

Fens Adventurers: Rural Development Programme 2008 to 2013



2 Year Delivery Plan (1st January 2012 to 31st December 2013)



“To develop a thriving farming and rural economy which contribute to and is supported by the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Fens’ communities”

30th November 2011



Fens Adventurers Local Action Group (LAG) delivers the Rural Development Programme England in Cambridgeshire & West Norfolk through the Leader approach. The LAG is managed by Cambridgeshire County Council & Cambridgeshire ACRE and supported by Defra, Local Authorities & the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: *Europe investing in rural areas*

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose

This document reflects progress made in delivering the Fens Adventurers Rural Development Programme and how we will deliver in future following reduction of the overall programme from £4 million to £3.129 million with budgets now set on the basis of spend on quarter days throughout the financial years. This creates significant pressure on managing the project profiles to optimise spend and to avoid any further losses to the programme should projects fail to spend to their agreed profiles.

The recession continues to impact on the general economy with the food and farming sector also continuing to be affected by fluctuating world commodity prices. Unemployed numbers across the FARDP area are rising as jobs remain limited in scope and availability. The five LAG meetings over the year have enabled smooth progression for applicants but delivery and spend inevitably lags behind in many instances making some 'over-commitment' important if possible.

The Local Action Group have considered this updating report and it is endorsed as the realistic way forward to deliver the almost final phase of the programme.

Signed :

Philip Bradshaw, Chair of the Fens Adventurers Local Action Group

1.2 Context

The global economic downturn for the private and public sector continues to create a very cautious and limited investment approach with the number of enquiries and limited ambition combining with difficulties in accessing bank funding.

The 25 Members of the Local Action Group (mostly non-public sector) are actively involved and their contributions to proposals being well balanced and informed. The programme still has a focus on:

Sustainable food and farming
Sustainable rural tourism

Rural business development
Addressing gaps in basic Services

Along with cross cutting themes of 'climate change' and 'access to the countryside'.

Defra are now taking a more consistent national approach to delivering the programme with a focus on their new 6 priorities :

1. The competitiveness of the farming sector
2. Skills and knowledge transfer
3. Support for upland areas
4. Rural broadband
5. Tourism
6. Simplification of processes

Clearly the Fens Adventurers Programme is in line with priorities 1, 2 (through Land Skills East), 5 and 6 and there is little obvious need to change direction as a consequence. As we are not an upland area we can only strive to benefit 'the Fens' and we are very willing to support rural broadband initiatives where possible. To date we have had tentative interest only from a Prickwillow community group who have failed to take up the offer of support.

The Fens Adventurers area straddles the administrative boundaries of five districts: Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire. The population covered is 165,000 with a settlement pattern characterised by a small number of market towns, some large villages and smaller hamlets which grew up on Fen islands. Ramsey, March, Chatteris, Littleport, Soham and Downham Market are included within the area –with most of urban Wisbech and Ely being excluded to provide greater scope for land based business investments. The areas comprises the silt and peaty fens served by a complex set of drainage channels and pumping stations providing coherence to the area where continual management of water levels is critical.

The area is hugely dependent upon agriculture and the related supply chains of activity up and down-stream of primary production on largely Grade 1 soil. Around 6.5% of the work-force is employed in agriculture with over three times that employed in food processing, packaging, storage and distribution. In the East of England the agri-food sector is a major employer with a labour force in excess of 375,000 people of whom 122,000 are employed in agriculture, food processing and related businesses, 115,000 in food retail and 139,000 in the catering sector. Nationally 2008 saw a 3% rise in agricultural employment due to increased production but 67% of employers reported a skills gap in their employees.

The Labour Force Survey of 2008 showed that the English agricultural workforce is

- Older, with 24% of employees over the age of 55 compared to 16% in all sectors of the economy
- Has more employees, 58% with qualifications at level 2 or below compared to 47% for all sectors
- 50% of employees took '2 years or more to learn to do the job well' compared to 29% in all sectors

An increasing number of farmers have contracted out their land, diversified and entered in to environmental agreements to support conservation and wildlife. Waterways, wildlife, nature reserves and fine medieval churches are major attractions for visitors.

The population of the area is growing and out-commuting levels are high. 86% of local businesses employ fewer than 10 people and GVA per head puts most of the area in the lowest quartile nationally –classified by Defra as a lagging area. Generally low incomes influence aspirations and related efforts to improve skills. Like many rural areas service delivery involves a rural premium not least with the impact of the increased cost of fuel and scant public transport services.

1.3 Challenges remain

- The future financial and environmental sustainability of the food farming
- Economic underperformance and low levels of entrepreneurship
- Supporting communities to provide sustainable basic services
- The global recession undermining ambitions and confidence

2. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

2.1 Context

There is an ongoing need to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by the programme –made difficult as the area is covered by eight local newspapers-Wisbech Standard, Cambs Times, Ely Standard, Hunts Post, Lynn News & Advertiser, Cambridge Evening News, Eastern Daily Press & Peterborough Evening Telegraph. Such split coverage makes getting the message out to potential applicants difficult but more publicity should be secured with case studies promoting possibilities.

Networks have been used to get the message out to the various business communities across the area. This has included local authority based tourism groups, the NFU (the most successful), the CLA, Economic

Development Officers, Local Authority Newsletters and more recently the Cambridgeshire Chamber Of Commerce. Mail shots to farmers and micro enterprises have been undertaken with our second version of the Prospectus and flyers and these will be undertaken yet again.

‘Case Studies’ have been included in the printed material and the web site –to bring a sense of local realism to the programme –to encourage more applicants to explore the opportunity.

2.2 Overview of 2011

The established programme team has changed as Hannah left and Jane came on board part time to fulfil the role of Monitoring and Administration officer. The distinct and complementary roles of the team have remained in working with partners and applicants which has enabled:

- Continued ‘selling’ of the programme and the various measures
- Increasing awareness of the opportunities the programme affords to partners and agencies
- Greater sharing of information to increase awareness of the requirements and timescales
- Updating and disseminating publicity material and forms to help applicants
- Optimising use of the Simplified Application Forms for up to £100,000 of RDPE grant support
- Building the capacity of the Local Action & Steering Groups encouraging debate and sharing information to optimise their input
- Building a ‘database’ of contacts, both intermediaries and potential applicants within Data Protection Act limitations around sharing and using it for targeted mail shots
- Dealing with enquiries, determining their potential and encouraging and supporting eligible applications to come forward.
- Updating the ‘project Database’ to enable Defra to access reports and accurately record progress from offers, to milestones, to spend and claims
- Progressing projects through to offer letter – working with applicants to provide all appropriate information and to meet business deadlines wherever possible
- Building the content and format of the website – including case studies to disseminate information and encourage enquiries–see www.cambsacre.org.uk/fensadventurers
- Networking with other RDPE teams to share understanding and good practice and raise common issues with Defra
- Networking with intermediaries with an interest in the programme for their clients , including NFU, CLA, Accountants, Local Authorities and Land Agents
- The new Monitoring and Administrative Officer has received some training on the Database to embed information and help with future reporting and monitoring requirements.
- Balancing selling the programme while being realistic about the funds available
- Using the State Aid ‘toolkit’ as required
- Visiting enquirers to test their eligibility and need for the programme and managing expectations
- Making applicants aware that developing the ‘Business Case’ is critical and encouraging them to seek professional support where needed
- Undertaking monitoring and audit visits which have increased as more projects deliver. The security of confidential information in hard copy and electronic means has been addressed to safeguard applicants.
- Separation of ‘duties’ to meet with routine inspections becoming more frequent. Compliance visits will be undertaken by the Defra team which reduces some local pressures
- Marketing the programme opportunities to encourage more applications has included disseminating the new Prospectus and promotional material which contains case studies
- Undertaking ‘Evaluations ‘ of projects when closed to complete each file

2.3 Commitments & Spend

The following is a summary of the investments which have been supported (with Offer Letter) since the start of the programme; the key variance is between what has been offered and what has been spent:

| | PROJECT NAME | MEASURE | END DATE | Offer Letter (check) | RDPE ACTUAL |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Dragonfly Centre @ Wicken Fen | 313: Tourism | 31/12/2010 | £35,464.46 | £35,464.46 |
| 2 | Completely Chilli Expansion | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £5,800.00 | £4,079.90 |
| 3 | Little Thetford Acorns | 321: Basic Services | 31/07/2011 | £18,763.00 | £18,763.00 |
| 4 | Little Teds Day Nursery | 321: Basic Services | 30/11/2010 | £5,814.48 | £5,814.48 |
| 5 | Enhancing Digital Photography | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £10,000.00 | £7,685.64 |
| 6 | Horspool Embroidery | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £16,523.00 | £16,253.35 |
| 7 | Tall Trees Leisure Park | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2010 | £36,060.84 | £36,060.84 |
| 8 | Highline Extreme | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2010 | £90,000.00 | £84,426.56 |
| 9 | Maximum Precision | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £25,200.00 | £18,519.34 |
| 10 | CN Seeds | 123: Adding Value | 31/07/2011 | £50,000.00 | £50,000.00 |
| 11 | Fen Paddle Company | 313: Tourism | 28/02/2011 | £3,271.86 | £3,271.86 |
| 12 | Mustard Seed Co-op | 123: Adding Value | 30/06/2013 | £49,987.00 | £35,140.88 |
| 13 | KECC Community Hub | 321: Basic Services | 31/05/2011 | £35,630.85 | £35,630.85 |
| 14 | Soham Viva Centre | 321: Basic Services | 30/06/2011 | £48,052.55 | £48,052.55 |
| 15 | March Mooring Upgrade | 313: Tourism | 30/09/2011 | £9,219.58 | £9,219.58 |
| 16 | Freshfields Packhouse | 123: Adding Value | 31/12/2012 | £86,663.00 | £69,000.00 |
| 17 | Common Farm Livery | 312: Micro Enterprise | 28/02/2011 | £25,581.93 | £25,581.93 |
| 18 | Heading Onion Facility | 121: Modernisation | 28/02/2011 | £125,000.00 | £125,000.00 |
| 19 | Green Access Initiative | 313: Tourism | 31/05/2013 | £175,000.00 | £58,102.43 |
| 20 | M & J Engineering | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/03/2012 | £42,854.00 | £40,686.30 |
| 21 | Stained Glass Museum | 313: Tourism | 31/12/2011 | £24,497.00 | £5,500.00 |
| 22 | Westmoor Small Holding | 312: Micro Enterprise | 30/06/2012 | £10,102.00 | £3,473.96 |
| 23 | Munns Bottling | 312: Micro Enterprise | 30/06/2011 | £36,381.00 | £34,141.00 |
| 24 | Manea School of Gardening | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/07/2011 | £12,100.76 | £12,100.76 |
| 25 | Halls for Hire | 321: Basic Services | 30/07/2012 | £39,602.00 | £25,379.38 |
| 26 | AV8 | 312: Micro Enterprise | 30/11/2011 | £4,240.00 | £736.61 |
| 27 | Ramsey Rural Life Museum | 313: Tourism | 31/12/2012 | £18,624.00 | £516.96 |
| 28 | Nene Lodge | 313: Tourism | 30/09/2011 | £19,273.00 | £13,322.55 |
| 29 | Kingsfield Pre-school | 321: Basic Services | 30/06/2011 | £47,086.00 | £47,086.00 |
| 30 | Sourced Food Ltd | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/10/2011 | £11,281.00 | £6,065.58 |
| 31 | Wicken Fen Cycle Hire | 313: Tourism | 31/12/2011 | £19,800.00 | £19,800.00 |
| 32 | Cambs Mopeds | 321: Basic Services | 30/09/2012 | £36,450.00 | £36,450.00 |
| 33 | Aqueduct Heating & Plumbing | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £5,612.00 | £2,760.96 |
| 34 | Watergull Orchards Expansion | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £31,047.00 | £31,047.00 |
| 35 | Fenland Farming Celery Packhouse | 123: Adding Value | 31/08/2011 | £67,080.00 | £63,216.48 |
| 36 | Ramsey Walled Garden | 313: Tourism | 30/09/2011 | £3,103.34 | £3,103.34 |
| 37 | Hill Farm Processing | 123: Adding Value | | £23,064.00 | £0.00 |
| 38 | Fields End Caravan Park | 312: Micro Enterprise | 30/09/2011 | £6,404.07 | £6,404.07 |
| 39 | Lazer2Day | 313: Tourism | 31/01/2012 | £18,852.00 | £18,851.55 |
| 40 | Second Wind - Denver Mill | 313: Tourism | 30/09/2012 | | £0.00 |
| 41 | Black Horse Drove | 321: Basic Services | 31/12/2011 | £7,626.00 | £0.00 |
| 42 | Wilson Trade Curtains | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £4,655.65 | £4,655.65 |
| 43 | Ring Track | 312: Micro Enterprise | 31/12/2011 | £10,200.00 | £0.00 |
| 44 | Newling Fruits | 123: Adding Value | 31/07/2012 | £124,603.00 | £67,244.50 |
| 45 | Wesfield Farms Grader | 123: Adding Value | 31/12/2011 | £36,501.77 | £36,501.77 |
| 46 | Denny Abbey | 313: Tourism | 30/09/2012 | £7,596.00 | £0.00 |
| | | TOTALS | | £1,520,668.14 | £1,165,112.07 |

The programme team are working to varying degrees with around a dozen 'pipeline' projects totalling around half a million pounds, most of which are likely to come forward for consideration by the LAG over the coming months. Inevitably as funds get 'spent' the competition for available funds will only increase and whilst not a problem for now –this is likely to be a challenge for 2013/14.

The programme is well on track to hit all initial targets save for that relating to livestock enterprises and equally important we have tried to ensure proposals have wider economic benefits and provide good value for money. As the allocated budget was reduced to £3,129,000 there remains £900,861 to invest and targets have been reduced in line with funding as illustrated in the table on page 24.

Applications remain few in number and the demise of Business Link and the loss of local contacts on the ground have resulted in a loss of profile in the area. All involved in delivering the Fens Adventurers Programme are aware of the need to ensure spend is achieved and that forecasts developed with applicants are realistic and viable and the LAG has been robust and rejected applications where it was felt that projects could not deliver.

The monitoring of proposals post offer letter has become critical as more new projects go live. Monitoring has increased over the life of the programme – and the team are spreading workloads to provide the appropriate balance between development of new ideas, supporting applicants and following this through at every stage up to a decision being made. Inception meetings with applicants have proved very important to ensure there is a full appreciation of the requirements of the programme and to eliminate any misunderstandings. Support through the claims process is not inconsiderable with greater emphasis now on spend and ensuring money is paid out as effectively as possible. Progress has seen a few projects completed and consequently 'closed' and this will be more tightly managed to stop projects continually seeking extensions. By closing down projects in such a managed way it is possible to manage the budget more effectively and re-allocating under-spent funds as projects are finalised.

3. IMPACTS ACHIEVED SO FAR?

In general terms few large investments have come forward –and it had been hoped it would be a programme that delivered fewer larger projects which create big impacts. Whilst this has been disappointing it has also meant that by supporting almost 50 initiatives from the outset there has been a wider spread of benefit amongst smaller business and across more communities. This has the advantage of spreading risk as if a proposal fails to deliver in full there are still general benefits being delivered.

When the initial allocations by measure were made there was a lack of appreciation of the eligibility which enabled funds to be allocated. A key allocation to measure 311 Farm Diversification has been almost impossible to award as most fen farmers and growers have already diversified and for many their major source of income is the diversification. Consequently it was agreed to close down this measure and reappportion it in other measures. This has resulted in greater use of Measure 312 to support investment on small farms to enable investment to go ahead.

An omission which this plan aims to address is to allocate funds within Axis 1 from Measure 123 'Added Value to Agricultural Products' to Measure 125 'Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture'. To quote 'Chapter 5 of Defra's Rural Development Programme for England', 'While much of England is well supplied with water, there are significant pressures on water resources in many of the drier areas of the county, particularly in the East and South East Regions'. A series of dry years particularly springs and to a lesser extent summers has seen water shortages and crops in urgent need of irrigation to optimise their yield and quality. Demand for winter storage reservoirs has been made and the Local Action Group are keen to respond to this need and thereby spread the benefits to others who are not in a position to invest in winter filled reservoirs.

Chart 1: Commitment by Measure

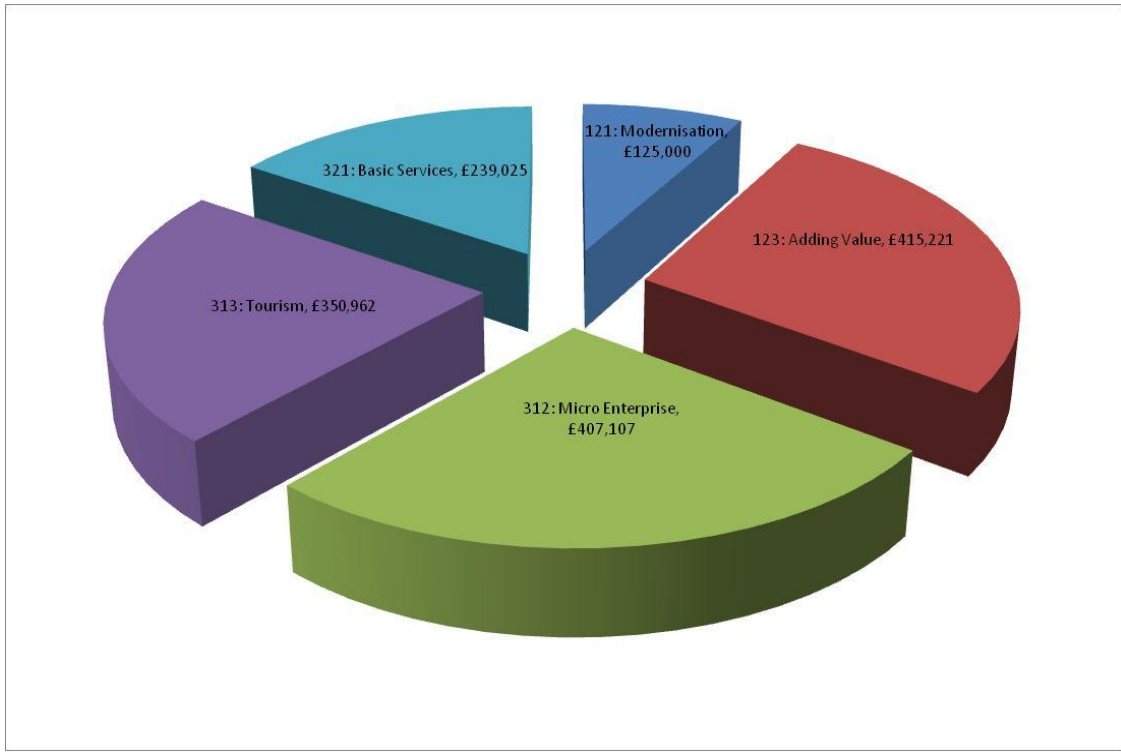
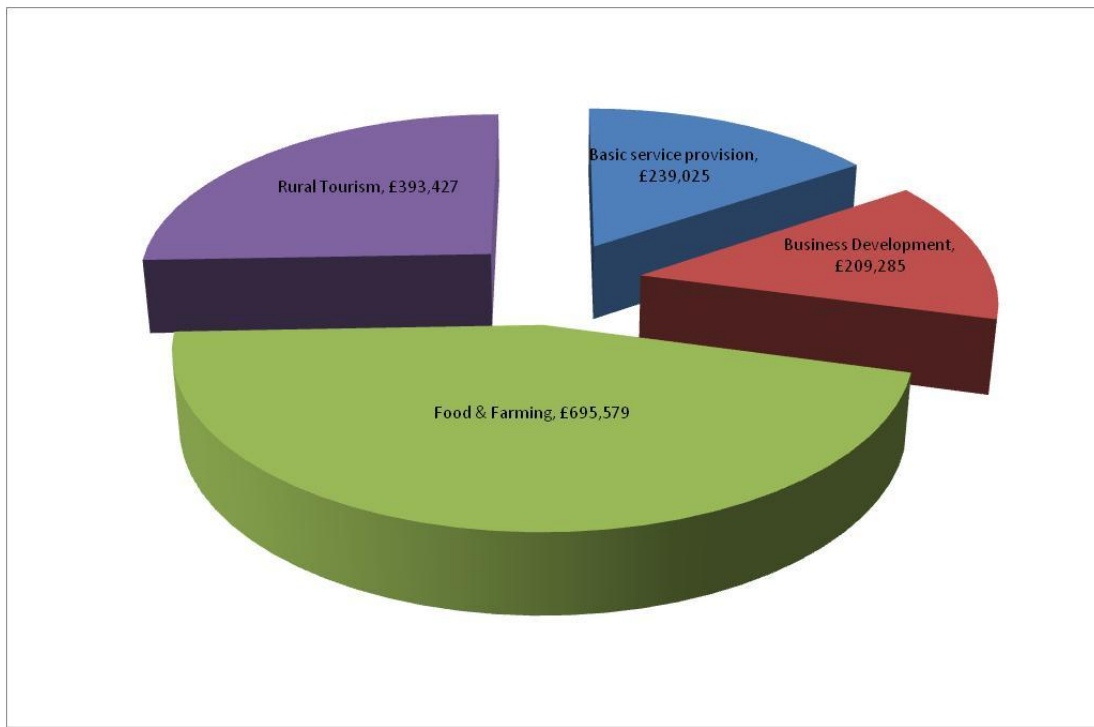


Chart 2: Commitment by Priority



A number of farming projects have been funded via measure 312 (micro) due to the complexities with funding projects through 311 (diversification)

Chart 3: No. of Projects per Priority

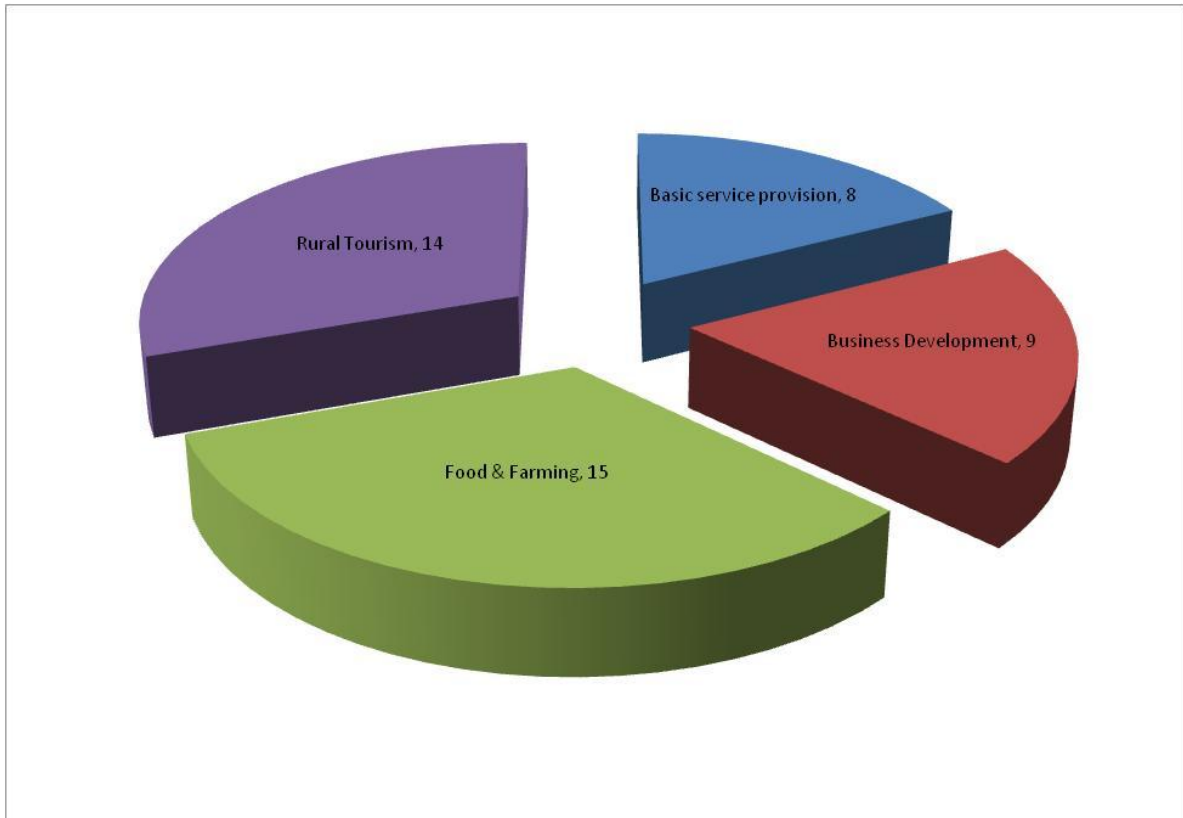
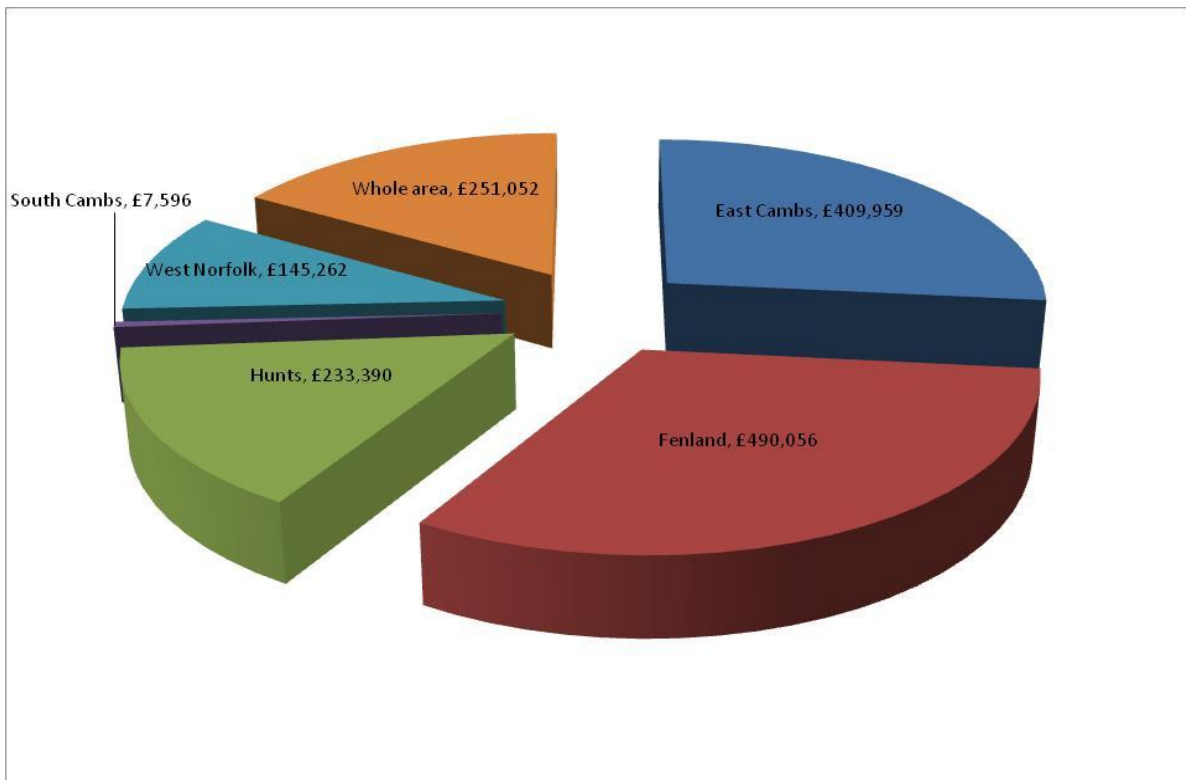


Chart 4: Commitment by District



Map showing the location of projects



This shows the geographic distribution of approved projects across the Fens Adventurers area.

The marker in Cambridge represent the 'Green Fen Access Initiative' which is run by the County Council Rights of Way Team but covers the whole area.

The marker outside the area to the North West of Peterborough represents the 'English Mustard Seed Co-operative' which again covers the whole area but has the head office in Thorney.

4. STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Programme staffing and other resources

The Fens Adventurers Partnership Programme Team comprises the Programme and Operations Managers based at Cambridgeshire ACRE's Main Offices in Littleport together with the Monitoring and Administrative Officer.

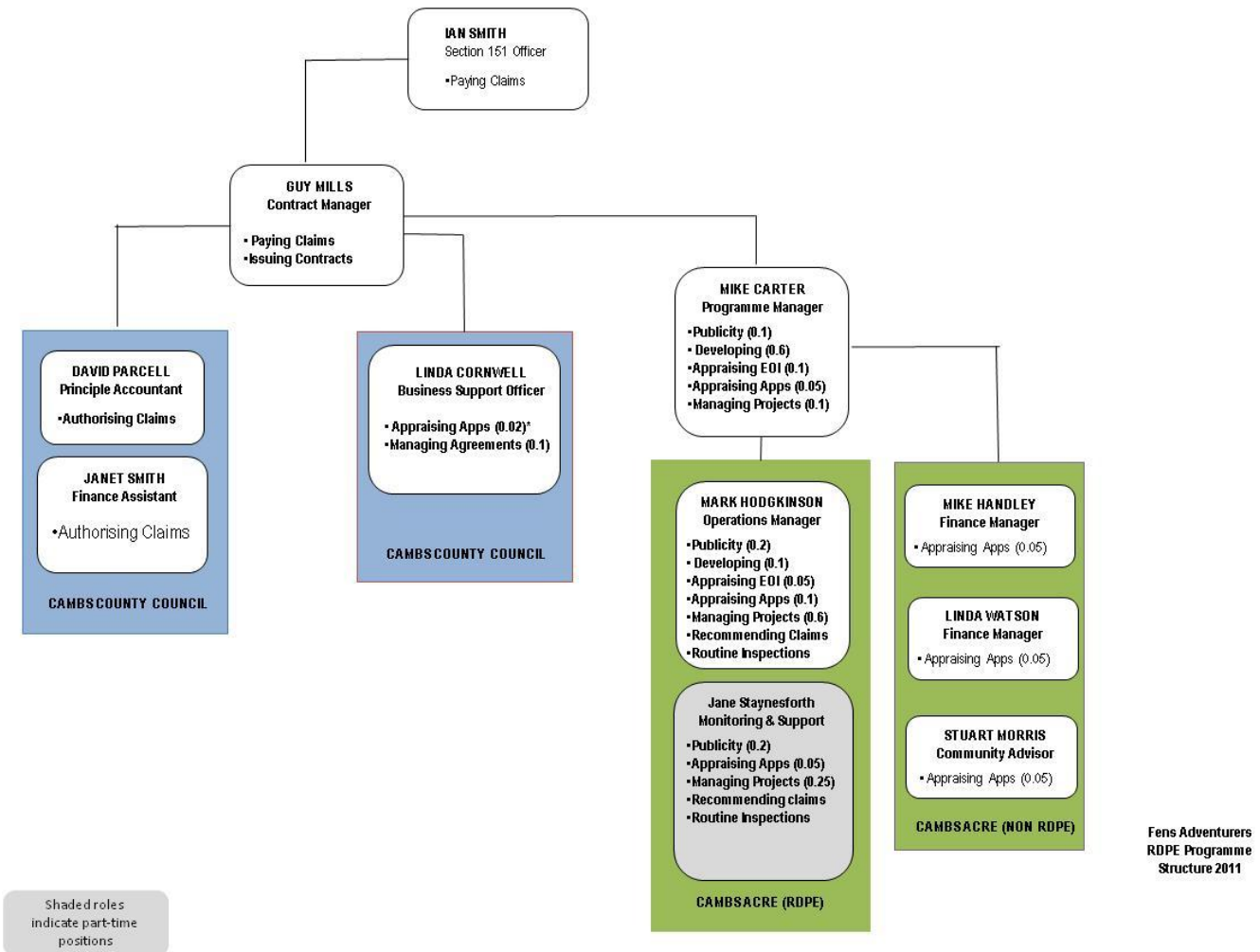
As the programme has delivered and more projects are active so the workload has shifted from development and more towards monitoring delivery and spend, handling claims and closing projects. Currently the enquiry levels and range of interest still seems limited – a reflection of the economic downturn, difficulty in accessing capital and a prevailing sense of caution across the business community. Originally this looked to require the need to continue project development work in to 2013 but the budget reduction of £871,000 now means this is unlikely.

The cuts to the programme have impacted on the administration budget and has meant the Monitoring and Administration Officer role has been reduced to 3 days a week and is initially for a year. The rationale for this is to cope with the expected peak work load as both development and delivery come together over 2012. Originally the administration and overhead costs were within the 15% set regionally but the late changes to the budget have resulted in this now increasing to around 17.4%. As the programme continues to deliver and assuming there are no more budget reductions it is anticipated that the overall administration costs will reduce and this will be reviewed next year. Much will depend on the number, scale and quality of applications that come forward and to what extent we can commit the budget early on and then focus on 'pushing spend'.

It is anticipated that by December 2012 several projects will be closed-having delivered-and the funds will largely be committed to projects –with them having started to deliver. For the last year of the programme there will be a mixed workload of managing expectations, ensuring spend is achieved and in putting to the new programme which will have started to take shape. It is expected there will be a considerable time gap before the new programme comes on stream so there are no prospects for any continuity.

To date most appraisals have been undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council with a view to ensuring a robust challenge and impartiality. There have been occasional pressures to get appraisals undertaken – mostly created by the tardiness of the applicants and consequently the appraisal capacity at Cambridgeshire ACRE has been built up. We now have four Cambridgeshire ACRE staff who are able to undertake appraisals with appropriate flexibility around the separation of duties and interests. Each member of staff has different experiences which will help – related respectively to farming, finance and community development. This resourcing is helpful in dealing with occasional peaks of work.

4.2 Fens Adventurers Staff Structure within Cambridgeshire ACRE & Cambridgeshire County Council



4.3 Team roles and descriptions (details on www.camsacre.org.uk/fensadventurers)

| Role | Reporting arrangements | Tasks and responsibilities |
|---|--|---|
| Programme Manager (Mike Carter) | Reports to: Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire ACRE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the LAG to monitor, review and update the LDS Developing and monitoring the programme plan to set and monitor programme budget Working with the LAG to ensure continued targeting to ensure projects deliver LDS objectives and comply with programme measures Organising and supporting meetings of the LAG and Steering Group Networking and facilitation of the programme with external organisations and businesses to bring forward projects Oversee the management of programme budget Supporting project leads to develop applications through from Expression of Interest to full 'Business Case' |
| Operations Manager (Mark Hodgkinson) | Reports to: Programme Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking inception meetings and agreeing milestones and budget profiles with applicants at the 'offer' stage' Ensuring appraisals are robust and take account of the programme objectives Supporting meetings of the LAG and Steering Group Organising and supporting meetings of the LAG and Steering Group Managing the programme budget and maintaining budget records, reporting to the LAG and Programme Manager Monitoring and evaluating the progress of projects and report to the Local Action Group |
| Monitoring & Administrative Officer (Jane Staynesforth) | Reports to: Programme Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising events and meetings Assisting with monitoring and evaluating the work of individual projects and reporting to the Local Action Group Supporting meetings, including preparing agendas and taking minutes With the Operations Manager verifying expenditure claims for payment to pass to the accountable body With the Operations Manager developing and maintaining files to provide full audit trails Leading on updating and maintaining the RDPE Data Base and production of reports Ensuring hard copy files are maintained for each 'live' project to ensure all appropriate audit requirements are met Undertaking routine monitoring inspections Contributing to delivery of promotion and marketing activity, including updating and developing the website and supporting articles in appropriate newsletters and similar Work with the 'team' to undertake mail shots and issue press releases as directed Lead on the development of 'case studies' Provide research on projects ideas to help the RDPE team determine the potential viability of ideas |

4.4 Authorisation and delegation limits

The tables below outline which staff within the County Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE are authorised to appraise business cases, authorise claims and conduct project monitoring. Appraisal and routine inspections will be carried out by programme team or Cambridgeshire ACRE or County Council staff to ensure impartiality. Compliance checks are being undertaken by the Defra team.

SIGNATORY PANEL

Authorised and trained project appraisers

| Name | Organisation and Location | Limits £ |
|-------------------|--|----------|
| Linda Cornwell | Cambridgeshire County Council, Shire Hall, Cambridge | 500,000 |
| Mark Hodgkinson | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 500,000 |
| Jane Staynesforth | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Mike Carter | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 500,000 |
| Mike Handley | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Linda Watson | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Alison Brown | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Stuart Morris | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |

Authorised and trained claim recommenders

| Name | Organisation and Location | Limits £ |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Mark Hodgkinson | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Mike Carter | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 500,000 |

Authorised and trained claim authorisers

| Name | Organisation and Location | Limits £ |
|---------------|--|----------|
| Janet Smith | Cambridgeshire County Council, Shire Hall, Cambridge | 250,000 |
| David Parcell | Cambridgeshire County Council, Shire Hall, Cambridge | 500,000 |
| Ian Smith | Cambridgeshire County Council, Shire Hall, Cambridge | 500,000 |

Authorised and trained inspectors

| Name | Organisation and Location | Limits £ |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Jane Staynesforth | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |
| Mark Hodgkinson | Cambridgeshire ACRE, Littleport | 250,000 |

The programme contract manager is Guy Mills at Cambridgeshire County Council.

4.5 Conflict of interest register

A conflict of interest register is maintained by the programme staff appreciating that all members of the LAG will have an interest in delivering the programme, achieving spend and outputs.

To ensure transparency, at each meeting Declarations of Interest (both pecuniary and non pecuniary) are asked for and duly noted in the minutes to provide a record.

Members with any conflicts of interest will be asked to leave the room whilst discussions are concluded and decisions made this is particularly the case if they are the lead applicant .

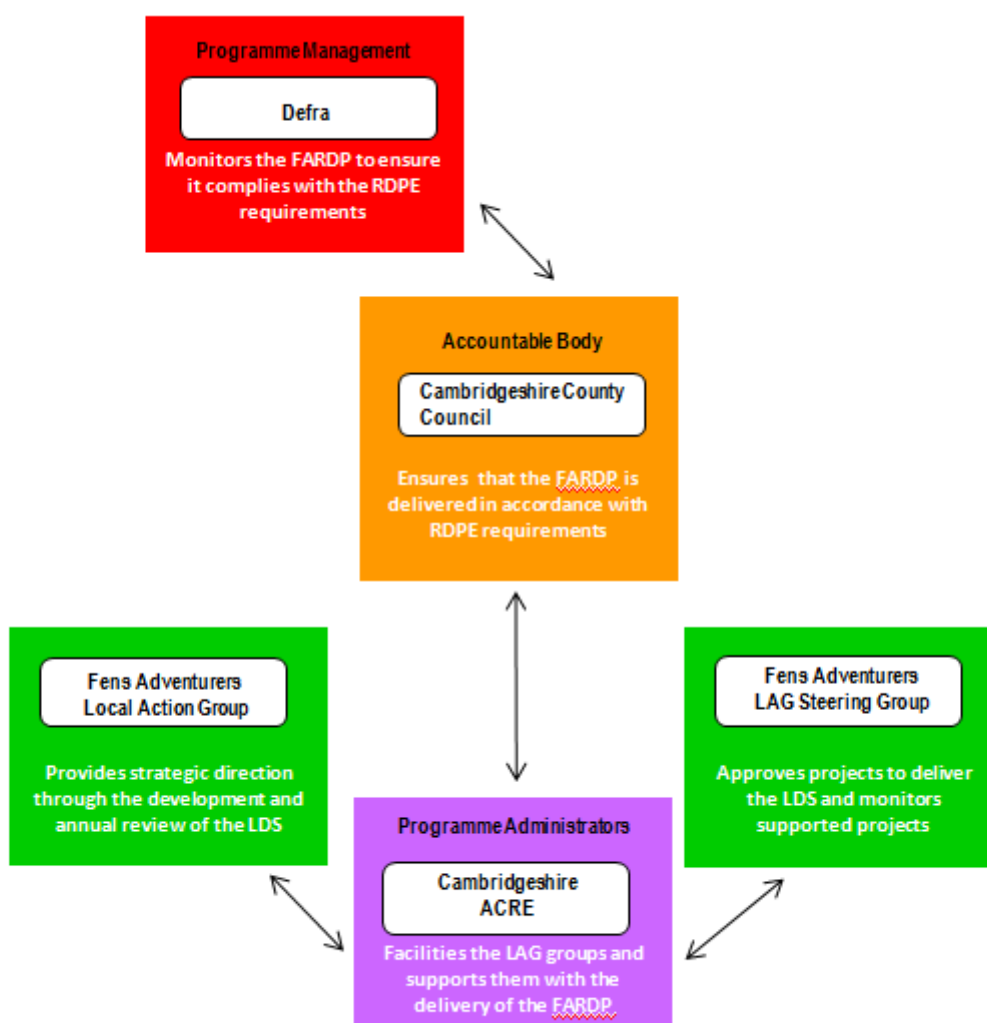
It is inevitable that members of the LAG will on occasion know different applicants who are proposing investments within the community and all commercial and confidentiality issues do need to be strictly observed. Members declare this for the record and it is duly noted.

5. PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION

5.1. The Local Action Group

Structure, roles & responsibilities

The chart below outlines the current structure for the Fens Adventurers, identifying the role & responsibility of organisations and groups showing across the partnership.



Terms of Reference

Detailed Terms of Reference for the Local Steering Group and the Local Action Group are available on the web site at www.cambsacre.org.uk/fensadventurers

The above structure reflects the more direct involvement of Defra. 2011 has seen the disappearance of the East of England Development Agency, Business Link East, East of England Tourism and Inspire East. Cambridgeshire County Council who are the Accountable Body and all the District Councils involved in the programme have all experienced significant budget cuts and staff reductions as has Natural England (with the latter currently not able to send a representative to the LAG).

The key role of the LAG remains that of providing strategic investment direction in contributing to the development and annual review of the delivery plan. The LAG comprises around 25 members and is 'open' to parties interested in the general economic well being of the rural Fens Adventurers area. To meet programme requirements there is a need to ensure the non public sector are the majority with public sector support and promotion being important to provide successful balance of delivery across the area.

LAG members are unpaid but can claim for mileage for attendance at appropriate meetings - a modest attempt to try and ensure that the private and non public sector are not out of pocket to a great extent from their commitment to the programme. This applies to all members who are unable to recover costs from their employer.

Local Steering Group Members (LSG)

The key role of the LSG will be to deliver the programme on behalf of the partnership by supporting and monitoring appropriate projects. The LSG comprises 12 members of the LAG & a representative from Defra as set out below. LSG members represent all 4 priorities of the Local Development Strategy.

| Name | Organisation | Occupation | Priority represented | Nominated Substitute |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Guy Mills (Chair) | Cambridgeshire County Council (AB) | Economic Development Manager | Rural Business Development | John MacMillan |
| Vicky Whittingstall | Fenland District Council | Economic Development Officer | Rural Business Development | Claire Burton |
| Chris Nye | CN Seeds-Pymoor | Farmer & Seeds-man | Sustainable Rural Tourism (Environment) | Stephen Parsley |
| Ken Goodger (Vice Chair) | Norfolk Essential Oils , Welney | Farmer | Sustainable Food & Farming | |
| Martin Collison (LAG Vice Chair) | Collison Associates Tilney All Saints | Farmer | Sustainable Food & Farming | Philip Bradshaw |
| Philip Bradshaw (LAG Chair) | Flegcroft Farm Whittlesey | Farmer | Sustainable Food & Farming | Martin Collison |
| David Fountain | Fountain & Partners, Benwick | Farmer | Sustainable Food & Farming | |
| Keith Leddington-Hill | Laurence Gould Associates | Rural Business Consultant | Sustainable Food & Farming | Tim Kneale |
| Chris Soans | National Trust – Wicken Fen | Property Manager | Sustainable Rural Tourism | Philip Broadbent-Yale |
| Kirsten Bennett | Cambridgeshire ACRE | Chief Executive | Basic Services | |
| Sara Hind | Defra | Rural Development Manager | Defra RDPE Team East of England | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Rachel Carrington | National Farmers Union | Senior Policy Advisor | Sustainable Food & Farming |
| Paul Gardner | NWES | Business Advisor | Micro Enterprise |

Members of the LAG and Executive Team aim to identify additional appropriate members to address the gaps on the LSG as they occur. The LAG will propose and second new members to ensure the private sector representation remains at the required 50% level, and with a view to encouraging a spirit of ‘openness’ which the Fens community is aware of as far as possible.

Local Action Group Members (LAG)

The following representatives sit on the wider Local Action Group which meets on the same day. There have been several changes over the last year with some members having ‘retired’ having failed to attend meetings (like Tony Hargreaves of Brown & Co and David Harris of ADAS) or had extra work to undertake which meant they could no longer find the time to commit to membership (like Elizabeth Ranelagh of the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group who now has a major role in rolling out The Campaign for the Farmed Environment). Current members are as follows:

| Name | Organisation | Occupation | Priority represented |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bernard Pentelow | CBLA | CLA | Sustainable Food & Farming |
| Alison Barber | COWA | Employer Engagement | Rural Business Development |
| Lucinda Leonard | Norfolk Rural Community Council | Community Development Manager | Basic Services |
| Nicola Williamson | RSPB | Fenland Farmland Bird Advisor | Sustainable Food & Farming |
| Paul Harrison | King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council | Economic Development Officer | Rural Business Development |
| Shirley Blake | East Cambridgeshire District Council | Master Planning Manager | Rural Business Development |
| Julia Upton | Environment Agency | External Funding Officer | Sustainable Food & Farming |
| Jeff Clarke | Orchard Cottage, Ramsey St Mary’s | Farmer | Sustainable Food & Farming |

Members cover interests to ensure private sector representation is appropriate to secure decisions.

5.2 Dates of future partnership meetings

Dates for future partnership meetings, including the LAG and LSG meetings are set out below. Plans are to have the LAG and LSG meetings on the same day, with the LSG being held around 9.00 a.m. each time and the LAG meeting to start around 11.15 a.m. with a view to concluding business by lunch time.

In 2011 there were 6 LSG and 5 LAG meetings to deal with the greater volume of business efficiently appreciating that many private sector applicants had seasonal and business timescales demands. A report is provided at each LAG meeting on the decisions made by the LSG with regard to Expressions of Interest which are supported or rejected prior to developing a 'Business Case'. For those who have submitted a 'Business Case' which has been appraised, these again will be considered for support or rejection depending upon their merits. Meeting venues are rotated across the area near to enable members to see projects supported with RDPE investment.

Enquiries remain patchy and the programme is marketed using all media. Five meetings have been planned for 2012 which should enable projects to be dealt with efficiently. In exceptional and urgent cases the LSG have agreed to take time critical applications using electronic means with voting and comments shared .

If the budget is fully allocated by September the December meeting may be cancelled –but at this stage it is 'planned' as the probable 'final commitment' meeting.

| Partnership Meeting | Date | Venues to be confirmed |
|---------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| LAG & LSG | 25/01/12 | Octavia Hill BPT Museum-Wisbech |
| LAG & LSG | 21/03/12 | Viva Centre, Soham |
| LAG & LSG | 20/06/12 | Flegcroft Farm-Whittlesey |
| LAG & LSG | 12/09/12 | Ramsey Rural Life Museum |
| LAG & LSG | 05/12/12 | Possibly Downham Market |

5.3 LAG Member Roles

Term of office: LAG members are permitted to serve until the end of the FARDP in December 2013 or until the LAG has been dissolved.

Role - The key role of members will be to provide strategic direction through the development and subsequent annual review of the programme

LAG Chair and Vice Chair-person Roles

Term of office: The LAG Chairperson / Vice Chairperson are appointed by the Local Action Group from within the LAG membership and will serve for one year or more.

Role -The Chair / Vice Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring that the LAG plays a full and constructive part in the development and determination of the programme.

Duties: The Chairperson will need to fulfil the following functions and responsibilities:

- Chair LAG meetings and be the guardian of the LAG’s decision-making process (Chair / Vice Chairperson will have the responsibility for casting the deciding vote should a split decision occurs).
- Maintain a close working relationship with the LAG executive - between meetings to ensure that action points and follow up recommendations have been or are being dealt with.
- Ensure that the requirements for membership, meetings and decision making are adhered to.
- To represent and promote the Fens Adventurers to a wide range of stakeholders & be the key public relations person for the LAG which could include representing the Fens Adventurers externally at local, regional or national meetings.
- Ensure that all constituents of the LAG complete their assigned tasks satisfactorily.

This plan is provided to LAG members together with a programme prospectus and material to enable members to promote the programme effectively. Members will be supported with some information sharing opportunities and Defra aim to continue hosting six monthly ‘Chairs’ events to share experiences and practices across the region.

5.4 The Accountable Body - AB

5.4 (a) Roles & Responsibilities, Key Positions & Functions Performed by AB

Cambridgeshire County Council is the Accountable Body for the Fens Adventurers Rural Development Programme (FARDP) and is responsible for the facilitation of the programme, regulatory compliance and ensuring funding is delivered in accordance with the funding agreement.

Cambridgeshire ACRE employs the programme team who are responsible for managing the LAG and facilitating the programme within the area. Such separation provides additional safeguards and ensures stronger regulatory compliance as well as more effective delivery building greater local involvement in running the programme and involving the LAG.

5.4 (b) Managing cash flow and bank rolling arrangements

Cambridgeshire County Council support the programme through its cash flow mechanisms to allow payment of grants for the RDPE where funding is paid quarterly in arrears by the Rural Payments Agency. With forecast project spend of some £922,000 for 2012/3 there will be occasional claims in excess of a £200,000 which would more than stretch Cambridgeshire ACRE. The estimated project spend for 2013/4 is around £260,000 in total. Cambridgeshire County Council has the staff and resources to manage this activity and will follow through with any required audits.

5.4 (c) Plans for developing skills required to fulfil AB role

The appropriate County Council and Programme Team staff have had some training to support them to perform their roles and responsibilities and this has been recorded on the Register of Staff Training.

5.4 (d) Conflict of interest register

A conflict of interest register for all programme staff and LAG members is being maintained, reflecting those reported at LAG and LSG meetings. The information is collected on Form OM3 –Conflict of Interest Register and forwarded to Defra each year.

6. INVESTMENT PLANS

6.1 Objectives & Priorities

The Fens Adventurers Programme should **complement** investment being made through the sub national Rural Development Programme for England, with linkages made to Natural England where practical to do so. Referrals to other support like the Regional Loan Fund operated by Foundation East and the Enterprise Finance Guarantee operated by most banks are made –but these remain relatively few. For part of 2012 LandSkills East will provide industry led flexible training and we have no budget allocated to support such activity.

The vision of the Fens Adventurers Programme partners remains:

“To develop a thriving farming and rural economy which contributes to and is supported by the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Fens communities.”

The programme encourages collaborative approaches to strengthen business development and to stimulate local rural business people to establish more businesses to ensure the Fens provides more jobs. A flexible approach to ‘using’ the measures in the most appropriate way has helped move forward ideas –not least with regard to tourism businesses and farm diversification initiatives. Measure 311 in respect of Farm Diversification has been found to be too restrictive and consequently some funds have been moved from this measure in to Measure 312 –Micro Enterprise which affords greater flexibility yet can achieve the same objectives of supporting businesses to develop and help generate more job opportunities.

If the Fens Adventurers Rural Development Programme is successful in delivering its vision and mission then by 2013 the area will be characterised by:

- A more modern and sustainable farming and food sector supplying high quality products locally, nationally and internationally, supporting viable livelihoods, and enhancing the environmental assets of the Fens
- Local rural businesses and social enterprises providing high value jobs supporting the sustainability of local communities
- Accessible high quality environmental assets supporting a thriving and sustainable environmental tourism sector that brings in more overnight visitors to the area
- Provision of more sustainable and well run basic services able to improve the quality of life for local people and support jobs

Proposals detailed are reinforced through working with the business and wider community to reflect needs and aspirations. There is a greater understanding of the eligibility of spend under each measure and of the need to balance benefits against any potential risks.

Widespread caution is very evident across the business community with the general economic downturn creating uncertainty around what to do for the best. In general terms the freehold farming community do appear to be able to access funds from the 'Banks', but for tenant farmers and the more general business community with fewer assets to pledge the ability to access finance remains very difficult.

For those businesses trying to access support through the programme the process does present some challenges when it comes to developing the 'Business Case' but local support has largely overcome this. Most applicants need support when it comes to the 'Business Case' and a few land agents and accountants have been helpful in supporting their clients to develop the best possible arguments for public funds. Most applicants have been reluctant to engage external expertise as they lack confidence that their application will be successful. The programme team do explain that once the 'concept' has been agreed the risks are vastly reduced and that it is all then down to demonstrating good value for money and a sustainable business model. Case studies will be used to encourage some projects to come forward and be more fully developed and these will be used extensively in literature, by way of press releases and on the web site.

The table below provides an overview of how the programme will be delivered to 2013.

| Measure | Budget | Committed | Residual budget & targets | Rationale |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings | £150,000 | £125,000 | £25,000 | 1 business has been directly supported and 3 indirectly. |
| 123 Added value to agriculture | £753,297 | £378,333 | £374,964 | Collaborative approaches have spread benefits |
| 125 Infrastructure to develop or adapt agriculture | £160,682 | zero | £160,682 | Two modest collaborative reservoir investments have come forward |
| 312 Micro Enterprises | £686,131 | £426,973 | £259,158 | Most interest is for up to £50,000. |
| 313 Encouragement of Tourism | £425,990 | £324,093 | £101,897 | Interest remains very modest with few visitor attraction proposals coming forward |
| 321 Addressing gaps in Basic Services | £401,772 | £300,083 | £101,689 | Smaller scale initiatives continue to come forward as public funds diminish |
| Totals | £2,577,872 | £1,554,482 | £1,023,390 | |

| Output/Target | | NEW | ACTUAL |
|------------------|--|-----|------------|
| RDPE TARGETS | No. of businesses supported (Axis 1) | 42 | 35 |
| | No. of new products/techniques (Axis 1) | 0 | 3 |
| | Support contributing to the competitiveness of livestock sector (Axis 1) | 4 | 0 |
| | Micro enterprises set up/supported | 28 | 21 |
| | Jobs Created/Safeguarded | 82 | 69.8 |
| | No. of individuals benefitting | 9 | 1,275 |
| | No. of businesses benefitting | 0 | 244 |
| | Tourism action supported | 7 | 11 |
| | No. of day visitors | 0 | 25,191 |
| | No. of overnight visitors | 0 | 3,908 |
| | No. of supported basic service actions | 2 | 23 |
| | No. of cooperation | 2 | 0 |
| | RDPE Investment | 0 | £1,554,482 |
| | Non RDPE Investment secured | 0 | £1,654,277 |
| FENS ADVENTURERS | No. of community participants involved in capacity building basic services actions | 39 | 102 |
| | No. of community services set up/assisted following capacity building actions | 23 | 120 |
| | Number of actions supported contributing to improved biodiversity | 5 | 11 |
| | Number of actions supported contributing to improved access to the countryside | 8 | 17 |
| | Number of action supported contributing to climate change mitigation/adaptation | 8 | 6 |

6.Priorities for 2011-13

Most original priorities as agreed in the Local Development Strategy remain appropriate even with the changes in the economic climate and the global influences which push efficiencies and modernisation to ensure assets generate as much added value as possible to ensure businesses remain competitive. The programme can support many investment proposals to do just this and it remains an issue of building confidence for applicants as to their potential for success.

The following is an attempt to highlight opportunities and reflect the nature of enquiries that are on the 'stocks' some of which may turn into fruitful applications.

(a) 1: *Investment in farms supporting modernisation and infrastructure, diversification and added value processing and marketing.*

Increasing the number of farm businesses undertaking non-agricultural diversification

activities, adding value or producing novel crops

Activities will include :

- Tourism and leisure facilities
- Rural tourism accommodation where there is identified demand (e.g. caravan and camping sites, farmhouse accommodation, self-catering & eco-log cabins)
- Farm shop developments –avoiding displacement
- Small rural enterprise space to meet needs
- Developing meat ‘processing’ and butchery facilities to add value to producers
- New collaborative ambient/cold-storage/grading provision
- Collaborative water storage reservoirs –ideally with bio diversity benefits

Grant support for set up costs of collaborative projects to add value to produce including:

- Marketing and local branding initiatives – e.g. ‘English Mustard’
- Processing equipment – e.g. producing fruit juices, mustard ,oils and fats
- Implementation of new small –scale technologies
- Development of niche products-e.g. sweet corn, celery, squashes, pumpkin, maize, artichokes –conscious to avoid any displacement issues

Measures 121 , 123 & 125

- Potential to link an under-grazing project to fund added value projects involving livestock from both a meat and attraction aspect

Partners

COWA, land agents, NFU, CLA, NRBAS, Local Authorities, NWES, private sector

Activities will support the objectives of the LAG

By supporting farmers to diversify income streams, reducing exposure to volatile commodity prices and deliver multiple benefits for the economy, community and environment including:

- Improving business turnover and profits , retaining local jobs in agriculture and strengthening the rural economy
- Supporting provision of business premises where there is demand
- Addressing shortages in tourism quality/accredited accommodation and attractions

Reducing food miles and supporting novel crops as an adaptation to climate change and increasing access to the countryside.

Promote local produce and develop local supply chains providing additional outlets for Fens produce

Activities will include:

Establishing ‘farm shops’ which boast fresh, local produce where the key elements required are ‘offering the right range of quality foods and being accessible to serve a market town’. This has significant potential with the biggest issue to overcome being that of displacement.

Grant support for the development of supply chains, storage and distribution facilities for local produce is likely at the micro-enterprise level, e.g. Munns Duck/Goose Fat and cold

pressed Rape Seed Oil.

Marketing activities to promote food from the Fens e.g. local brand identifiers like “Tastes of Fens”, food & drink awards, developing local food festivals and events remain under-developed as do “food trails”, routes linking local producers, e.g. vegetables, fruit, beer, meats, cheeses, flour, breads?

Measures 123,125, 313,

Partners

Funding support could include:

- District Councils and Cambridgeshire Tourism Partnership could support marketing activities e.g. food festivals and food trails

Tastes of Anglia, Local Authorities (support planning, regulatory issues and economic development), Cambs Tourism Partnership, private sector

Activities will support the objectives of the programme by:

Stimulating the demand for local food, enabling farmers to develop alternative outlets for produce and reducing reliance on the supermarkets and downward pressures on food prices.

Wider benefits include reducing food miles and hence CO2 emissions and increasing access to the countryside.

(b) 2: Supporting the creation and growth of micro-enterprises that support a strong, diverse economy and broaden the quality and range of jobs available locally.

Assist start-up and expansion of micro enterprises that provide broad economic benefits

Activities will include:

Grants to support the setting up or expansion of micro businesses which contribute to the objectives of the programme could include:

- Tourism businesses graded by Visit Britain (including accommodation where there is a need, e.g. self-catering, eco-lodges and high quality Bed & Breakfast)
- High value sectors and related supply chains, e.g. creative industries, environmental science and technology, high value manufacturing, high-tech
- Manufacturing and engineering as they afford good job growth prospects and have natural supply chain linkages
- Growth sectors linked to population growth that deliver multiple benefits, e.g. retail, services, ‘local’ food and drink businesses
- Development of individual business premises to enable expansion

Measure 312

Partners

Complementary funding routes could include:

- Private sector investment e.g. bank loans, venture capital, NWES Advance.
- Banks/ organisations investing in social enterprise.
- District Councils – investment in business premises.
- Business support provided by Foundations East,

NWES, Local Authorities, banks, Princes Trust, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, Business Networks, accountants, private sector

| | |
|--|--|
| NWES. | |
| Activities will support the objectives of the programme by: | |
| helping establish existing small businesses, provide local job opportunities and assist some start up enterprises. | |

(c) 3: *Attracting more day and overnight visitors to the Fens by improving the tourism offer - attractions, accommodation and activities.*

There is a need to develop brand awareness for the Fens and increase opportunities for visitors to enjoy their stay here. Currently the quality of accommodation available and the variety of attractions is limited. The programme can help address gaps by adding new dimensions to increase the private sector business offer which should result in more spend in the local economy and some facilities will benefit local people alike.

There are significant existing and developing local environmental assets across the area of particular interest to bird watchers and fishermen, with the latter very well catered for with the huge number of fishing lakes that have been built over the last 20 years.

Funding has been allocated to The Green Fen Way to improve access to the countryside and encourage healthy walking. The routes largely build on the existing Rights of Way but will enhance these and include interpretation boards which give insights in to the history of the Fens and what may be found under our feet.

Cycling and boating remain in short supply and other aspects which strengthen the local tourism infrastructure include; development and marketing of local foods and products as well as online marketing and booking facilities.

| |
|---|
| Green Fen Way Plus –Increasing ‘green’ access to the Fens by enhancing and developing green and blue routes across FARDP area and attracting more local and visitor spend |
| Activities will support the objectives of the programme by: |
| Building on the network of ‘green’ routes linking the habitat attractions with major population centres, public transport links and the waterways in a sustainable way . Priorities include Downham Market, Ely, Ramsey, Wisbech and March with an incremental approach involving a series of smaller ‘circular routes’ which link beads of interest and enterprises to offer people a range of different enjoyable experiences. |
| Investment in small scale infrastructure to increase the accessibility of the waterways and waterside locations, e.g. interpretation boards, paths, waste disposal points, moorings, facilities for canoeists, fishing platforms, pontoons for access to waterside attractions. The interest of the private sector to expand existing or set up small businesses along the routes will be key- with the potential including food and drink, cycle/boat hire as well as sporting and wider recreational use. |
| Branding and marketing of the Fen landscape and waterways tourism products, e.g. guides, web-based marketing and booking facilities are important to encourage investment in networked, quality assured tourism activities and should boost cycle and boat hire businesses, accommodation providers, specialist food producers and pubs and |

restaurants.

Measures 312 and 313

Partners

Complementary funding include:

- Local Authorities and landscape scale attractions to support the options for developing green corridors.
- Environment Agency, businesses and Local Authorities could contribute to waterways infrastructure.
- Utilising the Cambridgeshire tourism website and Destination Management System facility for marketing activities.

National Trust, Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Middle Level Commissioners, Sustrans, Cambs Tourism Group, local tourism partnerships, private sector

Activities will support the objectives of the programme by :

- Increasing access to the countryside /visitor numbers to the Fens, acting as a catalyst for the development of the tourism sector and increasing local job opportunities
- Improving local quality of life and delivering biodiversity benefits
- Supporting delivery of new diversification opportunities and bringing visitors into the countryside providing markets for local produce
- Supporting the development of new tourism businesses, bringing visitors into the countryside providing markets for local businesses

Develop and market niche tourism products

Activities will include :

Develop and promote visitor trails and small-scale infrastructure to support niche tourism products including cycle, wildlife and heritage tourism, e.g. circular cycle trails (to complement long distance routes in the area), cycle facilities, wildlife trails, wildlife-watching facilities, heritage trails.

Visitor guides, web-based marketing and booking facilities for group tourism initiatives.

Local specialised training/ information to tourism businesses delivering niche products, e.g. wildlife guide training.

Measures 313

Partners

Complementary support includes:

- Tourism businesses, RSPB and Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.
- Cambridgeshire tourism website and Destination Management System for marketing activities.

National Trust, Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Local Authorities, Cambs Tourism Group, local tourism partnerships, Sustrans, private sector

How the proposed activities will support the objectives of the programme

Attracting more visitors will potentially improve the turnover of many tourism businesses and improve their profitability balancing economic development and conservation. Overnight stays are particularly important in that each person generates around £50 spend per day across the local economy. In a sparsely populated area the disproportionate

| | |
|--|--|
| effect can be more significant and help underpin the facilities to the benefit of the local population. | |
| Improve the quality and environmental management standards of tourism businesses | |
| Proposed activities | |
| The programme will seek quality accreditation schemes through Visit Britain e.g. Welcome Host courses | |
| RDPE Measure | Delivery partners |
| Complementary funding routes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Management Courses arising from industry groups demands through Landskills East. | Local Authorities, Cambs Tourism Group, local tourism partnerships, environmental organisations , private sector |
| The proposed activities will support the programme objectives by | |
| Improving quality and environmental management by tourism businesses and their competitiveness and opening up new markets. Mitigates climate change by reducing carbon emissions. | |

(d) 4: Addressing gaps in basic service provision by enhancing community infrastructure and investing in sustainable enterprises that serve the community.

To support development of community services to meet local needs, which could include village shops, pubs, community buildings or a community enterprise such as for childcare and preschools. Important issues could include maximising the use of the ‘village hall’ and generating income to support services or local improvements to the village hall to improve the range of activities which a hall could offer to meet the needs of the community. The Halls For Hire initiative is a support mechanism for this and it is hoped will lead to greater use being made of community buildings, improved revenue figures by generating more ‘customers’ and potential to increase investment in the community facilities which may result in better maintenance and should help improve the offer.

Investment must not displace or distort the market through unfair competition and there must either be a gap in the market or too much demand for what is available.

| | |
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| Develop financially sustainable community hubs addressing gaps in rural services | |
| Proposed activities | |
| Small scale capital investment for rural enterprises, community enterprises delivering sustainable rural services, e.g. community shops, broad based community services. Delivery will need to on a business footing and signposting to agencies and professionals like NWES services will be important. | |
| RDPE Measure 321 and 312 | Delivery partners |
| Complementary funding routes could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority contributions to capacity building Capital grant funding from Virsa Banks/ organisations investing in social enterprise | Local Authorities, Rural Shops Alliance, Cambridgeshire ACRE, Norfolk Rural Community Council, NWES, |

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| | private and voluntary sectors |
| How the proposed activities will support the objectives of the programme | |
| <p>By improving access to services in rural areas in a sustainable way wider benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better community run enterprises improving the quality of life for many • Addressing gaps in provision to enable more economic participation e.g. through childcare • Improving the profitability of rural social enterprises enabling re-investment to enhance the local provision | |

6.2 Objectives & priorities: April 2012 to December 2013

(a) Project Development Activity

The need to sell the opportunities and promote the benefits of the availability of grants to potential applicants is continuous. This has to be backed up by identifying and driving robust RDPE eligible project ideas to the Local Action Group to secure future investment. There is a lag between issuing offer letters to projects and committing funds and the actual delivery on the ground and related spend. With spend by financial years now critical some degree of over commitment is planned-subject to receipt of good applications.

Under 'Basic Services' there have been no applications made in Huntingdonshire District and King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council areas. Each community has to identify needs and work with appropriate partners to develop sustainable plans which can secure funding.

Tourism Groups are strongest at district level supported by the local authorities. Some elements of The Green Fen Way should provide a sustainable legacy for all.

(b) Known projects for consideration for support

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Sustainable Food & Farming –Measures 121, 123,125, 312 | |
| Proposed activities | |
| A key area of interest is improving crop storage in order to improve the quality of the product for example specialised storage and handling buildings, provision of ventilation, insulation and refrigeration. | |
| How the activities fit the objectives of the Regional Implementation Plan and Local Development Strategy | Partners |
| Investment has been made in new drying, curing and storage facility for onions : grain processing and drying facilities, along with grading and storage of celery and potatoes all of which generate significant local benefits. | Fenland Green Business Club, farmers and growers, alternative energy providers. |

| | |
|--|--|
| 2. Rural Business Development-Measure 312 | |
| Proposed activities | |
| The Fens is characterised by a small firm economy where almost 90% of the businesses | |

employ fewer than 10 people. The area has a wealth of specialist engineering businesses which serves the world of food production, packing, packaging, processing, storage and haulage. This is a sector –along with creative industries and others identified within the prospectus, which we want to support and see strengthened. The approach is to support the strengthening of the business base, generate employment growth and ideally strengthen local business supply chains.

The aim is to secure more high value job creation investment which generates wider economic benefits across the area if possible.

| | |
|---|---|
| How the activities fit the objectives of the Regional Implementation Plan and Local Development Strategy | Partners |
| Growing small businesses is key in an area where there are limited employment opportunities so supporting entrepreneurs is important. | NWES, Private sector, Local Authority Economic and Tourism Development Officers |

3. Sustainable Rural Tourism-Measure 313 and 312

Proposed activities

There is a need to attract investment from existing accommodation providers and attractions as well as encourage new ventures which will enhance the overall ‘visitor offer’. Through raising awareness of grant opportunities it should encourage new private sector interest in developing a ‘tourism product’ which could bring more people to the area. Activities like ‘Fen Safaris’, exploring the marshes, coast and countryside; cycling ; horse-riding ; canoeing as well as walking could be supported as increasingly visitors are looking at having things to do as well as visit. Links to local places to source seasonal food and drink would be important to maximise benefits.

- 55% of visitors express interest in staying in accommodation with environmentally friendly practice or a green award
- Over 50% are seeking breaks which benefit the local community and are keen to learn something about the place they stay in
- 1 in 3 visitors walk or cycle during their holiday

The Fens in particular and East Anglia in general is suited to the short break. Day trips, short breaks and holidays that include walking and cycling are growing in popularity.

The marketing of rural businesses remains patchy and there is greater importance than ever before around networking, having a ‘smart’ web presence and having attractive well designed literature that entices customers to find out more about your distinctive offer. Local Information Guides will still be needed to serve some markets.

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| How the activities fit the objectives of the Regional Implementation Plan and Local Development Strategy | Partners |
| Investment will be used to support the three strands of tourism activity- to improve accommodation provision and ensure it is graded, to create or enhance attractions to offer additional dimensions which will include activities. Investments need to support: Where to stay? What to visit? What can we do? | Private sector, Local Authorities |

4. Addressing gaps in Basic Services-Measure 321

| | |
|---|--|
| Proposed activities | |
| <p>Communities are being supported to develop demand led 'Basic Services' where there is an identified gap –perhaps through a Parish Plan , a County Council service or community wide consultation exercise.</p> <p>Ingredients expected include collaboration for effective delivery with robust financial management systems which will involve appropriate governance arrangements and management expertise and transparent support at community level.</p> <p>There has been considerable interest in non statutory child care provision, whether a pre-school or after school club which generates part time employment opportunities enabling parents to secure paid employment.</p> | |
| How the activities fit the objectives of the Regional Implementation Plan and Local Development Strategy | Partners |
| <p>Investment can support those enterprising communities' which develop proposals which will help sustain the economic viability of rural services which provide activities which enhance quality of life. This fits the Regional Implementation Plan by improving 'Rural Community capacity' through helping to sustain viable rural communities; making rural communities more attractive places to stay and contributing to the communities future prosperity.</p> | <p>Legally constituted community groups; Parish Councils and Local Authorities</p> |

7. RISKS TO DELIVERY

The following table attempts to set out the potential risks to the delivery of the overall programme and actions taken to mitigate the risks are detailed.

| Risk actual or perceived | Impacts of risk | Mitigating actions undertaken |
|---|---|---|
| General economic climate and government funding cuts . | Undermining confidence in the programme and creating inertia. | Continued promotion and reassurance for enquirers and applicants. |
| Challenge of securing matched funding with any bank borrowing being very difficult for most businesses. Few banks have proved un-interested to link in. | This creates frustrations with potential applicants unable to progress their 'business ideas' as not able to provide either security or a track record. | Have met with Foundation East to link in to their short term borrowing capacity and met with Barclays Bank to inform them of the grant opportunities. |
| Difficulties in getting the message out about the programme –so people continue to invest in a more modest way without being able to optimise the benefits which grant aid may support. | Several under-funded developments which fail to deliver full economic benefits or more generally are unsustainable as the scale has been insufficient to be viable. | Using all resources possible to exploit opportunities to raise awareness of the programme and to sell the benefits of involvement. |
| Staff leaving the programme | Creates new pressures with | Continued support from |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| at Regional and LAG level - creating disruption in contacts, development, follow up and understanding of projects supported. | most contacts having been developed on a personal basis with the usual trusts having been established which has encouraged applicants to come forward. | Cambridgeshire ACRE management team on a day to day basis , combined with support from Cambridgeshire County Council with training |
| General lack of interest from applicants to undertake the work required to make an application fearing funding withdrawal or failing confidence in market opportunities. Made worse by exaggerated perceptions of the bureaucratic nature of the whole process. | Lack of applications to consider and resultant under-spend across the programme. | Considerable 'hand-holding' with applicants to help them develop their projects –being a challenge for those submitting applications-to ensure that any submissions are as strong as possible. Support continuing post approval and throughout the life of all projects. |

8. COMMUNICATION & CO-OPERATION

8.1 Facilitation activities planned to encourage good projects

The complexity of the programme has meant that the production of information about opportunities has needed to be made attractive and readily understandable. Promotional material, including a prospectus, which sells the benefits of the programme, has been produced. This includes an insight in to the application process and time scales involved for securing funding along with local case studies to give reality to the possibilities.

The promotional material continues to be disseminated to the Local Action Group, intermediaries and potential beneficiaries to generate enquiries. Literature has been shared with all local authority and delivery partners and been placed in town libraries and business centres at Wisbech, Chatteris, Littleport and Waterbeach to spread awareness.

Joint events held in Chatteris, Littleport and Welney with the RSPB were well attended with over 40 farmers present and both resulted in a number of enquiries and some applications. Events in Ely and Huntingdon have been attended but on each occasion attendance was limited and no direct applications resulted. .

8.2 Promotional plans

The themes of the programme identify a range of 'market segments' although it is appreciated that there is considerable overlap and interdependence between them. The majority focus is the farming and land based sector and engagement with members of the NFU and the CLA has been important.

The tourism sector often has plans which have natural affinity with the green travel client groups. The emphasis is very much around 'Where to stay and what to do' as both key aspects to attract visitors.

For Rural Business Development the optimum routes remain through the Norfolk & Waveney Enterprise Services, local authority economic development teams and on occasion

accountants. It is noticeable however how little contact the local authorities tend to have with the land based sector in general and farming in particular. Such networks generate enquiries which require supporting to determine their potential fit.

The Prospectus and accompanying flyers were updated to incorporate the latest budget details and contain case studies of successful local investments. The key message in light of all the government cuts has been 'business as usual' with confidence in the programme having been put in to doubt.

The website takes account of successful investments made – building on the updated Cambridgeshire ACRE site and optimising hot links to other organisations as appropriate.

Articles have been produced for the Local Authority Newsletters (including the Cambridgeshire County Farms) which are sent out to all households in their respective areas.

There is ongoing work in developing a data base of contacts that can be updated by email – ensuring that reciprocal contact details are clearly set out. Targeted mail-shot's to farmers are undertaken in the winter to avoid busy 'farm work' periods.

Developing opportunities to 'talk' to groups across the area to spread the message as to what the programme is about ,sharing good practice from other programmes across the region, and building on opportunities as they arise. This has been particularly well supported by the NFU and it is hoped will be repeated.

| Measure & Axis | 2009/10 | | | 2010/11 | | | 2011/12 | | | 2012/13 | | | 2013 Apr-Dec | | | Total | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|--|--|
| | Spent | Spent | Budget | Committed | Spent | Available | Budget | Committed | Available | Budget | Committed | Available | Budget | Committed | Spent | Available | | | |
| Axis 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 121: Modernisation | 0 | 125,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25,000 | 0 | 25,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 150,000 | 125,000 | 125,000 | 25,000 | | | |
| 123: Adding Value | 0 | 80,474 | 274,939 | 312,725 | 240,630 | -37,786 | 342,884 | 44,700 | 298,184 | 55,000 | 0 | 55,000 | 753,297 | 437,899 | 321,104 | 315,398 | | | |
| 125: Agricultural Infrastructure | 0 | 0 | 10,000 | 0 | 0 | 10,000 | 120,000 | 0 | 120,000 | 30,682 | 0 | 0 | 160,682 | 0 | 0 | 160,682 | | | |
| Axis 1 Total | 0 | 205,474 | 284,939 | 312,725 | 240,630 | -27,786 | 487,884 | 44,700 | 443,184 | 85,682 | 0 | 55,000 | 1,063,979 | 562,899 | 446,104 | 501,080 | | | |
| Axis 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 311: Farm Diversification | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 312: Micro Enterprise | 2,964 | 233,006 | 194,732 | 154,943 | 109,183 | 39,789 | 163,149 | 12,404 | 150,745 | 92,281 | 0 | 92,281 | 686,131 | 403,316 | 345,152 | 282,815 | | | |
| 313: Tourism | 34,210 | 11,080 | 181,649 | 176,531 | 104,664 | 5,118 | 155,993 | 89,264 | 66,729 | 43,058 | 13,009 | 30,049 | 425,990 | 324,093 | 149,933 | 101,896 | | | |
| 321: Basic Services | 5,082 | 107,500 | 117,992 | 107,500 | 104,595 | 10,492 | 115,950 | 8,451 | 107,499 | 55,248 | 0 | 55,248 | 401,772 | 228,533 | 217,176 | 173,239 | | | |
| Axis 3 Total | 42,255 | 351,585 | 494,373 | 438,974 | 318,441 | 55,399 | 435,092 | 110,119 | 324,973 | 190,587 | 13,009 | 177,578 | 1,513,893 | 955,942 | 712,282 | 557,950 | | | |
| Axis 1 & 3 Totals (Projects) | 42,255 | 557,059 | 779,312 | 751,698 | 559,071 | 27,614 | 922,976 | 154,819 | 768,157 | 276,269 | 13,009 | 232,578 | 2,577,872 | 1,518,841 | 1,158,385 | 1,059,031 | | | |
| Axis 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 421: Cooperation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 431: LAG Administration | 64,556 | 120,025 | 150,629 | 150,629 | 119,029 | 0 | 108,447 | 108,447 | 0 | 107,471 | 107,471 | 0 | 551,128 | 551,128 | 303,610 | 0 | | | |
| Axis 4 Total | 64,556 | 120,025 | 150,629 | 150,629 | 119,029 | 0 | 108,447 | 108,447 | 0 | 107,471 | 107,471 | 0 | 551,128 | 551,128 | 303,610 | 0 | | | |
| Axis 1,3 & 4 Totals | 106,811 | 677,084 | 929,941 | 902,327 | 678,100 | 27,614 | 1,031,423 | 263,266 | 768,157 | 383,740 | 120,480 | 263,260 | 3,129,000 | 2,069,969 | 1,461,996 | 1,059,031 | | | |
| Previous budget | £783,896 | £1,154,475 | | £251,841 | £1,011,629 | £179,000 | £3,129,000 | | £3,129,000 | | | | | | | | | | |

1. The total available spend to commit to new projects is now £1,084,449
2. The budget has been reduced to £3,129,000. This is a £871,000 reduction from the original £4 million LDS budget.