wavehill™

social and economic research
ymchwil cymdeithasol ac economaidd

Mid-term Evaluation of the LEADER programme in Conwy

March 2020

Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar
gyfer Datblygu Gwledig:
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig

European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development:
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

CONWY
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Conwy Cynhaliol
2014 - 2020

Wavehill: social and economic research

- Wales office: 21 Alban Square, Aberaeron, Ceredigion, SA46 0DB (registered office)
- West England office: 12 Orchard Street, Bristol, BS1 5EH
- North of England office: Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle, NE1 1LE
- London office: 52 Cecile Park, Crouch End, London, N8 9AS

Contact details:

Tel: 01545 571711
Email: info@wavehill.com
Twitter: @wavehilltweets

More information:

www.wavehill.com
https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets

© Wavehill: social and economic research.

This report is subject to copyright. The authors of the report (Wavehill: social and economic research) should be acknowledged in any reference that is made to its contents.

Authors:
Endaf Griffiths

Any questions in relation to this report should be directed in the first instance to Endaf Griffiths (endaf.griffiths@wavehill.com)

Date of document: February 2020
Version: FINAL

Client contact:

Tom Jones, Claims and Monitoring Officer
tom.jones@conwy.gov.uk | 01492 576675

Contents

Executive summary

Introduction

This is the second and mid-term report of the evaluation of the LEADER programme in Conwy as delivered by the Local Action Group (known as the LAG) for the area, Conwy Cynhaliol.

LEADER is an EU funded local development method which has been used in Wales for over 20 years. As a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) initiative, LEADER is an integrated development process designed to engage, enable, resource and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development. LEADER is built on several specific characteristics often referred to as the 'LEADER approach' as illustrated by the graphic below.
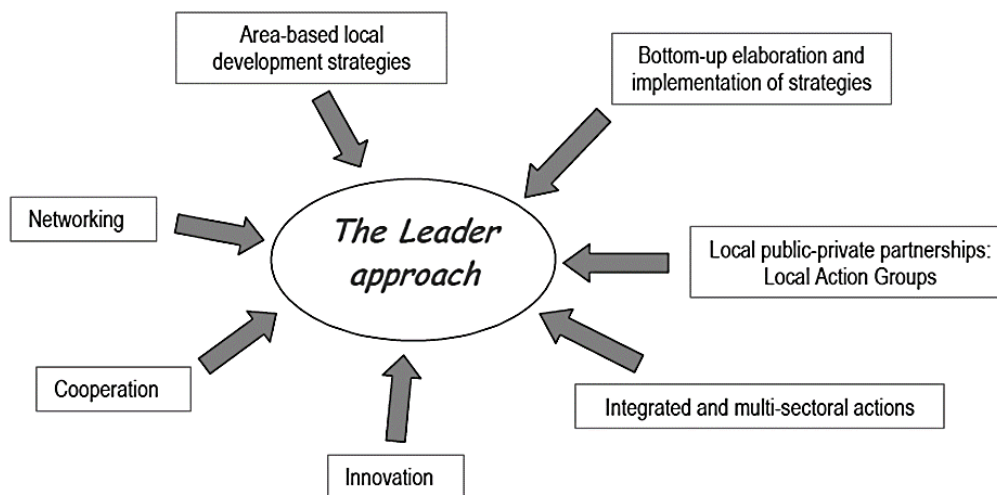
This mid-term evaluation has focused on the delivery of the LEADER approach in Conwy to date with a view to informing the remaining lifetime of the programme. The emphasis is particularly on the extent to which the LEADER approach has been delivered in Conwy. The summative, final, evaluation report, scheduled for the end of 2021, will have a focus on assessing the outcomes, impact and added value of the programme.

The Local Development Strategy

The LDS is an important element of the LEADER approach described within programme guidelines issued by the European Commission as 'the roadmap for LEADER implementation with the LAG selecting and supporting projects, according to the contribution they make to the goals of the strategy'.[1]

---

[1] Guidance produced by the European Network for Rural Development on the development and implementation of the LDS can be found here: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd-guidance_lsd.pdf

The LDS for rural Conwy included seven 'headline objectives' which are then focused down into four 'compacted' strategic objectives:

1. Develop a diverse economic base and suitable qualified workforce in rural Conwy
2. Provide accessible transport to those who cannot access or do not have access to conventional public transport
3. Improve the economic exploitation of the cultural, built and natural environment
4. Support community cohesion/integration and access to basic services.

Below those, there are 15 'specific priorities' describing how the strategic objectives will be implemented (see Chapter 3).

The strategy presented within the LDS for rural Conwy is therefore very broad identifying a wide range of issues that LEADER funding is to be used to try and address. This is not uncommon within the LEADER programme in Wales with the fact that LDSs were prepared at a time when the detail of the programme was unavailable needing to be considered along with the 'bottom-up', community led, nature of LEADER. That broadness does however mean that the LDS's usefulness as a guide for how LEADER funds in Conwy should be utilised is limited; most ideas and project proposals will fit within the LDS given that it is so broad. There is also an argument that the question that the LAG has been asking itself when considering project applications should be 'how can this project contribute to achieving the objectives of the LDS?' as opposed to 'does this project fit with the LDS?'. This is a subtle but important difference.

The pros and cons of a broad approach are debatable with a flexible approach, reacting to priorities identified by communities and the applications being submitted clearly having some merit. The need for a narrower, more focused approach from this point forward however, needs to be considered especially given the limited amount of funding for projects that remains as discussed further below.

Recommendation 1: There should be a review of the LDS which includes: (a) an update on the needs and opportunities in the area (including wellbeing plans, etc.); (b) a review of other activities, projects and programmes ongoing in the area; and (c) a review of projects supported to date.

The number of projects supported to date

Good progress has been made in respect of the number of projects supported to date (65) with three quarters of the budget available committed as shown in the table over page.[2]

---

[2] Examples of the projects supported can be found in Appendix 1.

Table E.1: Project budgets expenditure to date, as of June 2019

Totals	Total Approved Projects
Expenditure to date	£552,353
Total budget	£713,115
Remaining	£160,762
Remaining %	22.5%

Source: the Conwy Cynhaliol team

This is positive in many ways including providing some assurance that the funding available will be fully utilised which is obviously important. However, it limits the amount of resources that the LAG has at its disposal for the remainder of the lifetime of the programme. As noted above, careful consideration therefore needs to be given to how the resource that remains is utilised in light of the findings of this evaluation and the review of the LDS recommended above.

One potential way to contribute to this would be to introduce thematic rounds of applications; the approach to date has been to conduct 'open calls' for applications for funding that fit with the objectives of the LDS. The benefit of a thematic approach is that it allows ideas and proposals within the same field to be considered (and compared) at the same time; one of the challenges of an 'open call' approach to funding rounds is that it can be difficult to compare the quality of applications within the round (as they can be very different) and there is always a risk that a 'better' application in any given field will be submitted in the next round.

Recommendation 2: The potential for thematic rounds of applications, focused on priorities identified in the review of the LDS as recommended above, should be considered.

A key aspect of LEADER is also that it is a European wide programme which creates the opportunity to share and learn from projects that are being delivered by literally hundreds of LAGs. This is however an aspect of LEADER which is generally underutilised (not just in Conwy) with LAG members having little knowledge of the activities and projects that are ongoing on other parts of Wales let alone across Europe. This is a significant missed opportunity.

Recommendation 3: The LAG should review the projects supported by LEADER in other parts of Wales and across the EU with a view to considering whether any of those ideas (or elements of them) should be piloted in Conwy.

Outcomes to date

This report has only taken a limited look at the outcomes of projects, which will be a greater focus for the final evaluation report. The number and range of projects supported (and ideas piloted) is however clear and considered positive by those interviewed for this report. They also represent progress/activity across each of the themes of the programme/LDS.

It is positive that the survey of projects undertaken for this report found that a large proportion were not likely to have progressed without the support that had been received. It is also positive that a very high proportion of respondents to the project survey reported that they had benefited in respects of meeting or working with new people and increasing their understanding of challenges facing local communities as a result of their involvement with Conwy Cynhaliol. These are examples of how the process in place to manage and deliver LEADER can in itself generate positive outcomes.

Performance indicators

The fact that only a very limited number of indicators (and associated targets) are in place to monitor the performance of the LEADER programme in Conwy is however of some concern, in respect of our ability to judge what the programme has achieved and the extent of the progress towards the objectives set out in the LDS. Most of the indicators that are in place are also outputs which will capture information about the activities undertaken but not about the results and outcomes of those activities which is the information that is of most interest from an evaluation perspective.

Recommendation 4: Consideration should be given to the introduction of additional performance indicators for the implementation of the LDS in Conwy including both generic indicators and theme/priority specific indicators.

The limited number of programme level indicators also means we are dependent to a large extent on the monitoring and evaluation activities being undertaken at a project level. It is therefore important to try to make sure that project level evaluation activities are taking place and that the standard is as high as possible. The findings of this mid-term evaluation are that this may not necessarily be the case for all the projects that have been supported. If that is the case at the time of the final evaluation the risk is that we will not be able to make an informed judgement on what LEADER funding in Conwy has achieved other than the number of projects supported.

Recommendation 5: The need to provide additional support to projects to ensure that they are effectively evaluating the outcomes of their activities should be considered.

State aid restrictions

The restrictions on using LEADER funding to provide 'state aid' was a regular topic of discussion during interviews with both staff and LAG members. LEADER funding in Wales cannot be used to provide aid or other assistance that would constitute state aid.[3] Further, the funding cannot be used to provide grants or other forms of direct or indirect assistance to commercial businesses.[4]

Those restrictions clearly need to be considered when the outcomes of LEADER funding are being considered, especially in terms of economic development related outcomes. This is a change from the previous LEADER programme, designed to increase the emphasis on piloting new and innovative approaches, but identified regularly in interviews for this report as a negative change which has diminished the potential of the current programme, especially in respect of achieving economic outcomes. The reduced integration of LEADER with other RDP funding at a local authority level compared to the previous programme period was also noted, leading to what was considered to be a loss of momentum from the previous programme period. These are important points to consider when assessing the success of LEADER in terms of outcomes generated - it is a narrow and focused programme, which is perhaps not reflected in the LDS as discussed above.

The Local Action Group (LAG)

The LAG is a key part of the LEADER approach designed to be a group which represents the local area and its population. It leads the development process with no interest group nor public authorities having a majority in the decision-making process.

It is positive to note that attendance at LAG meetings in Conwy has been good with positive feedback about the meetings as well as the work of the LAG in general. LAG members also report that they benefit from attending meetings which is another positive outcome of the LEADER approach which is important to note.

---

[3] State aid is any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis to any organisations that could potentially distort competition and trade in the European Union. This means that LAGs in Wales cannot provide any kind of assistance that would reduce the normal day to day operational running costs of the business, enterprise, undertaking or 'economic operator' such as; subsidising staff salaries or giving financial support, directly or indirectly, towards rent, rates, energy costs, promotion, publicity, advertising and/or any other running costs or overheads. For further information, see: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid

[4] This includes but is not restricted to; capital grants towards buildings and equipment; any form of business start-up assistance; business bursaries; aid assistance through the provision of subsidised goods or services (for example, machinery and/or equipment provided on loan) to a business. Direct financial support; loans; financial assistance for new product development; or other methods of indirect financial assistance to a business, such as marketing for publicity or promotional activities that are free or at a reduced rate to a business, are also not eligible.

The role of the LAG going forward will however need to change, with less applications for funding to consider and it is important that this change does not lead to reductions in the number of attending meetings and so on. Potential activities which could have a greater role going forward include:

- Visiting projects and receiving presentations from organisations supported;
- Reviewing projects that have been funded in order to draw out lessons learnt, etc.
- Undertaking activities to share those lessons learnt amongst local stakeholders; and
- Considering the ongoing needs and priorities in the local area and feeding those views into ongoing discussions about future projects and programmes in the area.

Undertaking more activities to enhance the benefit for LAG members should also be considered including increased networking opportunities as well as potentially training in relation to LEADER themes; for example, encouraging innovation amongst communities (innovation is discussed later in this chapter).

Recommendation 6: The role of the LAG going forward needs to be considered to ensure that, with the inevitable reduced need to assess applications for support, the group continues to be active and deliver the LEADER approach in full in Conwy.

The Lead Body and animation

Conwy County Borough is undertaking the administrative and financial operations on behalf of the Conwy Cynhaliol LAG. The team delivering the programme – the Conwy Cynhaliol team - are also employed by Conwy County Borough Council.

Feedback on the activities of the Conwy Cynhaliol team as the lead body was overwhelmingly positive both from LAG members and respondents to the survey of projects supported. These are clearly positive evaluation findings.

'Animation of the territory', or making things happen, is a key part of LEADER undertaken by the Conwy Cynhaliol team under the direction of the LAG. This can include a range of activities including empowering or supporting local groups and organisations to develop and implement projects (in line with the LDS) or more general activities focused on the local area such as, for example, enhancing the awareness of local heritage and associated opportunities.

There was again some reference to the misconception of what LEADER could and could not support when interviewees for this evaluation were discussing animation how the team engaged with local communities created by changes from the previous programme period.[5] This led to some concerns that some communities were less engaged than they potentially could/should be.

---

[5] For the previous programme period, there was considerable integration between LEADER funding (known then as Axis 4) and Axis 3 funding (support for projects to improve 'quality of life' in rural areas) which were delivered alongside each other in Conwy.

The fact that a relatively limited number of projects are being delivered by what could be considered 'new' groups should be noted as that can potentially limit the extent to which the programme achieves 'capacity building' outcomes amongst those funded as well as the programmes ability to draw new organisations into rural development in Conwy - important objectives of LEADER in terms of 'fostering rural development' in the areas where the programme is active (the principal objective at an EU level).

Careful thought needs to be given to animation activities going forward in light of this feedback and of course the limited funding available for projects going forward. Options that the LAG could consider include:

- An increased emphasis on capturing and sharing lessons learnt by projects;
- Supporting applicants to source follow-up/continuation funding for projects once the LEADER elements have been completed;
- Linked to the above, providing support to communities developing ideas and projects that can be funded from other sources or delivered without the need for funding (i.e. by volunteers); and
- Building capacity within communities to analyse/understand the challenges that they face and develop new and innovative solutions.

Recommendation 7: The LAG should consider options for targeting amination activities in differently over the remaining programme period in light of the limited project funding available. This should include the potential to specifically target less experienced organisations in Conwy alongside possibly ring-fencing a proportion of the funding available for less experienced organisations.

Innovation and networking

Innovation is a cross-cutting priority of the LEADER programme. The focus on innovation is based on the argument that doing "more of the same" is unlikely to enable an area to reach its full potential and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. The objective is to encourage and support new, forward looking and entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to local issues and to share and transfer that experience.

The evaluation found that LAG members and staff are clearly aware of the emphasis on innovation within the LEADER programme. Innovation is also a key element of the application process and discussed when LAGs are considering applications for support. The definition of innovation being used (not just in Conwy) is however in many instances the minimum that is necessary in order to be able to justify that the project can be funded rather than a key consideration – has this project been undertaken in Conwy before? Whilst this definition is not wrong, it can be argued that it lacks some ambition.

There is therefore an argument that, to achieve the objectives set out within the LDS in respect of innovation, there is a need to introduce a greater degree of 'disruptive innovation' into LEADER in Conwy during its latter stages and also to be more pro-active in terms of supporting communities to develop innovative ideas and projects to tackle the issues and opportunities that they identify.

Recommendation 8: Options for increasing the level of innovation within the programme in Conwy should be explored including a review of approaches for supporting innovation as promoted by organisations such as Nesta.

There is also a tendency within the LEADER programme (not just in Conwy) to treat projects being supported as 'one-off' pilots, which once completed are either mainstreamed or not. Innovation is however often an ongoing process with ideas going through a number of iterations and pilots before they are mainstreamed. The potential need to revisit ideas and projects that have already been funded by LEADER to consider the need to support a further iteration of the pilot therefore needs to be considered.

Recommendation 9: Some pilot projects warrant a second attempt or further development. Alongside the development of new project ideas, the LAG should, on an ongoing basis, review project evaluation forms with a view to considering whether existing or previous pilot projects should be evolved into new of phase 2 pilots.

The importance of completing the 'innovation cycle' for projects also needs to be emphasised which should include a comprehensive analysis of lessons learnt, etc. as well as the effective dissemination and sharing of that information. Linked to this, there is the potential to enhance the level of networking taking place in Conwy, another key feature of the LEADER approach, especially during its latter stages as projects are ending and lessons learnt are emerging.

Networking among actors inside the LAGs area, among LAGs and other public-private partnerships, in order to establish a stronger foundation for the transfer of knowledge, and exchange of experiences is also a key part of LEADER. Another is cooperation, with LAGs across Europe offering a wealth of LEADER local development experience, knowledge and human capital. Cooperation offers a means of capitalising on this resource.

Recommendation 10: The 'innovation cycle' should include a review of what has been achieved, lessons learnt, etc. and projects reviewed on that basis as they near completion with a compendium of 'learning' from the programme being developed and shared. This could be done via networking activities within Conwy which brings together projects and/or stakeholders to share and discuss the findings of projects and priorities going forward (see Recommendation 1).

1 Introduction

This is the second and mid-term report of the evaluation of the LEADER programme in Conwy as delivered by the Local Action Group (known as the LAG) for the area, Conwy Cynhaliol.

The first report focused on introducing the LEADER approach, its delivery in Conwy and setting out how the evaluation will be undertaken. This formative, mid-term, report assesses the delivery of the programme within the county to date with a view to informing delivery over the remainder of its lifetime. The summative, final, evaluation report, scheduled for the end of 2021, will have a focus on assessing the outcomes, impact and added value of the programme.

This report has been informed by:

- A review of the monitoring data and other information about projects and programme as held by the Conwy Cynhaliol team within Conwy County Borough Council, managing and delivering the programme on behalf of the LAG
- Telephone interviews with 12 LAG members and six members of staff
- Telephone interviews with 21 representatives of projects supported by the programme, representing 28 of the projects supported at the time of the research.[6]

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides context for the discussion that follows with a brief overview of the LEADER approach and its implementation in Conwy
- Chapter 3 reviews the Local Development Strategy guiding the delivery of LEADER in Conwy, expenditure and performance to date
- Chapter 4 reviews of the implementation of the LEADER approach within the county
- Finally, Chapter 6 includes the conclusion and recommendations of this mid-term evaluation report.

Examples of projects supported by the LEADER programme have been included in Appendix 1 for ease of reference with the definitions of the performance indicators being used in Appendix 2.

The evaluation is being undertaken by the social and economic research company, Wavehill.[7]

---

[6] The number of projects is higher than the number of interviews because some of the interviewees were responsible for multiple projects.
[7] www.wavehill.com

2 A brief overview of the LEADER approach and its implementation in Conwy

Key points

- LEADER is implemented by applying 'community-led local development' and is built on several specific characteristics often referred to as the 'LEADER approach'.
- The programme in Conwy is led by the Conwy Cynhaliol Local Action Group with a team within Conwy County Borough Council leading in the delivery of the programme on their behalf.
- The total value of the programme in Conwy is just over £2m with 79 per cent being allocated to funding for projects.

2.1 Introduction

For ease of reference and to provide context for the discussion that follows, this chapter provides a brief overview of the LEADER approach and its implementation in Conwy. For a more detailed description of the approach, please refer to Report 1 of the evaluation.

2.2 Overview of the LEADER approach

LEADER is a local development method which has been used for over 20 years to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas.

As a **Community Led Local Development (CLLD)** initiative, LEADER is an integrated development process designed to engage, enable, resource and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development. LEADER is built on a number of specific characteristics often referred to as the 'LEADER approach' as illustrated in figure 2.1 over page.

LEADER is implemented by **Local Action Group (LAG)** activities, delivering a **Local Development Strategy (LDS)** that they have developed and animation/capacity building activities within the local community.

Figure 2.1: The LEADER approach
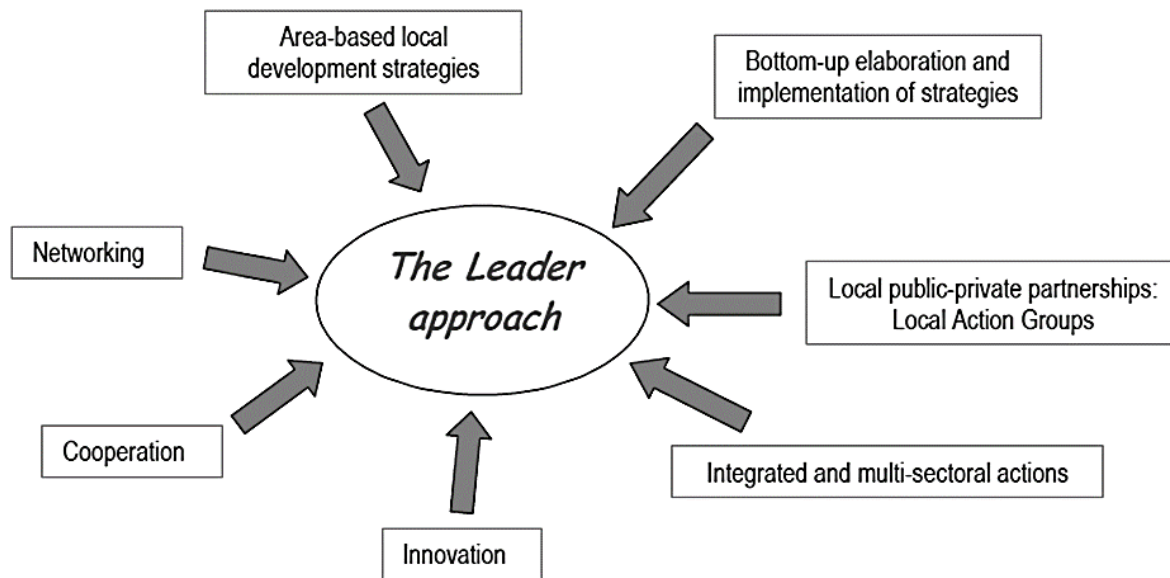
Animation is a key feature of LEADER (specifically the 'bottom up' element of the programme) and can include a range of activities, such as:

- working to 'empower' local people and/or organisations and their willingness to face local challenges or opportunities through the development and implementation of projects (linked to the LDS); and
- (not directly linked with the LDS or a specific project) working more generally in the local area and with the local population to, for example, enhance the awareness of local heritage.

Innovation is one of the original and fundamental strategic principles in LEADER. The focus on innovation is based on the argument that doing "more of the same" is unlikely to enable an area to reach its full potential and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. The objective is to encourage and support new, forward looking and entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to local issues and to share and transfer that experience.

Cooperation is also a core LEADER feature. With LAGs across Europe the wealth of LEADER local development experience, knowledge and human capital is potentially substantial, and cooperation offers a means of capitalising on this resource. LAGs can make use of or contribute to this network to develop the group, to undertake joint projects or initiatives, to innovate, or to share or transfer knowledge and experience.

2.2.1 Added value of the approach

The LEADER approach is expected to add-value at a local level through:

(1) **The implementation of the LDS** (i.e. its operationalisation in the form of projects and the results and impacts they produce);
(2) **The LAG delivery mechanism** (i.e. the set of rules, procedures and administrative arrangements, which ensure that strategy objectives become concrete actions on the ground); and
(3) **Capacity building support/animation**: The support provided to encourage and enable the beneficiaries (i.e. activities aiming to raise the awareness, readiness, cooperation and networking capabilities of local people to contribute to developing their area).

If correctly applied, the implementation of the LEADER method is anticipated to lead to three groups of outcomes, as illustrated by the graphics below.

Figure 2.2: Anticipated outcomes of the LEADER approach
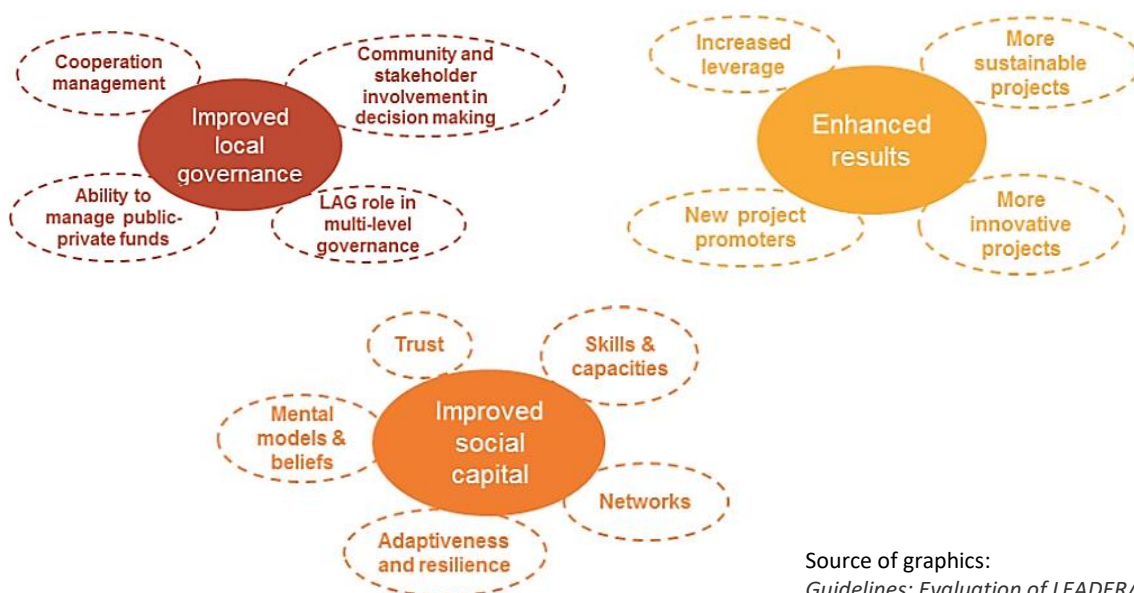
Source of graphics:
Guidelines: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (2017)
European Network for Rural Development

2.3 The approach in Conwy

In Conwy, LEADER is being implemented by the Conwy Cynhaliol LAG with a team within Conwy County Borough undertaking the administrative and financial operations on their behalf. The team delivering the programme are also employed by Conwy County Borough Council.

The total value of the programme in Conwy is £2,074,563 which funds each element of the projects including staff and administrative costs. The following is a description of the process of developing ideas and projects as utilised by the LEADER team in Conwy taken from the guidance notes for the programme in Conwy.[8]

Revenue type projects
Projects supported must be revenue in type with revenue being defined as anything costing less than £10,000.

Who can be involved?
Conwy Cynhaliol will seek to engage with communities of interest as well as those defined by their geography. Successful activities will require input from a broad range of participants and success will often be determined by ensuring all interested parties are involved and fully engaged in the process. Projects may include participants from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

Conwy Cynhaliol can cooperate with a broad range of groups and individuals, however it is not possible to fund projects for others to deliver outside procurement arrangements. There are several reasons for this:

• *It is not possible to award a grant (or anything that looks like a grant)*
• *Conwy Cynhaliol must adhere to all procurement rules on all expenditure*
• *Conwy Cynhaliol must adhere to State Aid rules and must avoid giving a commercial advantage to a business or organisation.*

How are projects developed?
Organisations can submit a Project Idea Form to the LAG. The Conwy Cynhaliol Team will then work with the organisation and the LAG members to develop the project idea.

We do not expect projects to be presented in their final form. The staff have an important role in identifying potential projects and adding elements in order to elevate them to become LEADER projects.

The Conwy Cynhaliol Staff and LAG members will have proactive approach in developing and implementing its own projects to respond to the Local Development Strategy. In these instances, Conwy Cynhaliol will recruit or develop the community of interest to support the delivery of the project.

---

[8] http://ruralconwy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/160816-eoi-guidance-form-eng.pdf

Capacity and timescales

This is a 6-year programme with limited human and financial resources. It is important for Conwy Cynhaliol to control the resources over the programme period to ensure the quality and impact of the activities. Conwy Cynhaliol will retain the right to limit the number of projects that are being developed and delivered at any one time. Once a Project Idea Form has been submitted there will be regular contact with the organisations and we will aim for a decision within 6 weeks.

3 Review of the Local Development Strategy & Expenditure, Outputs and Outcomes to date

Key points

- The LDS for Conwy is very broad and seeks to tackle a very wide range of issues.
- It can be argued that the strategy is too broad, lacking any prioritisation and spreading the resources available too thinly.
- The counter argument is that the broad approach reflects the wide range of challenges facing the area and the fact that LEADER is designed to be 'bottom up' supporting ideas that come from within the community.
- Staff and LAG members expressed mixed views about the LDS with some identifying it as a key document whilst others said it had limited influence of decisions being made. There was however a consensus that the LDS was too complicated.
- Over three quarters of the budget available for projects has been committed. This is positive in respects on ensuring that the budget available is fully utilised but leaves limited funding available for new projects.
- Those interviewed for this evaluation were generally satisfied with the number and range of projects supported to date (65) but there was concern about the limited emphasis on economic development amongst projects with state aid restrictions highlighted as a serious constraint on the programme in that regard.
- Only a limited number of key performance indicators are being recorded (in line with programme requirements) and they provide limited insight into the achievements of the programme.
- Further indicators need to be collected to fully understand the achievements of LEADER in Conwy along with effective evaluation of what individual projects have achieved.
- The common outcome most frequently identified by projects responding to a survey for this evaluation was 'engaging with new audiences'.
- Most projects said that they were unlikely to have happened without LEADER support.
- The programme seems to have had limited success in respect of engaging individuals or groups in rural development for the first time
- Those involved in managing projects reported that they had benefited as a result of their involvement with LEADER in a range of ways, including the development of new skills, an increase in their network and an improvement in their understanding of the challenges facing the area.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the LDS for Conwy. It is important to note that we do not consider the way in which the LDS was developed which is outside the remit of the evaluation. Rather, the focus is on the coherence of the LDS as a strategy for guiding the implementation of LEADER in Conwy and the extent to which it has been delivered via the projects supported to date. The chapter then moves on to review the figures for expenditure to date and the range of projects that have been supported.

The performance indicators recorded are then discussed before finally we consider the evidence of the outcomes of the projects to date. That discussion draws upon data and other information about projects that has been collated by the Conwy Cynhaliol team, interviews with LAG members and staff as well as the survey of project supported.

3.2 Review of the strategy

The LDS is an important element of the LEADER approach described European Commission guidelines as *'the roadmap for LEADER implementation with the LAG selecting and supporting projects, according to the contribution they make to the goals of the strategy'*.[9]

The policy and strategy review within the Conwy LDS are comprehensive as is the analysis of the key statistical information about the county although both sections require updating on an ongoing basis. It is important to note that the policy context has changed considerably since the LDS was originally written (the most obvious development being Brexit) which needs to be reflected within an updated LDS as these changes can potentially have a significant influence on the priorities for the implementation of LEADER in the area.

As shown in Table 3.1, the Conwy LDS included seven 'headline objectives' which are then focused down into four 'compacted' strategic objectives. Below those, there are 15 'specific priorities' describing how the strategic objectives will be implemented as set out in the table over page. The specific priorities relate to a number of the strategic objectives as indicated by the 'SO' and number noted after each specific priority. The specific priorities are also allocated into one of the four themes of the LEADER programme in Wales. This is a very clear logical and clear model for moving from strategic objectives through to specific priorities.

---

[9] Guidance produced by the European Network for Rural Development on the development and implementation of the LDS can be found here: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd-guidance_lsd.pdf

Table 3.1: Objectives and priorities of the LDS for Rural Conwy

Headline Objectives	Strategic Objectives	LEADER programme theme and LDS specific priorities
1. Developing a skilled and sustainable workforce and community enterprises 2. Improving rural transport provision 3. Developing and diversifying the economic base of rural Conwy 4. Preventing and mitigating the effect of rural poverty 5. Sustaining and developing the built and natural environment 6. Building sustainable rural communities 7. Enhancing local distinctiveness	1. Develop a diverse economic base and suitable qualified workforce in rural Conwy 2. Provide accessible transport to those who cannot access or do not have access to conventional public transport 3. Improve the economic exploitation of the cultural, built and natural environment 4. Support community cohesion/integration and access to basic services	Theme 1: Adding value to local identity and cultural resources 1. Pilot package of innovative heritage and tourism activities (SO1 and 3) 2. Integration of disparate community sectors (SO4) 3. To implement a pilot package of 'Our Nature Spaces' projects (SO3 and 4) Theme 2: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains 4. Facilitate the Dyffryn Conwy Naturiol brand development (SO1 and 3) 5. Establishing sector group networks to assist with collaborative working and coordinate the supply chain (SO1 and 3) 6. To establish a Llanrwst Town Centre Partnership (SO1, 3 and 4) 7. Facilitate basic business skills and development ideas for underrepresented groups (SO1 and 4) 8. Establish a series of pilot projects to encourage Youth Entrepreneurship in rural Conwy (SO1, 3 and 4) Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services 9. Support the delivery of non-statutory services by communities/groups (SO1, 2, 3 and 4) 10. To implement/pilot an innovative approach to community transport (SO1, 2, 3 and 4) 11. Facilitate a pilot of projects to ensure isolated individuals are engaged within the community (SO4) 12. Deliver a series of projects to address poverty and deprivation (SO4) Theme 4: Renewable energy at a community level 13. Renewable Energy at community level (no SOs specified) Theme 5: exploitation of digital technology 14. Increase the uptake of broadband and digital technology (SO1 and 4) Theme 6: Cooperation 15. Identify actions where cooperative working can deliver synergies to deliver real added value (SO1, 2, 3 and 4)

Source: Conwy Local Development Strategy

The strategic objectives set out are consistent with the SWOT analysis within the LDS with a specific SWOT also included for each strategic objective.

The strategy is however very broad and seeks to tackle a very wide range of issues. It can be argued that the strategy is *too* broad, lacking any prioritisation of the key challenges facing the local area. This approach dilutes the potential impact of the LEADER programme by spreading the resources available too thinly. It could also however be argued that this approach reflects the broad range of challenges facing the area. The fact that LEADER is designed to be a 'bottom up' support mechanism supporting ideas that come from within the community also needs to be acknowledged.

It is also important to note that the LDS document was prepared as a bid for funding, prepared at a time when the nature of the LEADER funding (including what it could and could not support) was unclear. This encouraged those preparing the LDS to propose a very broad and wide-ranging strategy with an emphasis on ensuring that nothing you may want to do at a later time was excluded. Its usefulness a 'strategy', which prioritises the challenges and opportunities that LEADER should focus upon and makes the best possible use of the limited funding available, is however inevitably limited by such an approach.

There is no clear prioritisation within the SWOT analysis within the LDS although specific elements of the analysis are identified within the appended 'intervention logic table' and linked to needs/opportunities and specific objective. It is not however clear which of the weakness or opportunities identified are considered by the LAG or identified by the analysis as being the most pressing or highest priority. From a strategy perspective, this is important as prioritising the issues being identified would allow a clearer analysis of which of the objectives and potential actions being identified are the most urgent and/or the most relevant to the LEADER programme in Conwy.

LAG members and staff were asked to comment on the LDS and its role in the decision-making process during their interviews for this report. The views expressed were mixed with some describing the LDS as being a key part of the decision- making process but others, whilst aware of the LDS, saying that it had little influence on the decision-making process. There is however reference to the LDS in every LAG meeting with the priorities noted on the papers distributed to members ahead of every meeting with a view to maintaining their awareness of them. There was however a general consensus that the strategy was 'heavy' and overly complicated (at least partly due to the template that had to be used for its development).

The following are examples of the comments made:

> *"The local development strategy plays a key role as each project must be consistent with the priorities of the strategy. The ideas of the strategy are always in the background of the LAG's discussions. Because the document itself is so heavy it is difficult to use but all members of the LAG are aware of the document. The main ideas of the strategy drive everything the LAG does."*

"The LAG members consider the strategy when selecting which projects to fund but for me it is too heavy and complex a document to understand and use. I am concentrating on the benefit of the project not how the project fits in with a very bureaucratic document."

"I can't even remember what the main priorities are because they are so hypothetical, and the language is so technical and bureaucratic."

"I can't answer this question because the strategy is too complicated to understand."

There was a recognition that the strategy within the LDS is broad with respondents noting that, to paraphrase, 'most things will fit'. The question that seems to be asked more often than not is whether applications for funding 'fit' with the LDS when we would argue that the question should be whether applications for support can contribute to achieving the aims of the strategy. This is a subtle but important difference in approach.

There were mixed views on whether the broadness of the strategy was a good thing during interviews for this evaluation. The need to prioritise activities from this point onwards in order to address elements of the LDS not achieved to date and to make sure that the limited funds that remained available where used in the best possible way was however generally recognised. There was not however a clear consensus that the LDS was, as the author would suggest, too broad from the beginning that that greater focus and prioritisation would have been appropriate given the relatively small budget available to deliver the LEADER programme in Conwy.

The key to the 'broad versus focused' LDS debate is that the LAG needs to be clear about what their objective for LEADER in Conwy is. If the objective to fund good or innovative ideas, whatever they may be, a broad approach is appropriate. If, however the objective is to addressing specific priorities, challenges or opportunities within the county, a narrower, more targeted, approach is necessary.

3.3 Expenditure to date

The table below sets out the expenditure figures for the projects budget in Conwy up to June 2019. It shows a healthy level of commitment in excess of 75 per cent of the budget available, assuming that projects fully utilise the budget allocated to them.

Table 3.2: Project budgets expenditure to date, as of June 2019

Totals	Total Approved Projects
Expenditure to date	£552,353
Total budget	£713,115
Remaining	£160,762
Remaining %	22.5%

Source: the Conwy Cynhaliol team

The relatively high proportion of the budget that has already been committed does however mean that the LAG has limited resources left to commit over the remainder of the lifetime of the programme. The LAG will therefore need to carefully consider how it utilises that budget going forward.

3.4 The range of projects supported to date

At the time of the analysis for this report, the LEADER programme in Conwy had supported 65 projects in total suggesting that good progress has been made in the implementation of the programme, looking purely at the number of projects supported. The table below splits those projects per theme as a total and as a percentage of the total. It also shows the budget committed per theme and as a percentage of the total.

Table 3.3: Approved projects split by theme

Theme	Number of projects	% of all projects
Theme 1: Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	12	18%
Theme 2: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	20	31%
Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services	13	20%
Theme 4: Renewable energy at community level	5	8%
Theme 5: Exploitation of digital technology	11	17%
Cooperation	4	6%

Source: the Conwy Cynhaliol team

The table shows that the dominant themes in respects of the number of projects supported to date is Theme 2 (facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains) with 31 per cent of the projects supported to date. The theme where there has been the least projects to date is Theme 4 (renewable energy at a community level) with just five projects (eight per cent of the total) supported.

> *"I am very happy with the range of projects supported by host Conwy. We have funded many projects that help with mental health, loneliness and dementia but have also had projects that promote food and drink producers, improving services such as transport and broadband. The only weakness is that we haven't had a huge impact on the county's economy, but this is because Leader rules and priorities have changed since the last time."*

The quote above is typical of the comments made during interviews with interviewees generally happy with the number and range of projects supported but also highlighting some limitations, specifically in respects of the economic outcomes of projects and the programme as a whole. The limited ability of the programme to achieve such outcomes was however also emphasised.

State aid was a regular topic of discussion during interviews with both staff and LAG members. For the current programme in Wales, LEADER funding cannot be used to provide aid or other assistance that would constitute state aid.[10] Further, LEADER funding cannot be used to provide grants or other forms of direct or indirect assistance to commercial businesses.[11] This is a substantial change from previous programme where, in some areas, there has been an emphasis on providing support to businesses. In the view of the Conwy Cynhaliol team, this has had a substantial (and negative) impact on the range of projects that have been supported via the current programme. They also highlight that the change of approach has been a cause of confusing and meant that substantial momentum developed over the previous funding period (when such support could be provided) has been lost.

It is also worth noting that, for the previous programme period, there was considerable integration between LEADER funding (known as Axis 4) and Axis 3 funding[12] which were delivered alongside each other in Conwy. The current programme is therefore much narrower/more focused than its predecessor with LAG members and other stakeholders taking some time to adjust to the revised approach.

---

[10] State aid is any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis to any organisations that could potentially distort competition and trade in the European Union. This means that LAGs in Wales cannot provide any kind of assistance that would reduce the normal day to day operational running costs of the business, enterprise, undertaking or 'economic operator' such as; subsidising staff salaries or giving financial support, directly or indirectly, towards rent, rates, energy costs, promotion, publicity, advertising and/or any other running costs or overheads. For further information, see: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid

[11] This includes but is not restricted to; capital grants towards buildings and equipment; any form of business start-up assistance; business bursaries; aid assistance through the provision of subsidised goods or services (for example, machinery and/or equipment provided on loan) to a business. Direct financial support; loans; financial assistance for new product development; or other methods of indirect financial assistance to a business, such as marketing for publicity or promotional activities that are free or at a reduced rate to a business, are also not eligible.

[12] Funding for projects to improve quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy.

3.5 Programme level performance indicators

The table below shows the data on the performance of the LEADER programme in Conwy against the targets agreed with the Welsh Government in terms of both the predicted final achievement and the numbers claimed to date.[13]

Table 3.4: Performance indicators for the LEADER programme in Conwy (overall)

Performance Indicator[14] ↓	Target	Claimed
Number of networks established	6	4
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	110	73
Number of information dissemination actions/promotion	81	62
Number of stakeholders engaged	16,788	142

Source: the Conwy Cynhaliol team

The range of indicators is not substantial. This is in line with the Welsh Government's change of approach for the current LEADER programme in response to criticisms of the previous programme which included a far longer list of performance indicators, leading to a very complex monitoring process. The much more limited number of indicators (most of which are outputs[15]) does however mean that the data available to judge the success of the programme, based on these performance indicators alone, is limited. This increases the reliance of the evaluation on the data collected by the individual projects, as discussed later in this chapter.

It is important to note that the performance indicators discussed above are reported to the Welsh Government for the programme in Conwy as a whole. The performance indicators are not reported per LDS objective, meaning that they cannot be used to assess progress against those specific objectives.

3.5.1 Potential additional performance indicators

As noted above, the KPIs in place for the LEADER programme (as set by the Welsh Government) are output (activity) focused and relatively narrow. The evaluation for Conwy, as well as evaluations of LEADER activities in other parts of Wales being undertaken by the same team, has therefore considered the potential to introduce additional indicators to provide further data on the performance of the programme in Conwy.

A key challenge to the evaluation of a programme such as LEADER is that the projects and activities funded can vary substantially. This makes it challenging to develop a set of common indicators that can be used across all projects, especially in respects of capturing the outcomes of activities. Potential generic indicators that could potentially be used however include:

---

[13] It should be noted that none of the achieved outputs to date have, at the time of this report, been 'claimed' as having been achieved within reports to the Welsh Government. This is because outputs can only be achieved once projects have been formally completed and closed.

[14] Definitions for the indicators can be found in Appendix 2.

[15] Illustrating the level of activity undertaken as opposed to results or outcomes of activities.

- The number of organisations applying for funding to deliver a regeneration project for the first time
- The number of those new organisations developing other or follow up project proposals (i.e. continuing their involvement in regeneration)
- The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they have benefited as a result of their involvement in the project funded by LEADER.
- The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they are more likely to get involved or continue to be involved in actions within their local community as a result of their involvement with the LEADER programme.

The main weakness of these indicators is that they tell you nothing about the nature of the benefit, only that there has been one. It may however be that such an indication is enough with more detailed data and analysis being provided at a project level.

A common theme in discussions with LAG members on this issue was the legacy of projects, whether they continue or evolve once the funding that has been provided by the LEADER programme has come to an end. This was considered by many to be perhaps the key indicator of the success of LEADER and is obviously consistent with the core objective of LEADER as a mechanism for piloting new and innovative approaches to rural development in Conwy.

Whilst accepting that not all projects will succeed is important (a key part of any intervention in support of new and innovative activities) the logic of indicators relating to legacy for a LEADER programme is clear. Potential indicators include:

- The number of projects still active 12 months post the end of the LEADER funding
- The amount of additional or funding drawn into Conwy by the project.

Sharing of learning is also a key element of the LEADER programme. It may therefore be valuable to capture indicators of activities relating to that process as part of any set of 'legacy' indicators. For example:

- The number of case studies produced and the number of times they have been downloaded from the programme website
- Participants in activities to share learning from the LEADER programme (individuals and/or organisations).

As discussed in Report 1, Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) are an important element of the EU Common Monitoring and Evaluation System of which the LEADER programme forms part and it is appropriate to consider them here. LAGs are required to report against the CEQs which are relevant to the Focus Areas their activities are aligned to. In Wales, all LAGs should address the CEQ related to Focus Area 6B: *'To what extent has the RDP intervention contributed to fostering local development in rural areas?'* The judgement criteria specified for this question are set out in the table below.

Table 3.5: Judgement criteria and indicators for Focus Area 6B: fostering local development in rural areas

Judgement criteria	Indicators
1. Services and local infrastructure in rural areas has improved 2. Access to services and local infrastructure has increased in rural areas 3. Rural people have participated in local actions 4. Rural people have benefited from local actions 5. Employment opportunities have been created via local development strategies **6.** Rural territory and population covered by LAGs has increased	• % of rural population covered by local development strategies • Jobs created in supported projects • % of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures *Additional information:* • Number of projects/initiatives supported by the Local Development Strategy • % of RDP expenditure in LEADER measures with respect to total RDP expenditure

The indicators specified for Focus Area 6B are of relatively limited value at a local level in terms of assessing the outcomes of the programme. Many of the indicators suggested above are however relevant to the judgement criteria specified further supporting their potential introduction. The constraints created by the state aid restriction on the programme in Wales on the potential to achieve the 'jobs created' result does however need to be noted again here.

It is also important to consider the Well-being of Future Generations Act when considering programme level performance indicators for schemes in Wales. The Act puts in place legislation requiring public bodies in Wales to put long-term sustainability at the forefront of their thinking, and work with each other along with other relevant organisations (such as third sector groups) and the public to prevent and tackle problems[16].

Seven 'well-being goals' are set and a series of 46 'national indicators' have been put in place to allow progress towards those goals to be measured. The list is too long to include here[17] but several of the indicators are potentially relevant to the LEADER programme in Conwy.

These indicators are however (as one would expect from national level indicators) very high level and long-term. Attributing any changes in these indicators to the LEADER programme will therefore be challenging to say the least. Being aware of these high-level indicators and considering them within the revision of the LDS will however be important.

---

[16] More information about the Act is available here: https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/

[17] The full list can be found within this document: https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160316-national-indicators-to-be-laid-before-nafw-en.pdf

Based on the review in this section, we would propose that the introduction of at least the indicators noted below be considered:

a) The number of organisations applying for funding to deliver a regeneration project for the first time
b) The number of those new organisations developing other or follow up project proposals (i.e. continuing their involvement in regeneration)
c) The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they are more likely to get involved or continue to be involved in actions within their local community as a result of their involvement with the LEADER programme.
d) The number of projects still active 12 months post the end of the LEADER funding
e) The amount of additional or funding drawn into Conwy by the project
f) Participants in activities to share learning from the LEADER programme (individuals and/or organisations).

These indicators are generic and not priority specific. Based on the review of the LDS previously discussed, the potential to introduce additional priority specific indicators should also be considered.

3.6 Project outcomes to date

As noted in the introduction, telephone interviews were undertaken with representatives of 28 projects supported by the programme. These interviews covered a range of subjects including the outcomes of the activities undertaken (anticipated or actual, depending on the progress of the project) and other outcomes generated by the implementation of the project supported by LEADER.

How respondents described what their project(s) had achieved

When respondents were asked to summarise what their project had achieved, the responses were understandably very varied reflecting the range in the projects in question.

Figure 3.1: Response to the question - how would you summarise what the project has achieved? (coded)
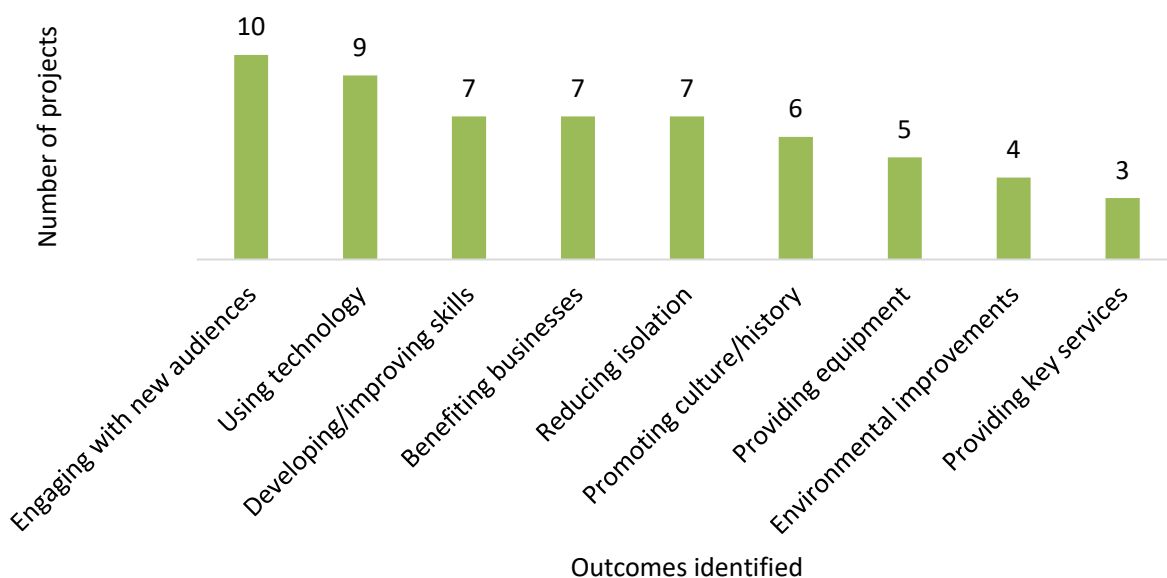
Total number of responses=28

When the responses were coded[18] (Figure 3.1) the most common theme to emerge is 'engagement with new audiences' with 'using technology' also prominent. The table over page provides examples of the nature of the outcomes being identified in each of these themes.

---

[18] Coding is the process of taking open-end responses to questions and categorising them into groups.

Table 3.7: Outcomes generated by projects as identified by respondents to the survey of projects funded by Conwy Cynhaliol

Outcome theme	Examples
Engaging with new audiences	• Increased use of social media • Engaging with local care homes • Setting up after school clubs • Creating an animated short film • Various events being held
Using technology	• Using social media • Producing films • Digital skills courses • Providing Wi-Fi • Using QR codes at events • Using e-bikes and electric cars • Developing a mobile application
Developing/improving skills	• Peer-to-peer time banking pilot • Engaging consultants • Developing a toolkit for community groups • Workshops • Provision of training
Benefiting businesses	• Reducing costs and improving efficiency • Feasibility studies • Attracting people to a town/area • Jobs fair • Business networking
Reducing isolation	• Creating community hubs • Creating opportunities to undertake group activities • Creating volunteering opportunities • Setting up mobile services
Promoting culture/history	• Working with local artists • Visits to local schools, clubs, etc. • Events and activities
Providing equipment	• To allow environmental enhancement activities to take place • To allow those with disabilities to participate • Setting up mobile services
Environmental improvements	• Feasibility studies • Setting up a mobile recycling scheme • Maintenance activities in communities • Use of electric cars
Providing key services	• Feasibility studies • Setting up mobile services • Provision of training • Providing Wi-Fi

Would the project have happened anyway?

A key question for any evaluation of this nature is whether a project that has been funded would have happened anyway, regardless of the support provided. In this instance, 11 of 28 respondents to the survey said that there was no chance that the project would have happened without the support of the LEADER programme with a further 13 identifying only a slim chance that it would have happened anyway (figure 3.2). No respondents believed it was likely.

<u>Figure 3.2: On a scale of 0 (no chance) to 4 (very likely), how likely is it that the project would have happened anyway, without the financial support of Conwy Cynhaliol?</u>

Total number of responses=28

When respondents were asked to explain their response, the most common reason given was that they did not believe that the same funding could have been sourced from any alternative programmes (n=16).

> *"This was a very innovative project and was on a very small scale with rural businesses and I don't think any other source of funding would have been willing to fund it at such an early stage."*

> *"LEADER is the only funding source I know that will fund a completely untested idea and see if it will work."*

The comments made also reveal a perception that, even if there was the potential that the project would have progressed without LEADER support, it has still added-value to the project by, for example, making it 'bigger and better' or enabling it to happen quicker than would otherwise have been the case.

> *"We did receive some funding from [other sources] but we needed LEADER for the initial funding and as it was a project that was very local and had cultural and economic aspects it was hard to find a suitable funding source for an untried project."*

20

"The project could have been attempted on a much smaller scale from existing funding arrangements, but it wouldn't have been as successful."

"Without the initial LEADER funding to trial the scheme we would never have been able to afford the E-Bikes and show how successful the project could be. It was the data from the pilot that allowed us to secure further funding and expand the programme."

As per the final quote above, the use of LEADER as a pre-cursor to a further, larger project is also apparent in some of the comments made. This is consistent with the purpose of LEADER as a funder of new, innovative and pilot projects.

Whilst the fact that we are reliant on the views of those responsible for the project needs to be considered, and the clear potential for bias that this means, these are important findings in respect of demonstrating the additionality of LEADER support.

Evaluation activities being undertaken by the projects

Given the limited number of programme level performance indicators being collected, the evaluation activities being undertaken at a project level will be very important in terms of demonstrating the achievements of LEADER in Conwy.

Evaluation activity was only reported as having been undertaken for nine of the 28 projects in the survey with a further six reporting that there were plans in place for an evaluation. This is clearly a relatively low proportion of the projects surveyed which is of some concern given the reliance on project level evaluation work. The fact that some projects were still ongoing does however need to be considered as does the fact that evaluation may not be necessary for some projects (for example, feasibility studies). It is an issue that does however need to be reviewed prior to the final evaluation stage.

The quality of the evaluation work undertaken or to be undertaken also needs to be considered. The evaluation has not, at this stage reviewed all the evaluation reports that have been produced. One that has been reviewed was however very short and provided minimal evidence of the outcomes generated/claimed by the project. Again, this is an issue that needs to be addressed ahead of the final evaluation stage.

3.7 Outcomes of engaging with LEADER and delivering a supported project

As well as the outcomes generated by the projects that have been funded, it is important to assess the outcomes that developing and then implementing a LEADER funded project can generate, as explored below.

Previous involvement in rural development projects

LEADER seeks to build capacity in rural areas by engaging people, communities, organisations etc. in the development of their area for the first time. Of the 21 respondents to the survey of projects, 12 said that they had at least some previous involvement with rural development projects, with seven of those respondents describing their previous involvement as being 'a lot'. Only four of the 21 respondents said they had no previous involvement. Those figures suggest that the programme has, to date, had limited success in respect of engaging individuals or groups in rural development in Conwy for the first time. The alternative view is however that the programme is drawing, in the main, on individuals with some relevant experience for the delivery of its projects.

The pros and cons of this issue can be debated with an argument that the utilisation of funding by experienced organisations drives up the standard of projects being delivered (as well as minimising the risk of poor delivery) whilst others highlight the benefit of drawing in 'new blood' into rural development in Conwy. Both points of view are valid.

Unsurprisingly given the previous experience of most respondents, 95 per cent (41/54) said that they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to continue to be involved in some capacity with active projects in rural Conwy in the future (76 per cent saying that it was 'very likely'). There was however a mixed response to this question from the small group of respondents who had no previous involvement in rural development projects with two of the seven saying that it was 'very likely', three saying it was 'likely' and two saying it was 'unlikely'. This suggests that this small group of first timers may need some persuasion to continue to be involved.

Learning from being involved in a LEADER project

Respondents to the survey (excluding staff employed as part of the Conwy Cynhaliol team) were asked to describe what, if anything, they as an individual or as an organisation had learnt as a result of their involvement with the project and Conwy Cynhaliol. Three 'benefits' are apparent from the comments made as shown in the table over page.

Table 3.8: Learning from involvement in a Conwy Cynhaliol project as identified by project representatives

Type of benefit identified	Examples
Developed new skills (n=8)	• Developed links and a group of volunteers who can be accessed regularly • Developed film making and animation skills
Improved network(ing) (n=7)	• Extending our networks to organisations like Menter Iaith
Improved understanding of the challenges facing the local area (n=7)	• Improved understandings of the issues families with disabled children face in isolated rural communities and what type of support is best for them • Learned about the problem's wool producers in Conwy face and the issues that are damaging traditional sheep farming • Showed that there is a huge demand for more information and heritage related activities • This project has made me aware that rural communities have a wealth of skills that have not been tapped into

When respondents were asked to explain how, if at all, their experience with Conwy Cynhaliol had influenced their thinking about rural development in Conwy, most identified some kind of influence, the most common being:

• An improved understanding of how to tackle the challenges facing rural areas (n=4)
• That community engagement is key to development (n=4)
• A desire to develop and implement new projects in the area (n=4).

The following are example of the comments made:

"Through this project my mind has been opened to the possibilities of projects to improve the rural community and how we can combat social isolation in rural areas and that we as a small organisation can help a lot more."

"I think this project has changed my views about delivering services in rural areas as there needs to be more flexibility and that engaging and getting feedback from those communities improves the service."

"By being involved in this project I have seen how important it is to engage with communities and seek out individuals who would not normally get involved in community activities. It is these hard to reach individuals who benefit the most from these activities and we need to make an extra effort to engage them."

"Through LEADER I have become more willing to take a risk an experiment with new ideas about projects and how they should be delivered."

Involvement in rural development going forward

Excluding those employed by Conwy Cynhaliol, all respondents to the projects survey said that their involvement in the LEADER project had an influence on whether they would be involved in rural development in rural Conwy in the positive (16 respondents), with 11 of those respondents describing the influence as being 'a lot'. In the main, the reasons for this were an awareness of the impact that the current project was having as well as the positive influences described previously.

It is however worth noting that a minority of respondents (n=3) also highlighted the negative influence that perceived high levels of bureaucracy within the programme can have, as shown by the quotes below.

> *"I personally want to be involved in future projects in Conwy as I have seen the positive impact projects like this can have on communities and individuals but the organisation I work for is finishing and I would find going through the whole bureaucratic process again very trying."*

> *"I don't want to be involved in future LEADER projects as the admin required is too demanding. I will be doing more community projects, but I will be using lottery funding as it is much easier to apply for and claim."*

Meeting and working with people for the first time

Most (12 of 16) respondents to the projects survey (excluding staff) said that they had met and/or were working with different people, for the first time as a result of their involvement with Conwy Cynhaliol with the majority (n=9) describing the number involved as 'a lot'. The outcome in this instance is an increase in the individual/organisations local network but also has led to some of the outcome previously discussed, especially an increase in understanding of the local area. The following are examples of the comments made by respondents:

> *"I have worked with local businesses for the first time especially in water sports, mountain biking and adventure holidays. I have worked with local food producers and church and chapel groups for the first time."*

> *"Through this project we have worked with the university and young people aged 18-24 years of age for the first time and this link with the university and it's students has been maintained."*

> *"I worked with the wool producing community and sheep farmers for the first time and gained a much better understanding of the problems Welsh farming is facing."*

> *"This was the first time I worked with people who are hard to reach and have a variety of mental, emotional and physical problems."*

> *"Through this project I have developed a link with different communities in the Hiraethog area for the first time."*

24

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the fact that the LDS for Conwy is a very wide-ranging document. Our experience of undertaking similar evaluations in other parts of Wales shows that this is not uncommon with the fact that LDSs were prepared at a time when the detail of the programme was unavailable needing to be considered. The fact that LEADER is designed to be a 'bottom up' support mechanism supporting ideas that come from within the community also needs to be acknowledged; those writing LDS documents did not want to tie their hands in any way which they may later regret. The broadness of the LDS does however inevitably mean that its usefulness as a guide or action-plan for how LEADER funds in Conwy should be utilised is limited. The need for a narrower, more focused approach from this point forward, when the funding left within the LEADER programme is very limited, does however need to be carefully considered.

Good progress has been made in respect of expenditure and the number of projects supported to. This is positive in many ways although it does limit the amount of resources that the LAG has at its disposal for the remainder of the lifetime of the programme. Less applications for funding will therefore need to be considered by the LAG going forward. This will require a change in focus for the LAG going forward which is a matter we return to in the following chapter.

This report has only taken a limited look at the outcomes of projects, which will be a greater focus for the final evaluation report. There is however positive information about what projects have achieved. The fact that LEADER cannot provide any support that constitutes a state aid does however need to be taken into account when considering the outcomes that the programme can achieve.

The limited number of performance indicators being collected at a programme level is also a limiting factor when it comes to assessing what LEADER in Conwy has achieved. It also increases the reliance on evaluation activities undertaken at an individual project level. This is obviously a risk which the LAG may need to consider addressing as will be discussed in the conclusion of this report.

It is positive that the survey of projects found that a large proportion were not likely to have progressed without the support that they had received. It is also positive that a very high proportion of respondents to the project survey reported that they had benefited in respects of meeting or working with new people and increasing their understanding of challenges facing local communities as a result of their involvement with Conwy Cynhaliol. These are positive outcomes. The fact that a relatively large proportion of the funding available has gone to what could be described as experienced organisations does however need to be noted as that can potentially limited the extent to which the programme achieves 'capacity building' outcomes amongst those funded and draws new organisations into rural development in Conwy which are important objectives of LEADER.

4 Review of the implementation of the LEADER approach in Conwy to date

Key points

- Attendance at LAG meeting has been good.
- LAG members were positive about the LAG meetings and the role that the group played.
- There is a good understanding of the LEADER approach amongst LAG members and staff.
- There was however a recognition that the changes introduced by the Welsh Government to the current LEADER programme had led to some initial confusion and taken some time to 'bed-in'.
- LAG member identified the opportunity to network, learn about projects and better understand issues in the local area as benefits of being a LAG member – important outcomes of the LEADER approach.
- The role of the LAG will need to evolve over the remainder of the programme period as it has less applications for support to consider.
- Feedback on the activities of the Lead Body (Conwy CBC) was very positive.
- The need to ensure that 'animation' activities included activities to engage with communities in the area for the first time was emphasised.
- Feedback from projects about the application process and the support they received was positive.
- Innovation is clearly a key part of the programme in Conwy but there is an argument that there could be a greater emphasis on encouraging more innovation within the programme over the remainder of its lifetime including a more pro-active approach.
- Networking and cooperation has been a key feature of some of the projects supported. There is however scope for an increase in networking between projects during the next phase in the lifetime of the programme with a view to sharing lessons learnt and so on.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the implementation of the LEADER approach in Conwy to date, other than the LDS which has already been discussed in the previous chapter. The discussion draws on data for activities undertaken to date, as well as discussions with LAG members and the Conwy Cynhaliol team.

4.2 The Local Action Group

The LAG is a key part of the LEADER approach designed to be a group which represents the local area and its population. It leads the development process with no interest group nor public authorities having a majority in the decision-making process.

4.2.1 Number of meetings and attendance

Figure 4.1: LAG meetings attendance numbers, actual and linear trend (July 2015 to July 2019)
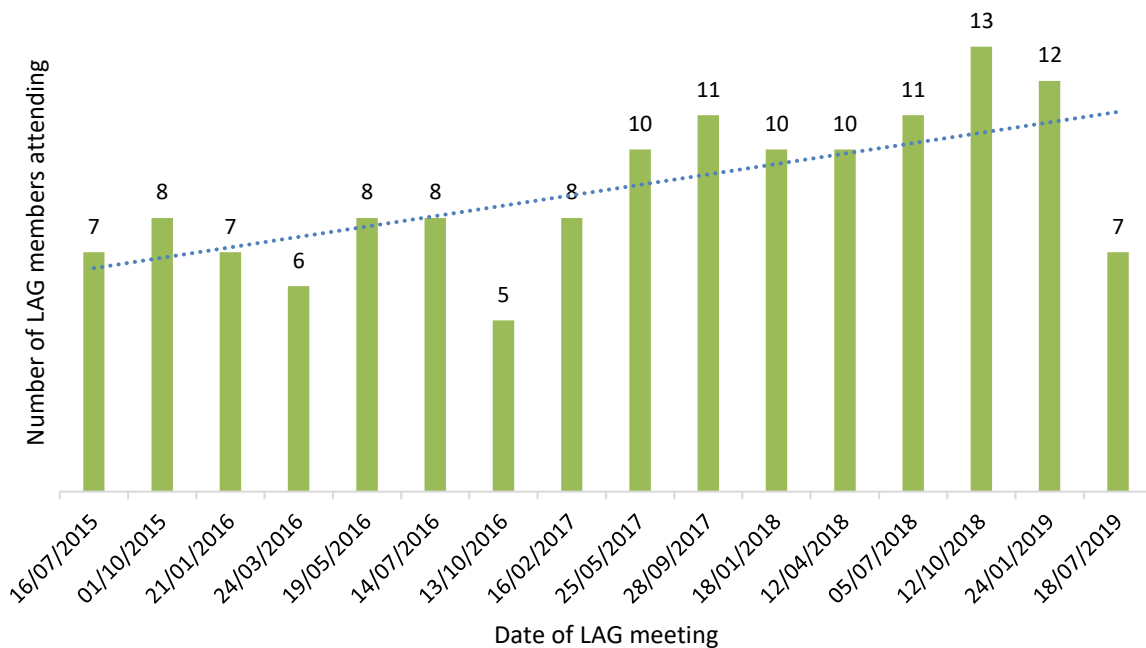
Source: analysis of data provided by the Conwy Cynhaliol team.

The graph above shows the number of LAG members attending meetings between July 2015 and July 2019 of which there were 16 (an average of a meeting every three months). In total, 21 individuals have attended at least one meeting during that period with the average number of meetings attended by a member being seven of the 16.

The trend in the numbers attending meetings has increased over the period in question (as illustrated by the dotted line in the graph above) although the low attendance number in July 2019 is noticeable coming after highs for the LAG in the two previous meetings (13 and 12 respectively). The average number attending meetings over the period was nine.

Continuity is important for any LAG with issues and projects often being discussed over a number of meetings. Whilst no members have attended all meetings, a total of nine LAG members have attended at least half of the meetings over the period in question although only two members have attended at least three quarters of meetings. This suggests that there will be some continuity in discussions over the durations period in question which is important. The figures do however also suggest some room for improvement in terms of continuity of attendance.

It is however also important to note that not all individuals have been members throughout the period under review, with a number of new members being added and some resigning (because, for example, they could not commit the necessary time). If we look at the proportion of meetings attended by each individual over the course of their membership (as opposed to the period as a whole), 11 have attended more than half of the meetings with three attending more than three quarters of the meetings.

When interviewees were asked to comment on the range of members (the sectors represented, demographics and so on), the response was generally positive with the mix of new and longer-term members being highlighted in particular as a positive. Some gaps in memberships were however identified, most notably in terms of private sector (specifically businesses rather than their representative organisations) and younger people, although respondents also emphasised the challenges of engaging with those two groups.

In the author's experience, these are the gaps most commonly identified by LAG members across Wales when asked this question. It is therefore not surprising that those gaps were identified in this instance. Whilst some members noted that number of steps to try and address those gaps had been taken (for example, evening meetings), none of the approaches were considered to have worked. The fact that changes to try and accommodate attendance from the private sector (e.g. evening meetings) could have a detrimental impact on other members ability to attend meetings was also noted. There was however a desire amongst some of the members interviewed to seek to continue to try different approaches to attract new (and different) members to meetings.

4.2.2 Views on the performance of the LAG to date

The views of those interviewed on the performance of the LAG were overwhelmingly positive with both staff and LAG members aware and comfortable with their responsibilities as members and the specifics of the LEADER approach as illustrated by the following quote, which also highlights the importance of experience and continuity within the group:

> *"At first new members believe that the LAG is only a panel to choose which projects to fund but it is much more than that. Much of the LAG's work is to identify weaknesses and opportunities and generate project ideas the team can develop. There is a lot of strategic work and it takes time for new members to understand this, so it is important to have an experienced group in the LAG and Conwy host has been successful in doing this."*

Views on the LAG meetings were also positive with no significant issues being identified. The quality of the discussion was considered to be good with respondents feeling that they were able to contribute to the debate and express their views. As one interviewee put it:

> *"The meetings are perfect because everything has been prepared by the Conwy Cynhaliol team before each meeting and the information is fantastic. The Chair is good at keeping the meetings running smoothly. There is no need to change the meetings at all."*

28

There was however a recognition that the changes introduced by the Welsh Government to the current LEADER programme had led to some initial confusion and taken some time to 'bed-in'. This included some confusion during the early stages of the programme amongst the LAG members who had been involved in the previous programme period as well as amongst local stakeholders and potential applicants for support. As previously discussed, this was as a result of substantial changes to the programme for this current period as a result of state aid restrictions and a reorganisation which meant that funding that had previously been delivered alongside LEADER at a local level was now centralised (funding known as 'Axis 3').

When LAG members were asked to identify any issues that restricted their ability to deliver their role, time was the issue most frequently identified with members highlighting the challenges of fitting in meetings and the preparation work required. Again, in the authors experience, this is not unusual, but always an issue that should be recognised; the LAG member role is undertaken on a voluntary basis. Identifying how members benefit, and, if possible, building on/increasing those benefits, is therefore important.

4.2.3 Perceived benefits of being a LAG member

A range of things where identified when members were asked to describe how, if at all, they benefited from being a member of the LAG. The most prominent of these was the networking that takes place in the margins of LAG meetings. Other benefits where however also identified including:

- Becoming aware of projects and activities ongoing in the local area; and
- Raising awareness/promoting the organisation they represent.

The following are examples of the comments made:

> *"Through the LAG I have made important links with organisations across Conwy and I have a better understanding of the different communities in Conwy and the problems rural communities face."*

> *"Being a member of the LAG provides an opportunity to develop useful links and awareness of projects already taking place. It is also an opportunity to see what funding is available for your own projects."*

> *"Being a member of the LAG is a lot of work, but it makes a huge difference to the community. It also provides an opportunity to see what other communities are doing and understanding problems in different areas of the county. The LAG also gives you the opportunity to make your views heard and be a difference."*

> *"I go to the LAG [meetings] thinking, have I got time. But every time, when I leave a meeting, I think I've learned something, made a new link, and it's given me some ideas… it stimulates ideas outside the boundary of my work… I attend a lot of meetings, but I'd prioritise these [LAG meetings]."*

Such benefits are an important outcome of the LEADER approach (especially in relation to 'improving local governance' which is a key programme level objective of LEADER) and need to be considered alongside any discussion about outcomes achieved by projects funded by the programme. As noted above, building upon, and enhancing those benefits is also important in order to 'reward' LAG members for their contribution. Ensuring that there is adequate time for networking at LAG meetings, for example, is important.

4.2.4 The role of the LAG going forward

There was some discussion during interviews about the role of the LAG going forward given that the amount of funding that it has left to distribute is relatively limited. There will, therefore, be less of an emphasis (and need) in future meetings to discuss applications for funding. This is an important point as the role of the LAG will need to evolve to accommodate this change and avoid the potential to develop into a group with no clear role or remit with an increased emphasis on the following going forward:

- Visiting projects and receiving presentations from organisations supported;
- Reviewing projects that have been funded in order to draw out lessons learnt, etc.
- Undertaking activities to share those lessons learnt amongst local stakeholders; and
- Considering the ongoing needs and priorities in the local area and feeding those views into ongoing discussions about future projects and programmes in the area.

Undertaking more activities to enhance the benefit for LAG members should also be considered including increased networking opportunities as well as potentially training in relation to LEADER themes; for example, encouraging innovation amongst communities (innovation is discussed later in this chapter).

4.2.5 Net promoter score

Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a method used to gauge the views of an organisation's customers. In this instance, we used the method to collect the view of members on the LAG by asking them to answer the following question: 'on a scale of 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (certain), 'How likely is it that you would recommend being a member of the LAG to a friend or colleague?'. Scores range from minus 100 (very bad) to plus 100 (very good).

The score given by members for the LAG was a very positive 73, which is in line with the general positive views about the LAG expressed.

4.3 The role of the Lead Body

The role of the Lead Body is to administer the LEADER programme on behalf of the LAG. LAG members were overwhelmingly positive when asked to comment on the role undertaken by the Conwy Cynhaliol team within Conwy County Borough Council in their capacity as the Lead Body.

A number of reasons for this were identified including the benefits of the continuity that had been maintained within the team since the previous programme period. This meant that the team had been able to build on the contacts and networks that were in place as a result of their experience of managing and delivering projects in the area over many years. The fact that a number of members of the team lived locally was also highlighted as being of benefit.

The advantages of hosting the lead body team within the local authority were also highlighted during some interviews. In particular, the benefits of being able to work closely with other departments (and their capacity and skills) was highlighted as being of substantial benefit. In a minority of cases, there was however also some concern that the fact that the team was located within the local authority could mean that projects developed within the council were more likely to be funded, at the expense of projects developed by outside organisations although there is no suggestion that this has been the case. The concern does however need to be noted.

4.4 Animation, engaging with the local community and providing support to applicants and projects

The LEADER approach includes the 'animation' of the local area to engage with the local community. That can include a range of activities including empowering or supporting local groups and organisations to develop and implement projects (in line with the LDS) or more general activities focused on the local area such as, for example, enhancing the awareness of local heritage and associated opportunities. The Conwy Cynhaliol team also provide support to applicants as they develop ideas and then apply for support as well as supporting organisations once funding has been allocated to them.

4.4.1 The views of LAG members and staff

There was again some reference to the misconception of what LEADER could and could not support when interviewees for this evaluation were discussing how the team engaged with local communities. As one interviewee put it:

> *"Some community groups are frustrated with the LAG because they don't understand that there is a pretty rigid framework about what the LAG can fund. The team needs to go out and give more information to community groups about what LEADER is able to do and not be able to fund."*

There was also a view that awareness of the programme was possibly limited outside those communities that had been involved with the programme with some concern, as illustrated by the second quote, that some communities may be reluctant to become involved in the programme due to a lack of awareness of the support that could be provided:

> *"There is an awareness of the LAG and LEADER but if a community group has not played a role in the LEADER project, they only have a limited understanding; for example, that LEADER gives money to community projects."*

> *"The team have done good work in terms of marketing the programme with community groups but some voluntary groups are not involved because they are concerned about the paperwork and have no experience, and don't have the time or perhaps the ability with the group. The team may need to let these groups know that there is support available to help them through the process."*

The need to engage with 'new' groups made in the second quote is an important one as a key objective of LEADER (specified in EC guidelines) is to foster local economic development. Engaging groups and communities in 'rural development' for the first time should be a key part of achieving that objective.

4.4.2 Feedback from projects

The survey organisations supported by the LEADER programme in Conwy (hereafter referred to as 'projects') included a series of questions about the process of applying for funding and the support that they had received from the Conwy Cynhaliol team.

Developing the project/application

Only eight respondents to the survey said that they had received support from the Conwy Cynhaliol team during the development of their idea or project. That support included, general discussions about an idea, support in answering questions about the application process, ensuring fit with the criteria of the LEADER programme and so on.

The feedback on the support provided was in all but one instance positive with comments made including:

> *"The support from the Conwy Cynhaliol team was very good as without it we wouldn't have been able to complete the application properly or have been successful with the application."*

> *"The LEADER team were very supportive, and they explained LEADER's funding requirements in a way that made it much easier for us to make our project outcomes more relevant to the type of project that LEADER funds. They explained each part of the application and ensured that our application was as strong as possible."*

"The help from the LEADER team was really useful as it helped us decide on the best way to carry out the community consultation and what questions we needed to ask."

"The support from the LEADER team was very good and I liked the fact that I could sit and meet with them in person to go over the project and application rather than exchange emails and phone calls. This meant that I developed a good relationship and knew that I could contact the LEADER team and get any support that I needed."

The one negative respondent noted:

"I didn't feel as if the LEADER team were interested in our project and were just interested in meeting the LEADER funding requirements and we had to change too much of the project to meet the funding requirements. The focus was too much on meeting LEADER requirements rather than what positive impact our project could have on Conwy."

With a view to exploring the outcomes of the support being provided, the survey asked respondents to assess how likely it was that their application for funds from LEADER would have been submitted *without* the support they received. Mixed views were expressed with three respondents saying that it was likely, three saying that it was unlikely and the other two being unsure. The finding is not therefore clear but there is a suggestion that, in some instances at least, support from the Conwy Cynhaliol team is critical to applications being submitted. This is important in respects of fostering local economic development, a key objective of LEADER.

The application process

Feedback about the application process and its different elements was, in most cases, again positive as illustrated in the graph below.

Figure 4.2: The number of respondents that agreed or disagreed that (a) guidance about how to apply was easy to understand; and (b) the guidance provided all the information needed
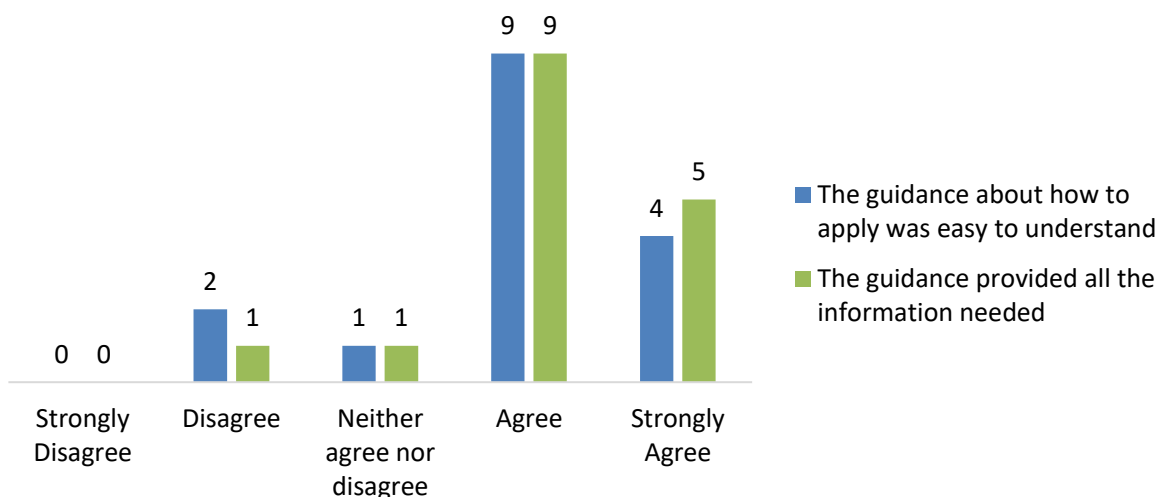
Views on the application process in general was positive with an average score of 3.1 out of 4 (on a scale of 0 [very poor] to 4 [very good]) as was the view on the efficiency with which the application was dealt with which was given on average a score of 3.4 out of 4.

Views on the administrative process once projects had been approved were again generally positive (3.1 out of 4 on average) although a number of respondents suggested potential improvements to the process, the most common being that the process was too time consuming which is not an uncommon response to this type of question.

Net Prompter Score

As noted above, NPS is a method used to gauge the views of an organisation's customers, in this case the projects supported by Conwy Cynhaliol. The score given by projects for Conwy Cynhaliol was a very positive 56.25 (within a range of -100 to +100), which is in line with the general positive views expressed by respondents to the survey of projects. It is however important to note that the sample to date only includes respondents whose project had been approved which may bias the response.

4.4.3 Animation activities going forward

Careful thought needs to be given to animation activities going forward in light of the limited project funding available. The animation resource does however continue to be available over the remaining lifetime of the programme and therefore needs to be effectively utilised. Options that the LAG should consider include:

- An increased emphasis on capturing and sharing lessons learnt by projects
- Supporting applicants to source follow-up/continuation funding for projects once the LEADER elements have been completed
- Linked to the above, providing support to communities developing ideas and projects that can be funded from other sources or delivered without the need for funding (i.e. by volunteers)
- As discussed below, building capacity within communities to analyse/understand the challenges that they face and develop new and innovative solutions.

4.5 Innovation

Innovation is a cross-cutting priority of the LEADER programme. The focus on innovation is based on the argument that doing more of the same is unlikely to enable an area to reach its full potential and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. The objective is to encourage and support new, forward looking, and entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to local issues and to share and transfer that experience.

Section 3.3 of the Conwy LDS is a 'Description of Innovation' (a requirement of the template). The following is an extract from that section included to illustrate both the commitment to innovation within the strategy and the approach to innovation proposed. Key text has been changed to bold text.

*This LDS has been prepared using the LEADER approach which has been designed as a bottom up approach to rural development. The main concept is that, given the diversity of European rural areas, development strategies are more effective and efficient if decided and implemented at a local level by local actors, accompanied by clear and transparent procedures, the support of the relevant public administrations and the necessary technical assistance for the transfer of good practice. As such, **the LAG will not design innovative projects itself, but rather, support proposed projects that are innovative and that give the maximum benefit to the rural community**. These projects will be proposed by various local interest groups that will be set up by grass-roots members of the community. These can include rural communities including community-based organisations and businesses that are eligible.*

The LEADER approach has been designed to be innovative, it gives LAGs the freedom and flexibility to make decisions about what projects they would like to support. It is essential that the LDS is sufficiently flexible to allow scope for the development of innovative approaches and to harness local expertise and knowledge. Therefore, collaboration of skills and resources across sectoral and community groups and statutory bodies will be embedded in each specific objective and proposed actions.

The LAG will encourage innovative projects by engaging with local interest groups and giving these groups relevant information that may support their efforts to develop new projects. *This can involve:*

- *Sharing information about innovations developed elsewhere within the European Union.*
- *Encouraging interest groups to take the initiative within their own community to develop new innovative ideas.*
- *Encouraging the modernisation of traditional rural "know-how".*
- *Encouraging new sustainable solutions to persistent local problems.*
- *Encourage pilot projects in the rural area.*

The approach that is identified is very much one of supporting innovation from others, rather than the LAG itself being innovative in its own right. The extent to which the programme to date has been able to deliver on these aspirations is however difficult to judge.

LAG members and staff are clearly aware of the emphasis on innovation within the LEADER programme and described how the level of innovation within applications is always discussed which is clearly positive. LAG members and staff were also generally satisfied with the level of innovation within the projects supported to date although there have been occasions where innovation has been 'engineered' into a project in order to meet the requirements of LEADER ("*to make a project fit with LEADER*"). The way in which communities and applicants are supported to be 'innovative' is however unclear with no clear approach in place to pro-actively support that process.

The generally accepted definition of 'innovation' within LEADER in Wales is to pilot or test an activity, service, or way of working that had not been seen or tried in the area/sector previously. Whilst this definition is not incorrect, there is an argument that the definition is very broad, especially given that the focus on innovation within the programme is based on the premise that doing "more of the same" isn't enough and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. Having a great focus on more 'genuinely' innovative or seeking to encourage innovative ideas in at least part of the programme going forward may therefore be appropriate.

As part of the above, it may be appropriate to consider how 'innovation' is defined within the LEADER programme in Conwy. The OECD, for example, identifies four types of innovation:[19]

- **Product innovation:** A good or service that is new or significantly improved. This includes significant improvements in technical specifications, components and materials, software in the product, user friendliness or other functional characteristics.
- **Process innovation:** A new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software.
- **Marketing innovation:** A new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing.
- **Organisational innovation:** A new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations.

The LAG should potentially consider adopting this more specific approach and seeking to support innovative projects across these types.

There is also value in being aware of the differences between disruptive and incremental innovation. **Disruptive innovation** when a new product, service or process is introduced to a market or area, designed to make a significant impact by completely replacing existing technologies and methods. By contrast, **incremental innovation** is usually focused on improving an existing product or service's efficiency, productivity and/or competitive differentiation. It is the latter that is seen in LEADER often and the argument is that a more disruptive approach may be needed.

Various innovation toolkits and guides are available via the Nesta website[20]. The potential to explore the potential to cooperate with other programmes and schemes in Wales designed to promote innovation should also be explored[21].

---

[19] https://www.oecd.org/site/innovationstrategy/defininginnovation.htm
[20] Nesta (https://www.nesta.org.uk/) is an innovation foundation. The organisation acts through a combination of programmes, investment, policy and research, and the formation of partnerships to promote innovation across a broad range of sectors.
[21] See: https://businesswales.gov.wales/innovation/

The need to complete what could be described as the innovation cycle or process also needs to be emphasised. There are many versions of this cycle or process all of which generally conclude with a review of the innovation that has been introduced after which it is either 'mainstreamed', modified for a further pilot or, discarded as not something worth introducing more widely. This final 'review' process is an essential component. To date, there would seem to have been limited emphasis on this within LEADER in Conwy (which may not be surprising given that the programme is still at its mid-way point). It is however very important that it takes place.

Project closure forms and case study templates provide the mechanism for this review to take place and there is some review of lessons learnt within the forms that have been completed to date. That review is however relatively weak and could be further enhanced.

4.6 Networking and cooperation

Networking among actors inside the LAGs area, among LAGs and other public-private partnerships, in order to establish a stronger foundation for the transfer of knowledge, and exchange of experiences is also a key part of LEADER. Networking includes the exchange of achievements, experiences and know-how between LEADER groups, rural areas, administrations and organisations involved in rural development within the EU, whether or not they are direct LEADER beneficiaries. Networking is a means of transferring good practice, of disseminating innovation and of building on the lessons learned from local rural development.

Cooperation is also a core feature of LEADER. With LAGs across Europe the wealth of LEADER local development experience, knowledge and human capital is potentially substantial, and cooperation offers a means of capitalising on this resource. LAGs can make use of or contribute to this network to develop the group, to undertake joint projects or initiatives, to innovate, or to share or transfer knowledge and experience.

As noted earlier in this chapter, LAG members highlighted that the group itself provided a networking opportunity for members and indeed identified networking as one of the benefits of membership of the group. Some LAG members have also attended some networking events related to LEADER but highlighted time as a major restriction of their ability to participate in such activity, even when they were particularly keen to do so. The Conwy Cynhaliol team have also participated in such events including international events which were considered to have been of some benefit. The challenges of building a cooperative project following such activities were however noted, with time again being identified as the main constraint.

Networking has taken place within a number of projects that have been supported with interviewees highlighting in particular the networking activities that had been undertaken with businesses in the food & drink and forestry sectors as a success. The networking and other activities undertaken to promote cooperation between businesses in the run up to the 2019 National Eisteddfod (held in Llanrwst) was also highlighted. Networking between projects that had been supported (for example, to share their lessons learnt, etc.) would however seem to have been limited to date.

Looking outside Conwy, interviewees reported that some networking was taking place at a LAG chair and officer level with other LAGs within the region. It seems clear however from interviews that LAG members have limited awareness of activities and projects being undertaken by LAGs in other parts in Wales. This is despite the existence of the Wales Rural Network (WRN) which shares information about projects being supported by LAGs on its website[22]. This is of some concern as an awareness of what projects and ideas are being piloted in other areas could be of substantial benefit; for example, it may stimulate the development of ideas for new projects in Conwy. It also means that an opportunity to learn from the experience in other areas is being lost.

Staff members however highlighted the fact that constraints/pressure on their time limited the amount of attention they could pay to developing cooperative projects (which tend to be resource intensive) highlighting that, when work has to be prioritised, and development and delivery of 'local' projects had been prioritised above cooperative projects.

4.7 Conclusion

The LAG plays a key role in LEADER and it is positive to note that attendance at LAG meetings has been good with very positive feedback on meetings and the perceived value of the role of the LAG with a good understanding of the LEADER approach. Members also report that they benefit from attending meetings which is clearly also positive.

Frustrations about the differences in approach for the current LEADER programme including the state aid restrictions and lack of integration at a local level with other RDP funding are however important to note. In particular, the perceived loss of momentum that had been developed over the last programme period is important.

Feedback on the activities of the Conwy Cynhaliol team was very positive both from LAG members and the projects they have been supporting. The suggestion that the programme has to date had limited success in respects of engaging with less engaged communities does however need to be noted.

Innovation is a key element of the LEADER approach and there is an argument that there is the potential to introduce a greater degree of 'disruptive innovation' into the programme in Conwy during its latter stages. The importance of completing the 'innovation cycle' for projects also needs to be emphasised which should include a comprehensive analysis of lessons learnt and so on, as well as the effective dissemination and sharing of that information. Linked to this, there is the potential to enhance the level of networking and cooperation activities taking place, both of which are key features of the LEADER approach especially during its latter stages as projects are ending and lessons learned are emerging.

---

[22] The Wales Rural Network is a forum to promote the exchange of expertise in rural development delivered by the Welsh Government funded by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. See: https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects

5 Conclusion and recommendations

This final chapter draws together the conclusions of this mid-term evaluation and presents a number of recommendations, based on those conclusions.

To conclude their interviews for this report, LAG members and members of staff were asked to reflect on the discussion they had just had with the researcher and give a score out of 10 for the performance of LEADER in Conwy to date. The average score was a positive 7.7 out of 10. Our conclusion based on the findings of the research for this mid-term report is that this is probably a fair, and positive, reflection of progress to date as discussed below.

<u>The Local Development Strategy</u>

As discussed in Chapter 3, the strategy presented within the LDS for rural Conwy is very broad identifying a wide range of issues that LEADER funding is to be used to try and address. This is not uncommon within the LEADER programme in Wales with the fact that LDSs were prepared at a time when the detail of the programme was unavailable needing to be considered along with the 'bottom-up', community led, nature of LEADER. That broadness does however mean that the LDS's usefulness as a guide for how LEADER funds in Conwy should be utilised is limited; most ideas and project proposals will fit within the LDS given that it is so broad. There is also an argument that the question that the LAG has been asking itself when considering project applications should be 'how can this project contribute to achieving the objectives of the LDS?' as opposed to 'does this project fit with the LDS?'. This is a subtle but important difference.

The pros and cons of a broad approach are debatable with a flexible approach, reacting to priorities identified by communities and the applications being submitted clearly having some merit. The need for a narrower, more focused approach from this point forward however needs to be considered especially given the limited amount of funding for projects that remains. What are the priorities of the LAG for the remainder of the lifetime of the programme? What should the focus be on? These are the key questions that the LAG needs to consider.

To aid this process, the potential to bring together stakeholders within themes or sectors should be considered. Such meetings could be undertaken as part of future networking activities (discussed later in this conclusion) which are used to share information, findings and lessons learnt from projects to date (from within and outside Conwy), as well as reviewing the LDS and considering priorities and potential projects going forward.

Recommendation 1: There should be a review of the LDS which includes: (a) an update on the needs and opportunities in the area (including wellbeing plans, etc.); (b) a review of other activities, projects and programmes ongoing in the area; and (c) a review of projects supported to date.

Good progress has been made in respect of the number of projects supported to date with three quarters of the budget available committed. This is positive in many ways including providing some assurance that the funding available will be fully utilised which is obviously important. However, it limits the amount of resources that the LAG has at its disposal for the remainder of the lifetime of the programme. As noted above, careful consideration therefore needs to be given to how the resource that remains is utilised in light of the findings of this evaluation and the review of the LDS recommended above.

One potential way to contribute to this would be to introduce thematic rounds of applications. The benefit of this is that it allows ideas and proposals within the same field to be considered (and compared) at the same time; one of the challenges of an 'open call' approach to funding rounds is that it can be difficult to compare the quality of applications within the round (as they can be very different) and there is always a risk that a 'better' application in any given field will be submitted in the next round.

Recommendation 2: The potential for thematic rounds of applications, focused on priorities identified in the review of the LDS as recommended above, should be considered.

A key aspect of LEADER is also that it is a European wide programme which creates the opportunity to share and learn from projects that are being delivered by literally hundreds of LAGs. This is however an aspect of LEADER which is generally underutilised (not just in Conwy) with LAG members having little knowledge of the activities and projects that are ongoing on other parts of Wales let alone across Europe. This is a significant missed opportunity.

Recommendation 3: The LAG should review the projects supported by LEADER in other parts of Wales and across the EU with a view to considering whether any of those ideas (or elements of them) should be piloted in Conwy.

Outcomes to date

This report has only taken a limited look at the outcomes of projects, which will be a greater focus for the final evaluation report. The number and range of projects supported (and ideas piloted) is however clear and considered positive by those interviewed for this report. They also represent progress/activity across each of the themes of the programme/LDS.

The fact that only a very limited number of indicators (and associated targets) are in place to monitor the performance of the LEADER programme in Conwy, is however, of some concern in respect of our ability to judge what the programme has achieved and the extent of the progress towards the objectives set out in the LDS. Most of the indicators that are in place are also outputs which will capture information about the activities undertaken but not about the results and outcomes of those activities which is the information that is of most interest from an evaluation perspective.

Recommendation 4: Consideration should be given to the introduction of additional performance indicators for the implementation of the LDS in Conwy including both generic indicators and theme/priority specific indicators.

The limited number of programme level indicators also means we are dependent to a large extent on the monitoring and evaluation activities being undertaken at a project level. It is therefore important to try to make sure that project level evaluation activities are taking place and that the standard is as high as possible. The findings of this mid-term evaluation are that this may not necessarily be the case for all the projects that have been supported. If that is the case at the time of the final evaluation the risk is that we will not be able to make an informed judgement on what LEADER funding in Conwy has achieved other than the number of projects supported.

Recommendation 5: The need to provide additional support to projects to ensure that they are effectively evaluating the outcomes of their activities should be considered.

The restrictions on using LEADER funding to provide 'state aid' was a regular topic of discussion during interviews with both staff and LAG members. Those restrictions clearly need to be considered when the outcomes of LEADER funding are being considered, especially in terms of economic development related outcomes. This is a change from the previous LEADER programme, designed to increase the emphasis on piloting new and innovative approaches, but identified regularly in interviews for this report as a negative change which has diminished the potential of the current programme, especially in respect of achieving economic outcomes. The reduced integration of LEADER with other RDP funding at a local authority level compared to the previous programme period was also noted, leading to what was considered to be a loss of momentum from the previous programme period. These are important points to consider when assessing the success of LEADER in terms of outcomes generated - it is a narrow and focused programme, which is perhaps not reflected in the LDS as discussed above.

It is positive that the survey of projects found that a large proportion were not likely to have progressed without the support that had been received. It is also positive that a very high proportion of respondents to the project survey reported that they had benefited in respects of meeting or working with new people and increasing their understanding of challenges facing local communities as a result of their involvement with Conwy Cynhaliol. These are examples of how the process in place to manage and deliver LEADER can in itself generate positive outcomes.

The Local Action Group

As discussed in Chapter 4, the LAG plays a key role in LEADER and it is positive to note that attendance at LAG meetings in Conwy has been good with positive feedback about the meetings as well as the work of the LAG in general. LAG members also report that they benefit from attending meetings which is another positive outcome of the LEADER approach which is important to note.

The role of the LAG going forward will however need to change with less applications for funding to consider and it is important that this change does not lead to reductions in the number of attending meetings and so on. Potential activities which could have a greater role going forward include:

- Visiting projects and receiving presentations from organisations supported;
- Reviewing projects that have been funded in order to draw out lessons learnt, etc.
- Undertaking activities to share those lessons learnt amongst local stakeholders; and
- Considering the ongoing needs and priorities in the local area and feeding those views into ongoing discussions about future projects and programmes in the area.

Undertaking more activities to enhance the benefit for LAG members should also be considered including increased networking opportunities as well as potentially training in relation to LEADER themes; for example, encouraging innovation amongst communities (innovation is discussed later in this chapter).

Recommendation 6: The role of the LAG going forward needs to be considered to ensure that, with the inevitable reduced need to assess applications for support, the group continues to be active and deliver the LEADER approach in full in Conwy.

The Lead Body and animation

Feedback on the activities of the Conwy Cynhaliol team as the lead body was overwhelmingly positive both from LAG members and respondents to the survey. These are clearly positive evaluation findings.

There was again some reference to the misconception of what LEADER could and could not support when interviewees for this evaluation were discussing animation how the team engaged with local communities created by changes from the previous programme period. This led to some concerns that some communities were less engaged than they potentially could/should be.

The fact that a relatively limited number of projects are being delivered by what could be considered 'new' groups should be noted as that can potentially limit the extent to which the programme achieves 'capacity building' outcomes amongst those funded, as well as the programmes ability to draw new organisations into rural development in Conwy - important objectives of LEADER in terms of 'fostering rural development' in the areas where the programme is active (the principal objective at an EU level).

Careful thought needs to be given to animation activities going forward in light of this feedback and of course the limited funding available for projects going forward. Options that the LAG could consider include:

- An increased emphasis on capturing and sharing lessons learnt by projects;
- Supporting applicants to source follow-up/continuation funding for projects once the LEADER elements have been completed;

- Linked to the above, providing support to communities developing ideas and projects that can be funded from other sources or delivered without the need for funding (i.e. by volunteers); and
- Building capacity within communities to analyse/understand the challenges that they face and develop new and innovative solutions.

Recommendation 7: The LAG should consider options for targeting amination activities in differently over the remaining programme period in light of the limited project funding available. This should include the potential to specifically target less experienced organisations in Conwy, alongside possibly ring-fencing a proportion of the funding available for less experienced organisations.

Innovation and networking

The evaluation found that LAG members and staff are clearly aware of the emphasis on innovation within the LEADER programme. Innovation is also a key element of the application process and discussed when LAGs are considering applications for support. The definition of innovation being used (not just in Conwy) is however in many instances the minimum that is necessary in order to be able to justify that the project can be funded rather than a key consideration – has this project been undertaken in Conwy before? Whilst this definition is not wrong, it can be argued that it lacks some ambition.

There is therefore an argument that, to achieve the objectives set out within the LDS in respect of innovation, there is a need to introduce a greater degree of 'disruptive innovation' into LEADER in Conwy during its latter stages and also to be more pro-active in terms of supporting communities to develop innovative ideas and projects to tackle the issues and opportunities that they identify.

Recommendation 8: Options for increasing the level of innovation within the programme in Conwy should be explored including a review of approaches for supporting innovation as promoted by organisations such as Nesta.

There is also a tendency within the LEADER programme (not just in Conwy) to treat projects being supported as 'one-off' pilots, which once completed are either mainstreamed or not. Innovation is however often an ongoing process with ideas going through a number of iterations and pilots before they are mainstreamed. The potential need to revisit ideas and projects that have already been funded by LEADER to consider the need to support a further iteration of the pilot therefore needs to be considered.

Recommendation 9: Some pilot projects warrant a second attempt or further development. Alongside the development of new project ideas, the LAG should, on an ongoing basis, review project evaluation forms with a view to considering whether existing or previous pilot projects should be evolved into new of phase 2 pilots.

The importance of completing the 'innovation cycle' for projects also needs to be emphasised which should include a comprehensive analysis of lessons learnt, etc. as well as the effective dissemination and sharing of that information. Linked to this, there is the potential to enhance the level of networking taking place in Conwy, a key feature of the LEADER approach, especially during its latter stages as projects are ending and lessons learnt are emerging.

Recommendation 10: The 'innovation cycle' should include a review of what has been achieved, lessons learnt, etc. and projects reviewed on that basis as they near completion with a compendium of 'learning' from the programme being developed and shared. This could be done via networking activities within Conwy which brings together projects and/or stakeholders to share and discuss the findings of projects and priorities going forward (see Recommendation 1).

Appendix 1: Project examples

This appendix provides examples of projects that have been funded by the LEADER programme in Conwy.

Theme 1: Adding value to local identify and cultural resources

Hiraethog Rural Shows

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. The toolkit will be simple and easy to update when needed.

The project will achieve the following:

- Create a new network
- Pilot operation
- Volunteers learn new skills and knowledge
- Protect the volunteers and attendees during the country shows
- Continuation of the Hiraethog rural show network for the future

Funding amount: £10,500

Rural Conwy Tidy Communities

The project will demonstrate the benefits for communities by having a sense of pride of where they live. It will foster community spirit by encouraging community members giving up their own time for various activities to enhance the aesthetics of their villages. Currently, Keep Wales tidy will come to your communities to help establish groups that want to make a difference where they live. They are extremely successful at bringing people together.

Unfortunately, they're only able to lend the equipment to groups, and collect once an organised litter pick has been completed, meaning groups are not sustained and efforts are stop-start. Many groups would like to operate on a more regular basis but are unable to, due to not having the equipment.

By providing this equipment and additional funding for other street furniture we aim to make these activities sustainable and hopefully increase participation in community activities and groups.

We aim to engage with our communities through the 28 community and town councils.

Funding amount: £14,000

Passport Llanrwst

Produce a Passport for Llanrwst drawing, on the history of the town of Llanrwst of not belonging to England or Wales in the past, and that the town considers itself in its own state, with its own way of acting, thinking and doing things. Creating a 'hollywood' style sign for Llanrwst in the Gwydir Forest during the Eisteddfod.

Who are the project beneficiaries? Local people and visitors to Llanrwst during the Eisteddfod and after.

The project is a fun and innovative way to engage visitors and locals with Llanrwst during the Eisteddfod week and has the potential to encourage and inspire people to explore the local area and visit again.

The project will create excitement in the town and encourage people to explore more than just the Maes Eisteddfod when they are here.

Funding amount: £10,000

Gwrych Castle Garden Restoration

- To employ a part-time Community engagement officer to recruit and manage volunteers
- To work with volunteers to restore the historic gardens at Gwrych Castle
- Upskilling volunteers
- Create a sensory garden that will be a community space.

Funding amount: £9,622

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

Study of Vacant Buildings in Rural Conwy

Commission a study into the number of vacant buildings currently in rural Conwy. The report would look at how many vacant farm buildings, and public buildings that are unused or underused, and capture the information into a register. Although there are a number of buildings currently available to rent, there are numerous unused buildings that are left to deteriorate but have the potential to be developed.

Funding amount: £2,950

Llanrwst & Conwy Valley - A stronghold for Food and Drink

This project will explore new ways of providing different services to people who will be using the official Eisteddfod caravan site, during the 2019 National Eisteddfod. The project will be innovative in bringing numerous businesses together to offer a package of events and service to Eisteddfod customers. The model (if successful) could be adopted for use at future events and eisteddfods.

Local businesses will work as a group to access support to develop a shop and event area at the caravan site to educate and teach people about the benefits of supporting local businesses. Local produce would be on offer at the shop, and an itinerary of events will ensure that cooking demonstrations, and lessons in bread making for example would be educational and of interest to people of all ages.

Funding amount: £8,650

8 of Us

A study to research and identify the opportunities of collaborative working that would improve the availability and innovativeness in the range of lamb produce available. By learning and understanding more about the lamb supply chain the group would research the developing of new lamb produce for the food service industry, utilising lamb trim (meat that is usually of low value). This project was completed in 2017 with results being positively in favour of further developing new recipes or ways of cooking lamb trim.

The study will see the group increase their understanding of the supply chain, gain valuable customer feedback on the new lamb cuts, and will raise the awareness of lamb trim.

Funding amount: £4,600

Rural Conwy Jobs Fair

An event which will see rural employers engage with potential job seekers, mostly local school pupils and will assist those looking for employment with understanding the range of opportunities that are available, and the skills needed.

The event will also comprise of three different workshops, namely, "Confidence and Engagement", "How to Conduct Yourself in an Interview" and an "Apprentice Workshop"

There will be pre booked mock Interviews and a drop-in session to help with CV writing skills.

Funding amount: £2,668

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

Hiraethog Rural Shows

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. The toolkit will be simple and easy to update when needed. The Project will achieve the following:

- Create a new network
- Pilot operation
- Volunteers learn new skills and knowledge
- Protect the volunteers and attendees during the country shows
- Continuation of the Hiraethog rural show network for the future

Funding amount: £10,500

E-bike Charging Network

The rural charging point's project is an innovative plan aimed at developing opportunities in the great outdoors. With the growing demand for cycling and the ever-increasing presence of e-bikes in the area Conwy can benefit from developing both mobile and permanent charging points within the rural areas.

- Installation of permanent charging points
- Mobile charging point to further develop interest and support events that encourage both cycling and this project
- Increase in visitors to the areas where points are installed

Funding amount: £6,400

Conwy Pre-school Support Scheme Rural

To pilot 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 of their choice and to update ICT equipment and practices in keeping with current technological and legislative developments.

A suitably qualified/experienced support worker was recruited, inducted and trained to work with the early years settings to provide ongoing support to identified children with additional learning needs and/or behavioural difficulties. This support would support children to continue to attend a mainstream setting of their choice with their peers. This would have an impact on the families/carers of those children.

Information and feedback will be collected to inform a further funding bid to other sources, to expand the project to recruit further support workers to safeguard the provision of support to the children and their families.

ICT equipment and systems would be in place and available for the scheme staff to work within current legislation and technology frameworks.

Funding amount: £7,440

Mobile Recycling Pilot

A pilot project to see if this non-statutory but highly valued service can be delivered on a mobile basis without the significant capital and revenue investment required for a fixed, permanent site.

The outcomes of the project are expected to be:

• Increase in percentage of Conwy residents live within 20 minutes' drive of HRC service
• Increase in tonnage of household waste reused from rural areas
• Increase in tonnage of household waste recycled from rural areas
• Reduced number of fly-tipping incidents in rural areas
• Establishment of community focal points for delivery of other council services/functions
• Promotion of local community options for reuse/recycling

Funding amount: £40,000

Tackling Social Isolation through Dance

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.

Funding amount: £1,940

Theme 4: Renewable energy at a community level

Rural Conwy LEADER programme installs first Steora benches in the UK. LEADER covered the cost of the benches whilst community councils covered the installation fee.

The smart benches are solar powered 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.

The Steora benches are manufactured in Croatia and supplied worldwide, but this project sees the first to be installed in the UK here in rural Conwy. The aim is to encourage people to stay for longer periods in rural areas and take advantage of renewable energy.

Funding amount: £9,999

Theme 5: Exploitation of digital technology

Conwy Rural Schools Coding Project Part 2

This is a follow-on project to our first project, where we will follow the previous Year 6 pupils through into high school. This is traditionally a difficult transition and we want to ensure they continue learning, hopefully to encourage them to continue towards GCSEs. The project will provide young people with the skills to acquire highly paid jobs in the area, helping us retain our best talent here in North Wales.

Code is what tells computers what to do. Behind every computer program, game, app etc. there is code. Everything that is computerised or digitised relies on code. The demand for people with coding skills is continually increasing as our world becomes more computerised. Coding clubs teach children computational thinking and coding skills, enabling them to create their own computer games and apps, turning them from digital consumers into digital creators.

These will have an initial day of two sessions to familiarize staff with the coding required and a follow up half day session once the programme has been running for a few weeks.

There will also be three follow up sessions in each school to ensure the clubs are running smoothly and staff feel confident in delivering them.

Funding amount: £6,866

<u>Nant Conwy Day Club</u>

To enable the members to be digitally aware and empower them to utilise the internet which will aid positive wellbeing by encouraging regular contact with the local community and their families who live outside of their immediate area.

The members will be fully knowledgeable in using the internet and fully confident/empowered to utilise it on their own. The members will feel a part of their community and will be in regular contact with their families.

Funding amount: £834

Appendix 2: Performance indicators definitions

Indicator	Definition
Number of feasibility studies	Number of specific feasibility studies commissioned or undertaken through the programme to provide the background research for a specific problem or issue and the production of a comprehensive written appraisal of the issues, the alternative solutions, the financial costings, a detailed risk analysis and recommendations for the next steps.
Number of networks established	Number of formal networks that have been created as a direct result of the LEADER programme and were not in existence prior to programme involvement. (Each network can be scored only once over the life of the approved programme).
Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects	Jobs safeguarded are where jobs are known to be at risk over the next 12 months. Jobs should be scored as FTE and permanent (a seasonal job may be scored provided the job is expected to recur indefinitely; the proportion of the year worked should also be recorded). The job itself should be scored, not an estimate of how many people may occupy the job. If the job is not full-time then the hours per week will need to be divided by 30 to find the proportion of what FTE represents (e.g. 18 hours per week would be 0.6 FTE).
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported through the capacity building activities, broken down as: new approaches, new products, new processes, new services.
Number of community hubs	The number of new community hubs that were formed as a direct result of the LEADER programme.
Number of information dissemination actions/ promotional and/or marketing activities to raise awareness of the LDS and/or it's projects	The number of actions undertaken by the Local Action Group to raise awareness and explain the aim objectives and activities undertaken via the Local Development Strategy to the rural population. The number of planned and targeted activities undertaken by the Local Action Group that promote the Local Development Strategy and its projects or the production and distribution of materials aimed at marketing and promoting the Local Development Strategy and its projects.

Indicator	Definition
Number of stakeholders engaged	Stakeholder: Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the project objectives. These can be people, groups or entities that have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a project. They include the community whose situation the project or programme seeks to change. Engagement: Stakeholders who become actively involved in the project's implementation at any stage.
Number of participants supported	Participants: Number of people who attend an event to disseminate information, etc. Please note that the number on receipt of any kind of mailshot associated with the dissemination of information (e.g. the distribution of a report summary) cannot be counted as participants.