobile Information Technology Training Unit, named the **TeleCabana** funded from a number of sources but developed with the resource provided by LEADER. The first TeleCabana was launched at the Royal Welsh Show in 1997 as a joint initiative with Cymad, (the LEADER group in South Gwynedd) and Menter a Busnes (independent economic development company).[16]

11.40 Farm businesses were a key target for the service. The original TeleCabana carried eight laptops, a printer and a fax machine. New equipment was added as technology progressed. The unit was available across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Gwynedd to deliver regular courses, one-off events and special promotions. Later it was available commercially and was used by social housing providers and other rural organisations to run their own courses and drop in events.

11.41 TeleCabana initially provided training on topics specific to farming such as bookkeeping, feeding techniques using the computer as well as supporting diversification. It provided mini taster sessions and later with Lottery funding

[15] A telecentre is a public place where people can access computers, the internet, and other digital technologies and develop essential digital skills.
[16] Menter a Busnes

expanded to service the wider community, helping people to set up email addresses and websites.

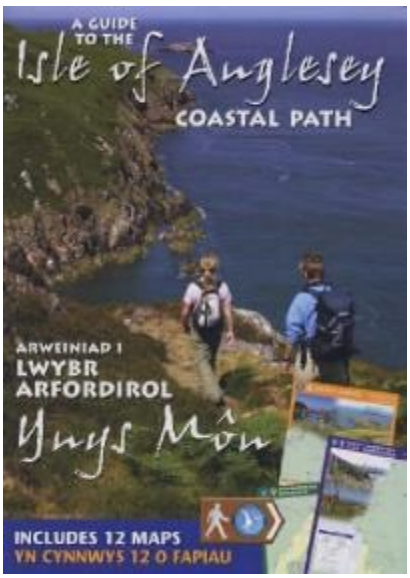
11.42 TeleCabana was one of the first projects to tackle digital exclusion. Recognising that rural areas were in danger of being left behind with emerging technologies, TeleCabana aimed to help businesses diversity and expand. On a visit to the unit in February 2001, the then E-Minister Andrew Davies said the scheme was an important part of the fight against a potential "digital divide".[17]

11.43 The project led to the then Welsh Development Agency (WDA) setting up a larger mobile technology unit called the Wales Information Service (WIS) trailer. TeleCabana established a need for tailored support for farm businesses. This idea was later taken forward by services such as Farming Connect[18] (established in 2001).

[17] BBC News 'Caravan crusade against digital divide'

[18] Farming Connect is an all-Wales service providing farm businesses with a range of services including business planning and specialist advice on aspects of agriculture.

Anglesey Coastal Path



11.44 The Anglesey Coastal Path runs for over 200 km from its start/endpoint at St Cybi's Church Holyhead. It lies almost entirely within the Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The path caters mainly for walkers, but some sections are accessible to other types of users such as cyclists and horse riders. Since 2012 it has formed part of the 1,400 km Wales Coast Path but the origins of the Anglesey Coast Path date back many years earlier, thanks to the work of Menter Môn and LEADER.

11.45 Menter Môn began working with local communities and groups to improve local paths and walks early in the LEADER programme. LEADER's bottom-up philosophy supported an approach that built on local assets to achieve community benefits. The development of local walks was seen as important to improve the tourism offer, encourage farm diversification to cater for walkers, the development of new businesses and the creation of local jobs. This is an example of the 'multi-sector' approach championed by LEADER.

11.46 Initially, the work involved improvements to local routes and the production of local leaflets. Between 1998 and 2003, Menter Môn, as the administrative group for LEADER in Anglesey, was instrumental in developing local community projects into an idea for an 'Anglesey Coastal Path'. LEADER was the vehicle through which the idea was seeded, building on the local work that had already been completed. A guide to the path was published by Menter Môn in December 2004.

11.47 Menter Môn was ideally placed to develop the Anglesey Coastal Path concept. They had strong links with local communities and also connections with a broad cross-section of local interests.

11.48 Some island landowners were concerned initially with the proposal. In 2013, the media reported that having secured £230,000 of funding, Menter Môn was working with landowners to overcome concerns about erosion and litter.[19] Concern was also expressed about the impact increased tourist pressure would have on fragile ecosystems. Menter Môn were in an ideal position as a trusted and independent

[19] The Independent 'Anglesey's landowners hold key to completing coast path' Accessed 25.06.21

enterprise agency to bring different interests together to focus on what was possible, rather than impose solutions on communities and interests. They were also able to suggest a one-year trial to test and evaluate the implications.

11.49 Evidence from Menter Môn and its pilot phase work was used to support the promotion of the wider Wales Coast Path.[20] In 2012 it was estimated that 300,000 people were using the Anglesey Coastal Path annually, resulting in a £12 million injection into the local economy. Menter Môn invested £6m levered from a range of funding streams to improve coastal access around Anglesey, as part of the wider Wales Coast Path project.

11.50 The project was subsequently 'mainstreamed' to Anglesey County Council, based on the success of the activities funded as part of LEADER. Today the route connects with over 20 coastal towns and villages across the island. It helps to support public transport, accommodation providers, shops, pubs and other local services. The path is recognised as an incredibly important asset for Anglesey's economy.

[20] Natural Resources Wales (2013). Evaluating the benefits to business of the Wales Coast Path. P1

Hermon - An enterprising and sustainable community in action

11.51 Hermon, and the neighboring communities of Glogue and Llanfyrnach, are three relatively small villages (population around 300) in north Pembrokeshire. In 2006, Pembrokeshire County Council closed the village school following a long and unsuccessful period of community protest. Local people feared the impact this closure would have on local life, the school having provided a focus for families and the wider community. Once that decision was made, the community turned to PLANED for help. Visioning workshops were undertaken to identify opportunities and the potential for using the school site for a regeneration project. An action plan was created and the Cwm Arian Forum was formed to take forward plans for a new community centre and other regeneration projects.

11.52 PLANED's Community Action Planning process (which continues to be delivered today) supports communities to build momentum, seek consensus and push for change together. They run community visioning events that help to form Community Action Plans and also are a great chance for people to meet up and discuss the issues that matter to them in their local area.

11.53 PLANED supported the Hermon community using LEADER to develop a well-researched and comprehensive business plan to buy the school as the basis for 'Canolfan Hermon'. A total of 196 shares were sold raising £49,000, with additional funds from the Welsh Government's Community Facility Activities Programme (CFAP).[21] The old school site was bought by the community in January 2008. The redevelopment of the site then began in earnest and after many twists and turns, in September 2013, Canolfan Hermon was officially opened by Maureen George, the last headmistress of the school. Today, Canolfan Hermon has small offices to rent, meeting rooms and the main hall to hire. It is also the home to Cylch Meithrin Hermon.

11.54 Having witnessed the success of the community planning methodology as a way of developing new initiatives, refreshed plans were produced with PLANED's help in 2011 and 2016. PLANED has supported many complementary and spin-off projects, for example, Cwm Arain Renewable Energy (CARE) and its community wind turbine. Support for a feasibility study on renewable energy was funded

[21] A Welsh Government Fund available to community groups for local projects. Welsh Government Community Facilities Programme Accessed 08.07.21

through the Sustainability Development Fund[22] and was sourced with help from PLANED. The 900kW wind turbine was installed in October 2019 and provides a community fund that can support community facilities, projects and local green enterprises.

> "The community in and around Hermon have had a great benefit from the support from PLANED to help produce the regular Community Action Plans. We are a small rural community and as we have seen rural service disappear, such as shops, schools, garages, pubs…. we decided to take action into our own hands and with the support of PLANED and an action plan we have reintroduced services such as a new hall meeting place, incubator business office units, early years education charity space, a new community café, Men's Shed Building, allotments, renewable energy projects with Solar PV, Solar Thermal, Air Source Heating and a 900 KW community wind turbine, biodiversity initiatives, local housing projects. When local people work to a focussed plan then great community activities can be achieved" Cris Tomos[23]

11.55 Hermon is about to embark on a new community planning exercise in 2021 as a springboard for new projects supporting community life.

[22] A fund supporting community projects in and around the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Pembrokeshire Coast - Sustainable Development Fund

[23] Cris Tomos community volunteer and activist became the local county councillor in 2017 and is now Pembrokeshire Council Cabinet Member for the Environment, Welsh Language and Public Protection

Siop Gymunedol Pwllglas

11.56 The village of Pwllglas is located less than three miles south of Ruthin in Denbighshire. The community had been without a shop for over 20 years when local people decided to explore the potential to reintroduce this vital basic service.

11.57 Cadwyn Clwyd worked with the Pwllglas community under LEADER to establish the need and feasibility of the idea. Three years of public meetings, planning and development of ideas were supported by LEADER.

11.58 Once the case had been made, Cadwyn Clwyd was able to support the community to apply for funds to turn the idea into reality. The community undertook a big fundraising campaign including serving up 300 breakfasts over three days in the village hall and a Big Soup event with 10 different homemade soups. Other funding came from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Denbighshire County Council, Village SOS (lottery) and the Plunkett Foundation.

11.59 The shop is located in a purpose-built section of the village hall, close to the site of the old village shop. It was officially opened by the then local AM Darren Millar on 17th May 2013. One of the first customers was Delia Williams who ran and owned the old village shop for many years.

11.60 As well as being a much-needed convenience store for the local community, the shop has become an important community hub, a focus for village life and a place for people to connect with each other. It also supports local businesses by promoting and selling locally grown fruit, vegetables, seafood and cut flowers.

11.61 The shop continues to be supported by a dedicated group of volunteers and employs two members of staff, a Shop Manager and a Saturday assistant.

11.62 Cadwyn Clwyd continues to work with the community of Pwllglas and has recently tendered for a feasibility study to help the village hall and shop explore options for further developments in the community hub.

Minerva Arts Centre

11.63 Minerva Arts Centre occupies a prominent building in the centre of Llanidloes. Formerly a car showroom and working garage the Centre is managed and owned by The Quilt Association. The project grew from local interest in the importance of Welsh quilts as part of Welsh history and culture as well as their intrinsic beauty, creativity and craftwork. Llanidloes was an ideal location for the project with its rich historical association with textile production (especially flannel) and a tradition of quilt making in the surrounding area.

11.64 The first Powys LEADER programme, delivered through Menter Powys, supported the early development of The Quilt Association and The Minerva Arts Centre. In 1995 a group of friends, with an interest in quilting, organised an exhibition of antique quilts based on a private collection. The group was called Welsh Heritage Quilters and the exhibition was simply called “Welsh Quilts”. The empty Minerva garage and other locations across Llanidloes were rented for the purpose. This collection was the basis of the annual summer exhibition until 2001. The Quilt Association now has its own collection of antique quilts, many from the local area, that are made available for research or personal study purposes by appointment.

11.65 In 1996 The Quilt Association was formed as a charity and company limited by guarantee. LEADER funding at this time was vital. As Andrew Warren former chair of Trustees said, "Menter Powys helped us in the early stages of the project to test out the feasibility of a quilt and textile centre in Llanidloes". A feasibility study was commissioned to consider setting up a permanent centre for patchwork quilts and textile arts and crafts in Llanidloes. This study enabled The Quilt Association to attract funding from a variety of sources to buy The Minerva Garage which was renamed The Minerva Arts Centre. Welsh Heritage Quilters continues to meet as a friendly group of quilters of all levels of experience to focus on the art of quilting.

11.66 Minerva Arts Centre has gone from strength to strength, attracting further funding including from Europe, Powys County Council, The Laura Ashley Foundation and private funders to improve the building and meet the requirements of the high-

quality exhibitions. Outside of main exhibitions, the Centre is hired out to a diverse range of other groups for events such as small exhibitions, talks, fairs, meetings, and workshops. A core group of key individuals have been involved right from the beginning with many only just stepping down as Trustees after many years' service.

11.67 The annual summer exhibition continues to showcase examples of contemporary quilts as well as examples of antique quilts from collections around the country. The exhibition is different each year. Minerva Arts Centre is an important asset for Llanidloes attracting visitors from across the country who come to research, learn and admire the diverse artwork on show.

Cittaslow Mold

11.68 Cittaslow is an Italian word meaning ‘slow town’. The movement began in 1999 when four Italian towns pioneered the idea of developing the Slow Food concept to include all aspects of life in towns of less than 50,000 people. They wanted to enhance local quality of life by adopting environmental, cultural and community objectives.

11.69 The Cittaslow objectives are in line with the LEADER principles of bottom-up development based on local assets. Cittaslow goals cover environment, infrastructure, quality of urban fabric, support of local products and hospitality, and community cohesion.[24] Mold’s initiative to be the first town in Wales to join the Cittaslow network was therefore an excellent fit with LEADER. Mold gained Cittaslow status in September 2006. The application was sponsored by Mold Town Council.

11.70 Cittaslow accreditation is for the whole town and recognises the outstanding contribution made by residents, businesses and organisations to improve the quality of life for people in Mold and area.

11.71 Cadwyn Clwyd supported the volunteers and Town Council to achieve the objectives, specifically the Cittaslow goal of ‘encouragement of local produce and products’ – from Mold’s rural hinterland. A Cittaslow coordinator was appointed and

[24] Cittaslow UK

awareness-raising events were held, including a Farmers' & Producers' Forum. The coordinator produced a local procurement feasibility study.

11.72 The Cittaslow Mold co-ordinator and Cittaslow volunteers visited Perth in Scotland, Ludlow in Shropshire and Aylsham in Norfork which were also members of the Cittaslow UK network, to share their experiences and exchange ideas.

11.73 Mold Town Council, supported by enthusiastic volunteers, continues to embrace the international Cittaslow goals, which underpin key strategic documents such as the Mold Town Plan 2017-2030.[25]

11.74 With a wide and varied portfolio of projects Cittaslow Mold supports local initiatives such as the Mold Food and Drink Festival and the Daniel Owen Festival. To help encourage people to shop local / use local services Mold Town Council launched a Totally Mold Voucher scheme in 2020. This has been so successful that over 80 businesses are now involved.

11.75 Supporting all aspects of the town a bi-lingual web site, Totally Mold,[26] enables organisations and businesses to add and promote their own listings and events. Networking and working in partnership is key to being a successful Cittaslow town.

11.76 Pre-pandemic Cittaslow Mold / Mold Town Council had a monthly market stall run by volunteers during Mold street market and distributed a four-page newsletter. They also attended local events and festivals to hear people's ideas and concerns, promote initiatives and events; and enable people to take part in consultations such as the development of Bailey Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

11.77 Information gathered at these stalls has been the basis for such initiatives as 'More Trees for Mold'.[27] Incrementally year-on-year up to 100 trees and hedges a year have been planted on public land in Mold over the last decade. Funding has come from a variety of sources and is presently from local enviro-friendly businesses who are keen to see tree canopy in the Town increased. Up until the pandemic the trees were planted by fantastic volunteers - from local residents to members of organisations such as CAIS and supported living schemes, presently contractors are used.

[25] Mold Town Plan 2017-2030
[26] Totally Mold
[27] Leader Live 'Businesses donate new trees to be planted around Mold'

11.78 In 2021 a partnership of Mold, Caerwys and Llangollen town councils, Mold Plastic Reduction and five local Mold and Caerwys businesses won the prestigious international Cittaslow Chiocciola Orange 2021 Award.[28] This was the first time a UK Cittaslow town had won the award. The winner - the Naked Takeaway initiative offers takeaway customers the choice of metal reusable food containers in place of the usual single-use plastic or cardboard ones.

11.79 Mold has been part of several regional initiatives including Light up Local Food and Drink, at the Mold Christmas Light switch-on event; and with Taste North East Wales at the Apple and Dance event during the Daniel Owen Festival.[29] Sharing best practise and working with other towns, especially Llangollen – another North East Wales Cittaslow town – is very important to Cittaslow Mold. Llangollen was instrumental in helping Mold to start on the plastic reduction route, especially single use food and drink packaging containers.

11.80 A successful online Community Conversation in June 2021 organised by Mold Plastic Reduction had guest speakers from the Welsh Government responsible for Deposit Return Schemes and Extended Producer Responsibility; from Flintshire County Council with some eye watering figures on how much collecting and processing food and drink packaging waste is costing the local authority / council tax payers; and a business which specialises in schemes for reusable takeaways.

11.81 University students[30] and visitors from other Cittaslow towns including China have visited Mold on fact-finding studies, which has given the Town a global reach and helped to 'put Mold on the map'.

11.82 Being a Cittaslow town has helped to focus decision makers on working holistically on the key aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability for Mold and the surrounding area, in order to improve the quality of life in the town.

[28] Cittaslow UK
[29] Leader Live 'Mold's Daniel Owen Festival returns this weekend
[30] Cittaslow UK

PLANED Networks

11.83 Creating a space where different interests and organisations can come together to share ideas, knowledge and experience has always been a central function of the LEADER methodology. LEADER LAGs perform this function, but thematic groups also have an important role to play in helping to drive forward new initiatives, build partnerships and strengthen capacity.

11.84 Two thematic networks supported by PLANED are the Pembrokeshire Sustainable Agriculture Network, (PSAN) and the Pembrokeshire Community Buildings Network. PLANED, often working with other organisations like the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS), identifies an opportunity or issue, brings people together to explore the need and if a network is deemed useful helps to organise network meetings. This can include organising speakers, researching information for network meetings, or arranging study visits.

11.85 PSAN was established in 2006. It aims to bring farming/environmental and farming organisations together to identify, discuss and take forward new ideas and opportunities linked to sustainable agriculture. Members include NFU, FUW, National Trust, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Natural Resources Wales, The Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire, (TENP), Lantra, and YFC amongst others. PSAN has covered topics such as renewable energy, adding value to woodlands and together exploring ways of tackling wildfires. PSAN continues to meet thus demonstrating even after fifteen years, the network remains relevant to organisations.

11.86 The Pembrokeshire Community Buildings Network is run in partnership with PAVS. A Pembrokeshire Halls Forum was set up in 2002 to run training courses for community buildings but the wider network has been operating since 2010.

11.87 Community venues are vitally important in rural areas. Many host basic services and all are places where isolated people can meet. Community venues are also often the places where innovative new local initiatives begin or where ideas are born.

11.88 Hall visits, talks and information sessions enable Trustees of community buildings to keep up to date as well as learn from the experience of others. Visits to halls were particularly useful before the Covid-19 pandemic as a way of seeing what others had achieved and gaining knowledge in an informal setting. The network is open to

everyone with an interest in community venues in Pembrokeshire. During the pandemic, meetings have been held online. The network is particularly important at this time as Trustees look to fully open up again to their communities safely.

Llangollen Food Festival

11.89 Cadwyn Clwyd, in partnership with Denbighshire County Council, Clwyd Fro Enterprise Agency[31] and funding from both Wrexham County Borough Council and Conwy County Borough Council, developed the first Llangollen Food Festival in 1997. The aim was to provide a platform for local food and drink producers to test the market, showcase their products directly to the consumers and shorten their supply chains. The idea came from discussions with a local food forum Cadwyn Clwyd were facilitating at the time. Llangollen Food Festival is now one of the longest running food festivals in Wales.

11.90 LEADER supported the forum to expand on their ideas and to develop the concept. Once this was established, LEADER funding covered costs such as stand hire, venue hire, marketing, cookery demonstrations, etc. Cadwyn Clwyd ran the event with LEADER funding for 10 years and then found an organisation to take over the running.

11.91 LEADER however provided much more than funding. It organised knowledge transfer for example by visiting the Limerick Food Festival to learn from an established festival and the promotion of products to other markets e.g. by taking producers to trade shows in Southern Italy to promote new markets. Locally, Cadwyn Clwyd supported the setting-up of farmers markets in Halkyn and Colwyn Bay as well as the Glyndwr Farmers Market at Rhug Estate, Corwen. A micro-producer market was set up in Ruthin. Cadwyn Clwyd was able to do this because of the contacts it made through local business and community networks.

11.92 Cadwyn Clwyd's Business Partnerships Officer still provides guidance and support to the current Llangollen Food Festival committee, which is made up entirely of volunteers. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Festival regularly attracted over 100 stalls with a truly international feel, attracting representatives from France,

[31] Clwyd Fro was a Welsh Development Agency, enterprise organisation operating at this time.

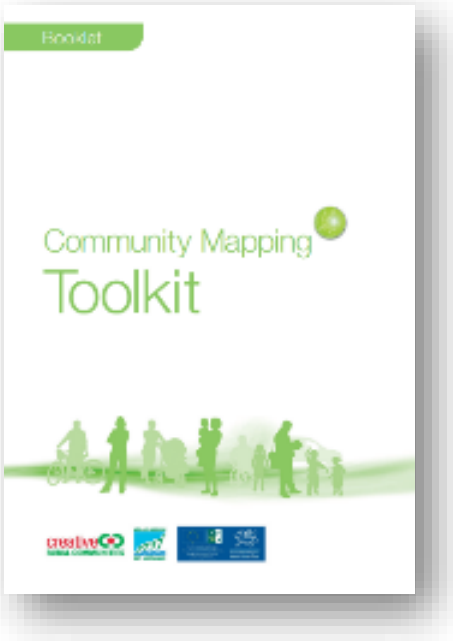
Poland, Italy and Spain. It has been named as one of the UK's Top 10 food festivals by the Daily Telegraph and Independent newspapers.[32]

11.93 In 2019, it was estimated that The Llangollen Food Festival would bring a total spend of £400,000 into the local economy by visitors.[33] Jo Edwards, chair of the Llangollen Food Festival said:

> "Cadwyn Clwyd has been supporting Llangollen Food Festival over the last 23 years and has continued to do so throughout the pandemic. Their knowledge, skills and detailed understanding of the needs of rural communities mean that Llangollen Food Festival has become one of the most well-respected and vibrant food festivals in the country, with the local community at its very heart.
>
> Being a not-for-profit organisation, with the festival run by a team of volunteers, Cadwyn Clwyd's involvement and advice has been invaluable."

[32] Llangollen Food Festival named in UK's top 10
[33] Food festival expected to bring £400k boost to Llangollen

Community mapping toolkit, Vale of Glamorgan



11.94 The Creative Rural Communities Team in the Vale of Glamorgan developed a toolkit to help local communities engage and find out what is going on in their community as part of their delivery of LEADER, publishing the final version in March 2017.

11.95 The toolkit is a user-friendly guide to help communities understand and participate in the community mapping process and includes:

- things to think about before starting the community mapping process
- how to organise community mapping events
- ideas for community engagement
- advice and guidance on how to bring all the information together to take things forward, evaluate the process and give feedback to the community.

11.96 The toolkit evolved from the Creative Rural Communities Team working with the communities of St Athan, Wenvoe and Rhoose to pilot new ways of community mapping.

- The process involved getting people talking about what already exists:
- Social Assets: community groups, organisations and individuals
- Physical Assets: community centres, open spaces and businesses
- What really matters to the community.

11.97 Several benefits of community mapping have been identified during the pilots, including:

- Building on existing strengths in the community
- Cultivating new partnerships and relationships
- Enabling the community to explore and be aware of their assets
- Identifying new resources
- Providing information across stakeholders
- Providing evidence of the need for external funding.

11.98 The use of the mapping process to provide evidence for funding is important. It can also be demonstrated by the local authority that those villages where a mapping process has been undertaken have accessed more funding on average than the other villages within the county. It is also being used by the local authority as a means to effectively allocate and target Section 106 grant funding.[34]

11.99 The community mapping process piloted in the rural parts of the Vale is considered within the Council to have been very effective and successful, so much so that the toolkit and process are now being used by the Council across the county in urban as well as in rural settings. It is therefore an example of how a process developed and piloted by LEADER can be 'mainstreamed' across a local authority. It is also an example of how close links between a local authority and a LEADER group can facilitate the mainstreaming of a successfully piloted process.

11.100 The video below provides an overview of the Community Mapping Toolkit as well as case studies for communities that have undertaken the process.

[34] The reports for the three areas can be found here: Community Mapping Pilot Project

Perfect Pitch, Vale of Glamorgan

11.101 Perfect Pitch was a pilot project developed and run by Creative Rural Communities (CRC), the LEADER group in the Vale of Glamorgan. During its work with farmers and landowners, CRC became aware of an increasing number of landowners asking about how to open a campsite. Many felt overwhelmed by the process and permissions required.[35]

11.102 The pilot project ran in the summer of 2012 and was focused on sites near the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. There were only three existing camping and caravanning sites operating in the area at the time and demand was predicted to be higher than normal due to The National Eisteddfod being held in the Vale that summer.

11.103 The key objectives of the project were to meet the anticipated increase in demand, raise the profile of camping in the Vale of Glamorgan, promote the area for tourism and deter fly camping by providing alternative sites. The project also set out to test the planning authority's attitude towards temporary campsites.

11.104 Five farm/landowners and two existing campsites took part in the pilot. The two existing campsites took part in the joint marketing exercise, the new businesses were supported to set up. The pilot excluded caravans and campervans due to regulations in force for temporary sites and the "low impact" ethos of the initiative.

11.105 Farmers and landowners were recruited by an open call consisting of direct mail, advertisements in local press outlets and online promotion. Sixteen applications came forward and were initially discussed with planning services to assess their suitability. A panel, made up from Local Action Group members then chose the successful sites.

11.106 Each successful site was invited to apply for LEADER funding up to the maximum value of £5k to support the development of their campsites. This consisted of up to £2.5k towards on-site infrastructure improvements and £2.5k towards the hire/purchase costs of on-site amenities, such as shower/toilet/hand wash facilities.

[35] Planning Solutions Consulting, (October 2012). Pitch Perfect Evaluation: Final Report.

11.107 Landowners were required obtain prior approval for all costs, thus abiding by the strict procurement guidelines required for RDP funding

11.108 LEADER was not just a funding mechanism. In fact the funding available was very small. Through LEADER, CRC was able to identify a need, design and implement a pilot project and crucially provide support to the pilot projects. This additional support included a marketing campaign, signage, support with regulation (including piloting new licensing arrangements for temporary sites) and training. CRC organised a study trip to visit sites in the Gower which facilitated peer to peer learning.

11.109 The LEADER approach was a vital element of the success of the project. The CRC officers were enthusiastic and worked with the pilots to overcome issues. This included facilitating communication with local communities when opposition to the proposals arose.

> "To do this we had to be passionate about it. The CRC team were passionate and that rubbed off on us to be passionate". Philippa George, Heritage Coast Campsite

11.110 CRC worked closely with colleagues in Environmental Health on regulation, Highways for signage and Planning for initial approvals. Through LEADER CRC was able to pull these strands together to create a viable pilot project. All sites were subject to ongoing ad-hoc monitoring throughout the trial.

11.111 Sites took 246 bookings in total during the pilot and hosted over 700 campers. The 28 day trial is estimated to have generated £60,870.24 of revenue (based on a small sample size).[36]

11.112 The pilot led to a Toolkit being produced aimed at businesses exploring new ventures. Individual campsites have acted as mentors to people thinking about similar initiatives. The pilot influenced new Supplementary Planning Guidance.[37] Four of the five pilot sites are still operating in 2021.

[36] Ibid p.17
[37] Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan 2011-2026

12. Research Tools

Scoping interviews with LAG chairs and LAG administrative body managers

1. To inform our thinking and the development of the framework that we'll be using for the evaluation, what are they key factors that we should be considering when judging the added value of LEADER and CLLD more generally in your area / in Wales?

2. What are the key issues that this evaluation should be looking at? Who are they key people that we should be speaking to?

3. What evaluation activities have been undertaken in your area, for the current programme period? We're interested in CLLD generally as well as LEADER. We're also interested in case studies and other project specific activities as well as more formal programme level evaluation activities. *Ask for copies of anything relevant identified.*

4. Do you have any evaluation activities planned for between now and the end of March 2021? For example, survey work with LAG members or projects, the development of case studies, etc. *Ask for copies of anything relevant identified. Ask for timescales for any relevant work that is identified. We'd like to avoid any potential for duplication of contacting of the same projects/stakeholders.*

5. We're interested in any evaluation activities that have been undertaken in your area during previous programme periods. Do you have any evaluation reports or project case studies that you would be able to share with us? We'd like to go as far back as we possibly can. *Ask for copies of anything relevant identified.*

6. Can you suggest who else we could speak to about previous LEADER activities in your area? For example, former LAG managers or staff, previous LAG members, etc. *Are you able to provide their contact details please?*

7. As part of the evaluation, we'd like to attend a LAG meeting to run a workshop with LAG members, or attend a virtual meeting if meetings are not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you please provide a schedule of LAG meetings? Would you be happy for us to facilitate a discussion (lasting about an hour) at a future meeting?

8. We're also planning a survey of LAG members. Are you able to share contact details for LAG members (current and previous) with us? Telephone numbers and email addresses. We're happy to sign a data sharing agreement if one is necessary. If not, would you be able to distribute an online questionnaire on our behalf?

9. We're also interested in trying to contact individuals that have been involved with previous LEADER programmes in your area, including LAG members and possibly LAG managers. Would you be able to help us pull together a list of potential contacts for your area and their contact details?

10. We’re planning a survey of projects / communities supported by LEADER. Same question as above, would you be able to share contact details for projects / communities supported with the evaluation team? We’re also potentially interested in ‘applicants’ that have not ultimately been supported by the LAG

11. Is there anything you were expecting me to ask you about that we haven’t covered?

12. Is there anything else we should be aware of or that you would like us to specifically focus on as part of the evaluation?

Scoping interviews with Welsh Government stakeholders

1. Can you please explain your role and specifically your involvement with LEADER and CLLD more generally, for the current programme period and for previous periods?

2. To inform our thinking and the development of the framework that we'll be using for the evaluation, what are they key factors that we should be considering when judging the added value of LEADER and CLLD more generally in Wales?

3. What are the key issues that this evaluation should be looking at? Who are they key people that we should be speaking to?

4. What evaluation/research activities are you aware of for the current or previous programme periods which could be useful to the evaluation? We're interested in CLLD generally as well as LEADER. We're also interested in case studies and other project specific activities as well as more formal programme level evaluation activities. *Ask for copies of anything relevant identified.*

5. Can you suggest who else we could speak to about previous LEADER/CLLD activities in Wales? *Are you able to provide their contact details please?*

6. Is there anything you were expecting me to ask you about that we haven't covered?

7. Is there anything else we should be aware of or that you would like us to specifically focus on as part of the evaluation?

Stakeholder interviews

1. Overall, how important has the LEADER programme been in Wales / in your area? Please explain your answer

2. To what extent does the LEADER programme add value to local development in Wales / in your area? Please consider the following in your response:

    a. Creating more sustainable projects
    b. Supporting projects that would not exist or succeed otherwise
    c. Trialling new and innovative ideas/approaches/project
    d. Engaged members of the community who wouldn't otherwise be engaged

3. Has LEADER had any impact on improving governance in local areas? Local governance includes things like involving cooperation amongst local partners, community and stakeholder involvement in decision making and the ability to manage funds.

4. To what extent have services and local infrastructure in rural areas improved as a result of LEADER?

5. How many and with what effect have employment opportunities been created via the intervention?

6. To what extent has LEADER resulted in increased adaptiveness and resilience in the local communities in which LEADER has been delivered?

7. What other community-led local development (CLLD) approaches, in your area, in Wales or beyond, would you identify as being comparable in some way to LEADER? [38]

8. In what ways can the CLLD approach potentially continue to add value to rural development in Wales / in your area beyond the end of EU funding in Wales?

9. To what extent can the lessons learned from applying CLLD in a rural context be applied in other contexts?

10. Finally, is there anything further you would like to add or feel is important to mention within this interview?

[38] A basic definition of CLLD is the involvement of local people, organisations, etc. in identifying priorities, developing solutions and making decisions about the use of resources in the local area to address local challenges and opportunities.

LAG Chair and Administrative Body Manager Interviews

Delivery of the Programme

1. Overall, how effectively do you feel that LEADER has been delivered in your area?

    a. How effectively do you feel each aspect of LEADER has been implemented and delivered in your area?
    b. How closely aligned to LEADER principles has LEADER activity been in your area?
    c. What have been the strengths of the management of LEADER in your area?
    d. What have been the weaknesses?

2. How has the Local Development Strategy been used in the delivery of LEADER in your areas?

    a. How often and how centrally are Wales' LEADER themes addressed in the Local Development Strategy and project proposals?
    b. To what extent does the Local Development Strategy continue to be 'live' throughout the LEADER programme period?

3. To what extent is the LAG representative of the local area?

    a. Have there been any issues recruiting particular groups or sectors?
    b. Has the LAG been successful in getting groups that do not usually participate involved in decision-making?

4. In your view, how effective and productive is the relationship between the LAG and the administrative body?

5. To what extent does the current LAG administrative body model provide effective and sufficient support to LAGs?

    a. What impact - if any- does the structure of the LAG administrative bodies have on how these bodies support LAGs and the outcomes that are produced?

6. Are LAGs of a suitable scale to identify the needs and opportunities specific to an area?

7. Have budgets been allocated effectively across each of the four priorities within your area?

8. How much interest has there been in cooperation projects in your area?

9. Do the cooperative projects supported contribute to the LEADER aims?

10. What would you say are the key lessons learnt from your involvement in LEADER?

Programme Design and Management by Welsh Government

11. How effectively has the Welsh Government performed as a Managing Authority for the scheme in the present period?

12. To what extent are programme roles and responsibilities appropriate for project delivery? To what extent are they clearly understood by stakeholders?

13. How effective is the system for communication around LEADER?

    a. To what extent do LAGs communicate effectively with one another?
    b. To what extent has the systematising of communication about projects (via the Rural Wales network) added value to the programme and enhanced opportunities for networking?

14. To what extent do existing monitoring and evaluation arrangements for LEADER support the delivery of the programme and enable effective evaluation?

15. How have changes in the programme design of LEADER across different programme periods impacted on delivery, effectiveness, and outcomes of LEADER in your area and more widely? For example:

    a. How have financial management decisions (particularly the removal of State Aid cover) affected the achievement of LEADER's aims?
    b. How has requiring match funding impacted LAGs?
    c. To what extent has the shift from a cross-Wales competitive process led to changes in project selection and outcomes/value-for-money?

16. How effectively does the payment and claims system assist administrative bodies in making timely, straightforward, and compliant payments?

Outcomes

17. To what extent has LEADER supported local development in your local area?

18. To what extent does LEADER add value to the projects it supports?

    a. To what extent does LEADER result in more sustainable projects?
    b. To what extent does LEADER result in support for projects that would not succeed otherwise?

c. Are there any commonalities in the projects, groups or individuals who don't achieve funding through LEADER?
d. Are projects used effectively as a tool for trialling approaches that could be implemented beyond the local area?

Common Evaluation Questions

19. To what extent has LEADER enabled rural people to participate in 'local actions' as a result of the intervention?

    a. To what extent has LEADER engaged members of the community who wouldn't be engaged (participating in governance structures and taking part or benefitting from projects)?

20. How effective has LEADER been in increasing social capital in local areas?

    a. How likely is it that any outcomes in the area of improved social capital will continue beyond the LEADER funding period?

21. How effective has LEADER been in improving governance in local areas? How likely is it that any outcomes in the area of improved local governance will continue beyond the LEADER funding period?

    a. To what extent has the partnership structure succeeded in creating 'shared decision-making'?
    b. To what extent has the delivery of LEADER enhanced levels of trust in bodies delivering services?

22. To what extent have services and local infrastructure in rural areas improved as a result of the LEADER programme?

23. To what extent has access to services and local infrastructure increased in local areas as a result of the intervention?

24. How many, and with what effect, have employment opportunities been created via the intervention?

25. To what extent has LEADER resulted in increased adaptiveness and resilience in the local communities in which LEADER has been delivered?

Cross-cutting themes

26. To what extent has the LEADER programme in Wales successfully addressed the European Commission's cross-cutting themes

    a. Innovation
    b. Environmental Sustainability
    c. Climate change

Online survey of individuals and organisations involved in LEADER in Wales

INTRODUCTION

A brief introduction before we get into the questions. Funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales (2014-2020), the LEADER programme is delivered in Wales via 18 Local Action Groups (known as LAGs) covering eligible wards (i.e. the rural areas) in 21 local authority areas in Wales. The programme has, however, existed in various forms in Wales since the 1990s. Please note that if there are any questions in the questionnaire that you cannot answer, feel free to leave them blank and move on.

Let’s start by establishing how you’ve been involved with the LEADER programme in Wales, to make sure that we ask you the right questions. Please tick each of the following that applies to you:

- [ ] I am or have been a member/advisor of a Local Action Group (LAG) during the current programme period (2014 onwards)
- [ ] I have been a member/advisor of a LAG during a previous programme period (before 2014)
- [ ] I’m currently a member of staff for an organisation that is administrating/delivering the LEADER programme on behalf of a LAG
- [ ] I used to work as a member of staff for an organisation that is administrating/delivering the LEADER programme on behalf of a LAG
- [ ] My project/organisation has received support (financial and/or non-financial) from the LEADER programme in this and/or previous programme periods
- [ ] My organisation has been contracted to deliver a service as part of a LEADER programme in this and/or previous programme periods
- [ ] I work in an area where the LEADER programme is active but am not directly involved
- [ ] I’ve been involved in one or more projects supported by the LEADER programme (as a volunteer, a participant, a beneficiary, etc.)
- [ ] I’ve been involved with LEADER is some other way, not described above

Please could you explain a bit more about the other way(s) that you are or were involved in LEADER, not described in the question above:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In which area(s) have you been involved in LEADER? Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Anglesey
- [ ] Bridgend
- [ ] Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent
- [ ] Carmarthenshire
- [ ] Ceredigion
- [ ] Conwy
- [ ] Denbighshire
- [ ] Flintshire
- [ ] Gwynedd
- [ ] Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taf
- [ ] Monmouthshire & Newport
- [ ] Neath Port Talbot
- [ ] Pembrokeshire
- [ ] Powys
- [ ] Swansea
- [ ] Torfaen
- [ ] Vale of Glamorgan
- [ ] Wrexham

In a nutshell, how do you describe the purpose of the LEADER programme?

For example, if a friend or colleague asks you to describe what the programme does, what would you say?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Overall, how important is/has the LEADER programme been in the areas where you live or work?
Please think about this question in terms of previous versions of the programme, as well as the current version, if you've been involved with previous versions.

- ○ Extremely important
- ○ Very important
- ○ Moderately important
- ○ Slightly important
- ○ Not at all important

Please very briefly explain your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We'd like to know a bit more about your role. Please could you give us your job title.

_____

Roughly, for how many years have you been involved with the LEADER programme?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 or more

Are you currently a member of the LAG and attending meetings?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Which sector did you represent on the LAG?

- ○ Private sector
- ○ Public sector
- ○ Third/voluntary sector
- ○ Other

Please specify which sector you represented.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Roughly, how long ago did you stop being a member of the LAG/attending meetings?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 years or more

Roughly, how many years up to the point at which you stopped, had you been a member of the LAG/attending meetings?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 years or more

Why did you stop being a member/attending LAG meetings? *Tick all that apply:*

- ☐ Change of role/job
- ☐ No longer interested
- ☐ Lack of time/capacity
- ☐ Another reason

Please specify why else you stopped being a member/attending LAG meetings.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Roughly, how many years have you been a member of the LAG/attending meetings?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10 years or more

Would you be interested in re-joining the LAG/attending meetings in the future?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

What would you say is the purpose of the LAG? For example, if a friend or colleague asks you to describe what the LAG does, what would you say?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How effectively has the LAG/programme performed the following roles?

	Extremely effective	Very effective	Moderately effective	Slightly effective	Not effective at all
Being representative of the local area/community	○	○	○	○	○
Analysing the needs and priorities of the local area	○	○	○	○	○
Consulting with the local community	○	○	○	○	○
Developing new and innovative ideas/approaches to rural development	○	○	○	○	○
Encouraging the development of ideas/projects in local areas	○	○	○	○	○
Encouraging people/organisations to get involved in activities to develop the local areas for the first time	○	○	○	○	○
Encouraging networking and cooperation amongst those involved in rural development in the local area	○	○	○	○	○

As you'll be aware, each LAG has a body which undertakes administrative activities on their behalf including employing staff, reporting to the Welsh Government, dealing with funding and so on.
How effective is the working relationship between the LAG and the administrative body in your area?

- ○ Extremely effective
- ○ Very effective
- ○ Moderately effective
- ○ Slightly effective
- ○ Not effective at all

Why do you think this about the working relationship between the LAG and the administrative body in your area?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How familiar are you with the activities and projects being undertaken by LAGs in...?

	Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Slightly familiar	Not familiar at all
Other parts of Wales	○	○	○	○	○
Other parts of the UK	○	○	○	○	○
Other parts of Europe	○	○	○	○	○

We're interested in how LAGs are spending their time. Generally, what proportion of time has the LAG spent doing the following activities?
Please use the sliders to indicate what percentage of the LAGs time is spent doing each of the following tasks. Note that the total cannot be more than 100%. So, if you're already on 100%, you will not be able to move the sliders that follow until you've reduced the ones previously. There's no right or wrong answer to this question. We're simply interested in understanding and comparing how LAGs are operating in Wales.
If you feel you are unable to answer this question, please drag the slider for the last response to 100%

_____ Discussing the needs of the local areas and priorities for the programme
_____ Assessing applications for funding/support
_____ Reviewing financial reports
_____ Reviewing activity/output reports
_____ Discussing generally what has been achieved to date
_____ Other
_____ I can't answer this

What are the other tasks that you are referring to above?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Has the existence of the LEADER programme had a positive impact on local governance in your area?
Local governance includes things like involving cooperation amongst local partners, community and stakeholder involvement in decision making and the ability to manage funds.

- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Has being a member of the LAG had any impact on your working relationships with other organisations that are active in the local area?

- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

In what ways has it impacted on your working relationships?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why hasn't it had an impact on your working relationships?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'to a great extent'), how would you rate the extent to which LEADER programme activities have generated the outcomes listed below?

We’re aware that this is a very broad/general question. Other elements of our research are going into greater detail. The purpose of this question is to collect a general view of the issues.
If you were not involved in the programme before 2014, please that part of the question blank.

	Since 2014 (current programme)					Pre 2014(previous programmes)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Setting up new businesses
Safeguarding and creating jobs
Sustaining or improving access to local services and infrastructure
Increasing individual's skills and abilities
Increasing organisations, knowledge, skills and abilities ("capacity building")
Safeguarding/enhancing the environment
Getting people/organisations involved in rural development activities for the first time

Please very briefly describe your project or the activity which was supported by the LEADER programme.

_____

Excluding financial support, what other types of support did you receive from the team delivering the LEADER programme in your area?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Advice and/or assistance with applying for LEADER funds administered by a LAG
- ☐ Advice and/or assistance with applying to other EU and Welsh Government Rural Development funds
- ☐ Advice and/or assistance with applying to other funds
- ☐ General advice on developing a project
- ☐ Assistance with promoting a project
- ☐ Assistance on implementing a project
- ☐ Other
- ☒ None of the above

Please specify what other support you received from the team

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How useful was this support?

- ○ Extremely useful
- ○ Very useful
- ○ Moderately useful
- ○ Slightly useful
- ○ Not at all useful

Did the project or activity which you received support for change as a result of this support?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Was the project or activity for which you receive support from the LEADER programme better as a result of this support?

- ○ Much better
- ○ Somewhat better
- ○ About the same
- ○ Somewhat worse
- ○ Much worse

Did you receive financial support from the LEADER programme in your area?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Would the project/activity for which you received financial support have happened without the support you received from the LEADER programme?

Just to stress that 'yes' is not the wrong answer to provide here. We're interested in what would have happened anyway if LEADER funding had not been available to you.

- ○ Yes – all of it (for example, you would have accessed funding from another source)
- ○ Yes – but at a smaller scale or only some elements of the project/activity would have happened
- ○ Not at all

Were you referred or signposted to other potential sources of support (financial or non-financial) by the LEADER team?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/can't remember

Did the referral lead to any other support being accessed by you?
For example, did you secure financial support or further advice and guidance as a result of the referral?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/can't remember

How much experience of rural development activities and projects did you have before you received support for the activity or projects we're discussing here? Our definition of 'rural development' is any activities (projects, etc.) designed to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in a rural area.

- ○ None
- ○ A little
- ○ A lot

Has your involvement in LEADER encouraged you to become more involved in rural development activities in your area in the future?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If LEADER supported a specific project, what is the status of that project as of today? **Please note - if LEADER funding was used to undertake projects such as a feasibility study, we are interested in any project that may have been developed as a result rather than the study itself.**

- ○ Active and currently receiving LEADER funding
- ○ Active and received funding from LEADER in the past
- ○ Active but did not receive LEADER funding
- ○ Closed/inactive
- ○ Other

Please specify what the status of your project is.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is your intention once LEADER funding comes to an end?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is the project self-financed (i.e. operating commercially), or is the project being funded by an alternate funder?

- ○ Self-financing
- ○ Funded
- ○ Other

Please specify how the project is currently being funded.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Would the project exist today if you have not been previously supported by the LEADER programme?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Please explain the circumstances in which the project/activity came to an end. If there was never any intention to continue the project, please note that here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you and/or your organisation developed new skills or capabilities as a result of your involvement with the LEADER programme?

- ☐ Yes - my organisation
- ☐ Yes - me personally
- ☐ No

Please tell us a little bit about those skills and capabilities.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How likely are you to recommend getting involved in a rural development activity in some way to a friend or colleague? Our definition of 'rural development' is any activities (projects, etc.) designed to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in a rural area.

- ○ Definitely will
- ○ Probably will
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably will not
- ○ Definitely will not

Are you more or less likely to recommend getting involved in rural development in some way to a friend or colleague as a result of your involvement with the LEADER programme?

- ○ More
- ○ Less
- ○ The programme has not influenced this

Which sector is your current role in?

- ○ Private sector
- ○ Public sector
- ○ Third/voluntary sector
- ○ Other

Please specify which sector your current role is in:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please provide your current job title:

_____

What was your job when you were involved with LEADER?

_____

Roughly when were you involved in the LEADER programme?

Has your experience and/or learning during your time with the LEADER programme had any influence subsequently on your career or how you work?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Please briefly explain what this influence has been.

_____

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire. We're planning to speak to a sample of people to discuss some of the issues covered in this questionnaire further. Would you be happy to be contacted by a researcher for a further discussion?
Please note that you can always say no when you're contacted even if you say yes here!

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Thank you. Please provide your contact details below.

- ○ Name _____
- ○ Email _____
- ○ Telephone number
_____
- ○ Preferred language of contact (Welsh or English)
_____

That's it! Please use the box below to add any further comments you may wish to make about the LEADER programme and/or to provide any feedback on the questionnaire.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Please click the 'submit' button to record your responses.

13. Breakdown of online survey responses

Question/role in LEADER→ Local Authority area↓	I am or have been a member/advisor of a Local Action Group (LAG) during the current programme period (2014 onwards)		I have been a member/advisor of a LAG during a previous programme period (before 2014)		I'm currently a member of staff for an organisation that is administrating/delivering the LEADER programme on behalf of a LAG		I used to work as a member of staff for an organisation that is administrating/delivering the LEADER programme on behalf of a LAG		My project/organisation has received support (financial and/or non-financial) from the LEADER programme in this and/or previous programme periods		My organisation has been contracted to deliver a service as part of a LEADER programme in this and/or previous programme periods		I work in an area where the LEADER programme is active but am not directly involved		I've been involved in one or more projects supported by the LEADER programme (as a volunteer, a participant, a beneficiary, etc.)		I've been involved with LEADER is some other way, not described above	
Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taf	5.5%	6	5.7%	2	1.7%	1	0.0%	0	7.3%	7	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	2.2%	1	0.0%	0
Wrexham	5.5%	6	5.7%	2	13.3%	8	0.0%	0	3.1%	3	2.9%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Denbighshire	7.3%	8	8.6%	3	13.3%	8	0.0%	0	2.1%	2	5.7%	2	0.0%	0	6.5%	3	0.0%	0
Flintshire	3.6%	4	5.7%	2	13.3%	8	0.0%	0	1.0%	1	5.7%	2	0.0%	0	2.2%	1	0.0%	0
Neath Port Talbot	7.3%	8	0.0%	0	1.7%	1	0.0%	0	2.1%	2	0.0%	0	33.3%	1	6.5%	3	0.0%	0
Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent	2.7%	3	2.9%	1	1.7%	1	0.0%	0	6.3%	6	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	2.2%	1	0.0%	0
Monmouthshire & Newport	3.6%	4	2.9%	1	0.0%	0	4.0%	1	9.4%	9	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	4.4%	2	12.5%	1
Anglesey	5.5%	6	2.9%	1	6.7%	4	4.0%	1	5.2%	5	20.0%	7	0.0%	0	10.9%	5	12.5%	1
Conwy	6.4%	7	8.6%	3	3.3%	2	4.0%	1	2.1%	2	8.6%	3	0.0%	0	2.2%	1	12.5%	1
Torfaen	4.6%	5	2.9%	1	5.0%	3	4.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Swansea	2.7%	3	2.9%	1	11.7%	7	4.0%	1	6.3%	6	2.9%	1	0.0%	0	2.2%	1	0.0%	0
Powys	8.2%	9	11.4%	4	0.0%	0	4.0%	1	16.7%	16	5.7%	2	33.3%	1	8.7%	4	25.0%	2
Gwynedd	3.6%	4	2.9%	1	6.7%	4	4.0%	1	4.2%	4	17.1%	6	0.0%	0	10.9%	5	25.0%	2
Bridgend	7.3%	8	5.7%	2	1.7%	1	8.0%	2	5.2%	5	2.9%	1	0.0%	0	10.9%	5	0.0%	0
Pembrokeshire	6.4%	7	2.9%	1	1.7%	1	12.0%	3	15.6%	15	11.4%	4	0.0%	0	6.5%	3	12.5%	1
Carmarthenshire	3.6%	4	2.9%	1	1.7%	1	12.0%	3	1.0%	1	2.9%	1	0.0%	0	8.7%	4	0.0%	0
Vale of Glamorgan	10.9%	12	17.1%	6	10.0%	6	16.0%	4	5.2%	5	5.7%	2	33.3%	1	4.4%	2	0.0%	0
Ceredigion	5.5%	6	8.6%	3	6.7%	4	24.0%	6	7.3%	7	8.6%	3	0.0%	0	10.9%	5	0.0%	0
Total	Total	110	Total	35	Total	60	Total	25	Total	96	Total	35	Total	3	Total	46	Total	8