

L|E|A|D|E|R
PROGRAMME



L E G A C Y
R E P O R T

VALE OF GLAMORGAN
LOCAL ACTION
G · R · O · U · P

Final report
from Ash Futures

July 2019

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Ash Futures Ltd

Lead authors: Shane Vallance and Jo Talbot

Other contributions: Angharad Butler and Simon Hooton



We are very grateful for the help of CRC staff in helping us with the arrangements for these evaluation activities and providing information and data for the evaluation. We are also very grateful for the time, comments and views of the businesses, stakeholders and LAG members who have contributed to the evaluation through surveys, interviews or focus groups.

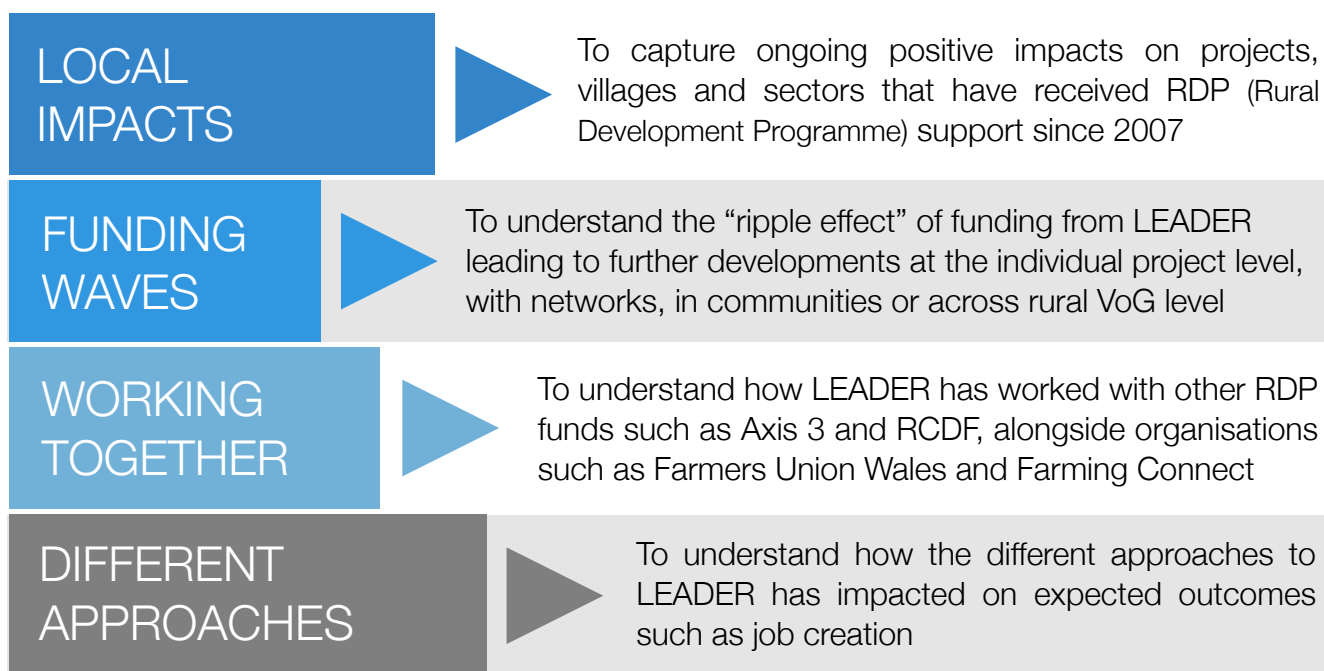


1 Introduction – study objectives

This report looks at the legacy from projects supported through the Creative Rural Communities (CRC) Local Action Group (LAG) from 2007 – 2014 with rural development funding support.

As well as a requirement for a mid-term (and final evaluation) of the current programme, the brief also included a requirement for an exercise to capture and illustrate the ‘legacy’ impact of projects supported through the previous LEADER programmes - focusing on the period 2007 onwards. This report accompanies the mid-term evaluation, which has considered the current LEADER programme.

Overall, this element of the evaluation had four objectives:



The tasks we have undertaken for this legacy report have covered:

- A review of earlier LEADER programme and evaluation documents: understanding delivery processes, activity criteria and impacts
- Two online surveys to ‘historical’ project leads: one focused on business-related project leads and the other on community and heritage related project leads. These were undertaken in English and Welsh
- 13 telephone interviews with individuals involved in projects that were supported through the previous LEADER programmes. CRC supported this by obtaining consent so they could be interviewed. Some of the interviews were linked to a series of legacy ‘maps’ that CRC had begun to develop, and which we have used in this report to outline a series of case studies.

Our work has been considerably enhanced and supported by the CRC teams early work on this legacy mapping. These legacy maps graphically illustrate how different projects have progressed through different initiatives, building on their early rural development funding. The legacy maps, which we discuss as case studies in Section 3, are based on a range of different foci:

- individual businesses/organisations – understanding how their subsequent ‘journey’ was influenced by that original support
- on geography (a place) – understanding how the programmes have assisted in a variety of ways in certain areas of rural Vale
- and on a ‘theme’ – understanding how multi-faceted support and activity has helped address one of the underlying objectives of the programmes

We sought to corroborate and expand on these legacy maps by speaking to representative individuals for some of them. The outcome of those interviews can be viewed as further narrative in this document, building on the visualisations as found in the legacy maps themselves.

It is important to note whilst CRC has selected these as ways to demonstrate the iterative support that the programme has provided, that not all projects from earlier programmes will have the same 'shape' or extent of continuing support or impact. However, the case studies are very useful to illustrate how a seemingly disparate set of projects supported through different programmes have combined to provide a more coordinated focus. We are very grateful to CRC for undertaking this mapping work which has formed an important basis for our subsequent work.

This report is subsequently structured into the following sections:

Section Two – findings of previous programme level objectives, the key findings

Section Three – the legacy maps and associated case studies

Section Four – the findings of the online survey and telephone interviews with legacy contacts

Section Five – conclusions, bringing the evidence together to understand what key findings about how the previous LEADER programmes have delivered long-lasting and sustainable impact

2 The Background: Business Plan 1 and 2, and current LEADER

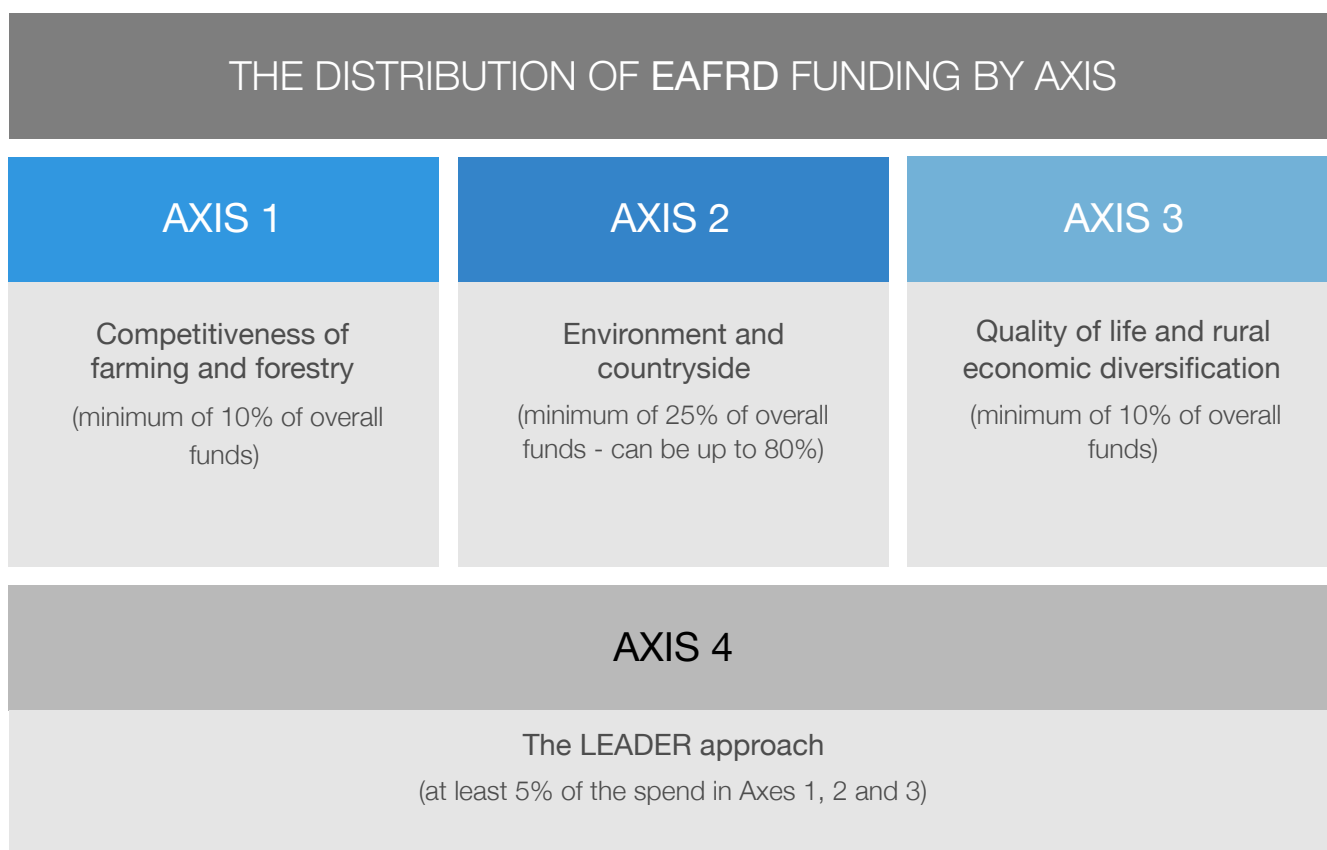
2.1 What is LEADER?

LEADER is an initiative first brought in by the EU in 1991 to support locally led rural economic development projects. LEADER is a French acronym (Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale) and is built on seven key principles:

- It takes an area-based approach, set out in a local development strategy
- It develops from the bottom up in terms strategy and delivery
- It brings together local people in a public/private/community partnership to manage its delivery – the Local Action Group
- It seeks to achieve integrated and multi-sectoral activity
- It seeks to be innovative at the local level
- It also looks to co-operate with other LEADER areas
- And it seeks to develop local networks and encourage networking

LEADER first operated as a stand alone programme and one of the EU's Community Initiatives, supported by the EU Structural Funds. Community Initiatives were the way in which the EU made provision for special initiatives for geographic areas or sectors, in this case for rural areas. LEADER was intended to generate new thinking about ways of regenerating rural areas, through locally led and bottom up activities.

Initially it was targeted at peripheral and fragile rural areas. By its third iteration (2000 – 2006) it had become an initiative potentially available across all rural areas. In its next iteration from 2007, LEADER was mainstreamed into delivery of the EU's rural development policy as one of the four Axes of development that could be supported through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). It became 'the LEADER approach', rather than specifically a LEADER programme. The EU expectation was that at least 5% of the EAFRD would be delivered through this approach:



Source: *Rural Development and the LEADER approach in the UK and Ireland. Carnegie UK Trust Research Paper 2010*

In the Welsh 2007 – 2014 programme, which had a total initial budget allocation of £796.9 million, the Welsh Assembly Government took control of management of delivery of Axis 1 and Axis 2, working with partners such as the Forestry Commission. Axis 3 was locally delivered through County Councils and/or local partnerships and Axis 4 specifically through Local Action Groups.

2.2 The Timeline

Historically the rural Vale has been the recipient of funding to support rural regeneration/development activity over approximately fifteen years.

The Vale of Glamorgan Rural Partnership was responsible for decision making on a Rural Community Action Fund which operated 2004 – 2007. This provided revenue funding across four themes: rural enterprise and skills; food and nutrition; access to services / social inclusion; and tourism, art and craft.

An annual budget of £150,000 supported 4 officers alongside a pooled budget of £25,000 revenue funding available for external projects. This supported small-scale community led projects across the 10 wards of the rural Vale.

In addition to Rural Community Action, the Welsh Assembly also made provision for funding to promote the adaptation and development of rural areas using Article 33¹ capital funding. The Vale of Glamorgan Rural Partnership called for applications and determined priorities locally. The Council was then issued with the Article 33 money to distribute and to deliver its own projects that were submitted via the open call process - a total spend of c£2m over the three years. This funding stream had three priorities:

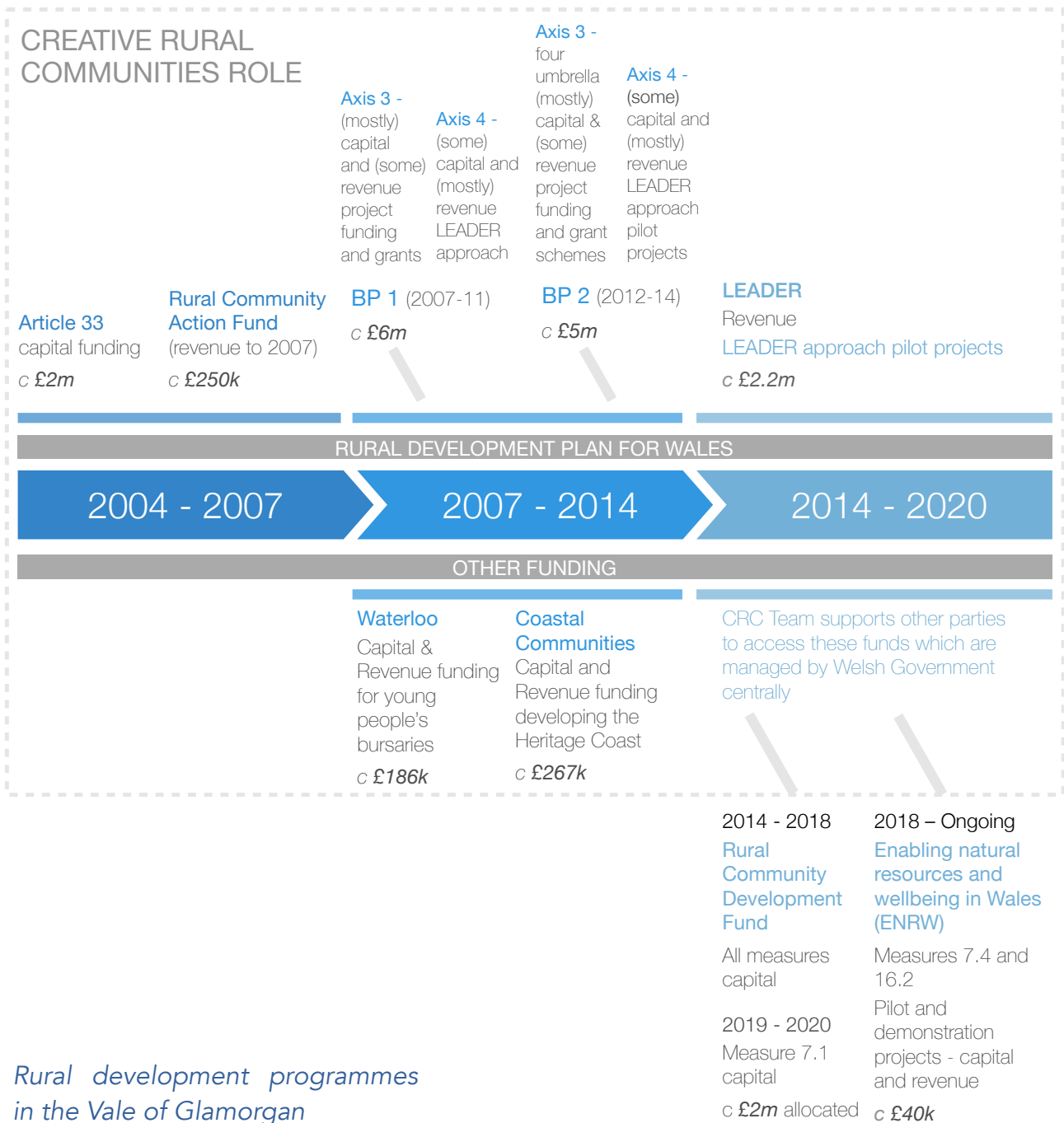
- Basic services for the rural economy and population - this measure sought to widen access to mainstream services, particularly addressing issues of how they could tackle social exclusion and promote services that encourage entrepreneurship.
- Renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of the rural heritage - this measure invited proposals for investment in the fabric of streetscape and public spaces.
- Encouragement for tourist and craft activities - this measure aimed to support community bids to develop tourist and craft activities.

Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007- 2014 – context:

Funding for rural regeneration was then mainstreamed into the Rural Development Plan which set out how EAFRD would be used in Wales. The Rural Development Plan for Wales (RDPW) 2007 – 2014 set out the context for investment in rural community economic development in the rural Vale through the LEADER approach and also in relation to Axis 3 of the RDPW which the Welsh Government chose to deliver at the local level:

- Axis 3 of the RDPW related to quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (accounting for 10% of the budget). The overall objectives of the measures were to raise Gross Value Added (GVA) and quality of life. It was divided into a number of measures:
 - ▶ Measure 311: diversification into non-agricultural activities;
 - ▶ Measure 312: support for business creation and development;
 - ▶ Measure 313: encouragement of tourism activities;
 - ▶ Measure 321: basic services to the rural economy and population;
 - ▶ Measure 322: village renewal and development;
 - ▶ Measure 323: conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage;
 - ▶ Measure 331: training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3
- Axis 4 of the RDPW was the delivery of rural economic development through the LEADER approach. This sought to be a locally-led ('bottom up') approach to rural development based on the seven LEADER principles (accounting for 6% of the RDPW budget).

¹ 2000 - 2006, Welsh Government promoted LEADER type schemes in non-LEADER areas through Rural Community Action & Article 33 funding.



Rural development programmes in the Vale of Glamorgan

Delivery of the RDPW 2007 – 2014 in the rural Vale

The Rural Partnership in the Vale of Glamorgan was responsible for delivery of RDPW Axis 3 activities and the Creative Rural Communities Local Action Group was responsible for Axis 4 LEADER delivery. Both were delivered in line with locally developed Business Plans.

Each Business Plan had two elements relating to delivery of the Axis 3 element or the Axis 4 LEADER element:

- **Business Plan 1 covered 2007-2011²**
 - ▶ Set out a number of projects/project themes under Axis 3 and its various measures³:

² We recognise that the start and end dates for each programme were delayed and extended at various points and that delivery of some activities in BP1 extended beyond 2011. However, for ease we represent the project delivery periods as two distinct periods, even though in practice they did overlap

³ All these measure numbers refer to the 2007 – 2013 RDPW Programme

- Tourism Matters Grant Scheme
 - Inspire Grant Scheme
 - Places for young people
 - Rural Community Transport Project/Green Links
 - Rural footpaths and the Stiles project
 - Rural Bridleways
 - : Rural Events Network
 - Business Networking
- ▶ Set out some more pilot projects under the Axis 4 LEADER approach
- Heritage Tourism
 - Inspire the Vale Bursary
 - Visit Vale+ Grant Scheme

The total budget and final expenditure for Business Plan 1 activities is set out in the following table⁴:

Business Plan 1	Total Budget	Final Expenditure	RDP Grant	Match	Income
Tourism Matters	£505,909	£498,425	£309,907	£188,518	
Inspire the Vale Grant scheme	£1,106,597	£1,098,466	£762,769	£335,696	
Places for Young People	£301,397	£295,454	£208,943	£86,512	
Rural Community Transport/Greenlinks	232,158	£184,158	£143,543	£38,615	£2,000
Stiles Project	£101,722	£56,076	£44,861	£11,216	
Rural Bridleways	£34,222	£31,004	£24,798	£6,206	
Rural Events Network	£43,401	£43,401	£34,721	£8,680	
Business networking	£67,579	£57,832	£46,266	£11,655	
Inspiring the Vale Bursary	£135,375	£131,955	£105,559	£26,385	
Visit Vale+	£167,339	£163,254	£126,983	£36,721	
Heritage Tourism	£194,846	£194,846	£146,852	£47,994	
TOTAL	£2,890,545	£2,754,871	£1,955,202	£798,109	£2,000

- **Business Plan 2 covered 2011 – 2014. It took a more strategic approach and:**

- ▶ Chose to identify four grant schemes by an 'umbrella' theme under Axis 3
 - ▶ Pride in our Farming Families (helping to support measures 311, 312, 313)
 - ▶ Pride in our Heritage (supporting measures 312, 313, 323)
 - ▶ Pride in our Services (supporting measures 321)
 - ▶ Pride in our Villages (supporting measures 322)

⁴ The total expenditure and budget figures for both Business Plan 1 and 2 include the RDP financial contribution plus all matched funding from public and private sources.

- ▶ Used the Axis 4 LEADER approach to develop a number of pilot projects under the theme heading of 'Pride in the Vale'⁵:
 - ▶ slow tourism (10 pilot projects)
 - ▶ community engagement (three pilot projects)

The total budget and final expenditure for Business Plan 2 is set out in the following table:

Business Plan 2	Total Budget	Final Expenditure	RDP Grant	Match
Pride in our Families	£698,977	£709,205	£489,157	£220,048
Pride in our Services	£1,469,479	£1,469,662	£999,223	£470,439
Pride in our Villages	£349,538	£355,306	£125,107	£19,584
Pride in our Heritage	£658,158	£670,744	£513,326	£157,418
Pride in the Vale	£761,319	£764,958	£609,056	£155,902
TOTAL	£3,937,471	£3,969,875		

2.3 Business Plan objectives

Both Business Plan 1 and 2 worked under the same set of five Local Development Strategy priorities which were:

- community capacity building;
- women and young people;
- business networking and co-operation;
- access to and provision of services;
- making the best use of local resources.

2.4 Management and Delivery (2007 - 14)

The Rural Development Plan in the Vale was overseen by the Rural Partnership for the Vale of Glamorgan (Axis 3) and Vale of Glamorgan Local Action Group (Axis 4). Membership of these boards came from private, public, voluntary and community sectors – bottom up approach to regeneration. The Boards were responsible for both strategy development and project delivery. Creative Rural Communities (CRC) is the Vale of Glamorgan Council's rural regeneration initiative whose role was to deliver rural regeneration on behalf of the Partnership and the LAG.

Both Business Plan 1 and 2 were delivered through this management structure, the details being as follows:

- The CRC Local Action Group was responsible for Axis 4 specifically, in line with the LEADER approach and requirements.
- The Rural Partnership delegated day-to-day delivery of Axis 3 to the CRC LAG, retaining an overall strategic view.
- The Vale of Glamorgan Council acted as accountable body for the CRC LAG and the Rural Partnership.
- The CRC staff team provided the day to day management, delivery and support resources for both Axis 3 and Axis 4 activities.
- The whole management structure was organised through Memorandums of Agreement/Service Level Agreements between all participating parties.

⁵ *Pride in the Vale supported measures 41, 312 and 313 of the 2007-2013 RDPW*

The costs of administering this management structure over both Business Plan periods are given in the following table. This excludes CRC team time on actual projects, the costs of which were incorporated into the project costs given earlier. These costs cover other elements such as financial management, publicity and communications, administrative support, meeting costs and expenses, training and other relevant costs.

	2008-2011	2012-2014
Local Partnership running costs	£659,343	£645,557
LAG running costs	£252,378	£242,711
TOTAL	£911,721	£888,268

2.5 Overview of programme-level evaluation findings from BP1 and BP2

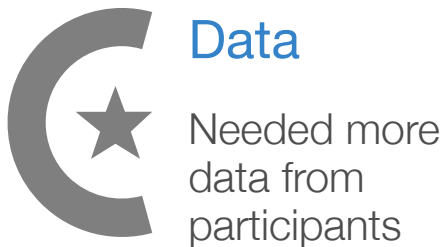
Evaluations were undertaken of both Business Plan 1 reporting September 2012 and Business Plan 2 reporting July 2015. The following summarises key points from both.

- The evaluation of Business Plan 1⁶ concluded that:
 - ▶ The programme has been delivered effectively with the vast majority of outputs and results met, and in many cases, surpassed
 - ▶ One tourism project - Tourism Matters - was seen as particularly successful in generating positive impacts for tourism businesses within the Vale, generating in excess of 6,000 tourism visits a year and increasing annual turnover by approximately £145,000
 - ▶ Project participants were universally positive about the support they have received
 - ▶ The Rural Partnership appeared to be a very useful resource for the delivery of the RDP programme. It had a wide ranging membership and had high levels of participation at each meeting with a great deal of interaction and contribution from all attendees
 - ▶ Project participants and the Rural Partnership attributed much of the success of the various projects, to the hard work of the Creative Rural Communities team

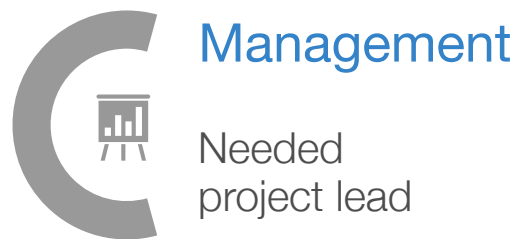
However:

- ▶ Lack of a dedicated project manager had in some instances delayed the progression of certain projects due to insufficient capacity to proactively promote the project, or to react to enquiries or issues as they emerged
- ▶ There was a lack of results and impact data obtained from participants as part of delivery, an issue which would need to be addressed in Business Plan 2

⁶ Vale of Glamorgan RDP Business Plan Round 1 Evaluation; Wavehill Ltd for Vale of Glamorgan Rural Partnership, September 2012

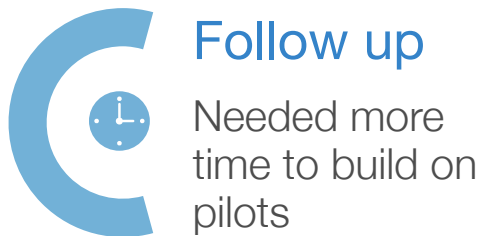


BP1
Project participants were very positive

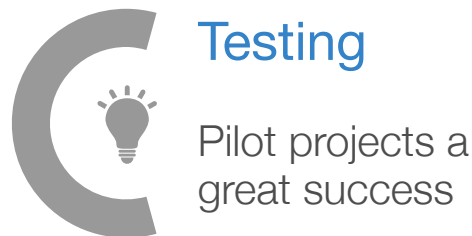


- The evaluation for Business Plan 2⁷ concluded:
 - ▶ Activities had collectively led to a more positive attitude within the rural Vale and greater networking, exchange of experience, mutual working and support than was felt to exist previously
 - ▶ The Rural Partnership continued to be identified by stakeholders as proactive, with a wide membership and good attendance at meetings. The LAG was perceived as a good and active partnership with a range of representation. Although LAG members had different viewpoints, members identified that people had listened to each other and been able to see the bigger picture
 - ▶ Pride in Farming Families was particularly seen as having a positive economic benefit with grant beneficiaries seeing the diversification routes followed as something that will lead to long-lasting benefits, and on which future development can be built. It was seen as the most overtly business focused Axis 3 project with jobs created defined as part of its scoring criteria and increasing business turnover as one of its objectives. Outputs reported for this project included 23.5 gross jobs created, 13 new products or services launched and 12 new markets accessed
 - ▶ The pilot projects and trials developed through the LEADER approach in Axis 4 developed a principle of providing the various building blocks to support people's involvement in pilot projects. This was seen as very positive and something which could be taken forward into future LAG work and other initiatives.
 - ▶ Having the two overarching themes in Axis 4 had given it a valuable focus. The links from some of the Axis 4 pilot work into Axis 3 delivery were also recognised as important – it was the combination of these that helped to deliver activities in support of the Axis 4 aim.

⁷ Evaluation of the RDP in the Vale of Glamorgan 2011 – 2014; Ash Futures Ltd, July 2015



BP2
More positive attitude in the Vale



- ▶ CRC was seen to have played an important role in facilitating linkages between projects that were funded through the RDP programme - concluding it was unlikely the same links between projects and businesses would have occurred without the intervention and support of CRC

However:

- ▶ Whilst activities in Business Plan 2 had contributed to LDS vision, mission, aims and themes, there needed to be a clearer logic link cascading downwards within the LDS itself where the link from objectives to activities was not that strong
- ▶ The timescale challenge on how far some of the pilot work in Axis 4 could be taken within the time available was recognised, with a suggestion that stronger follow-up work to consolidate the experience would be beneficial

2.6 The current LEADER programme 2014-2020

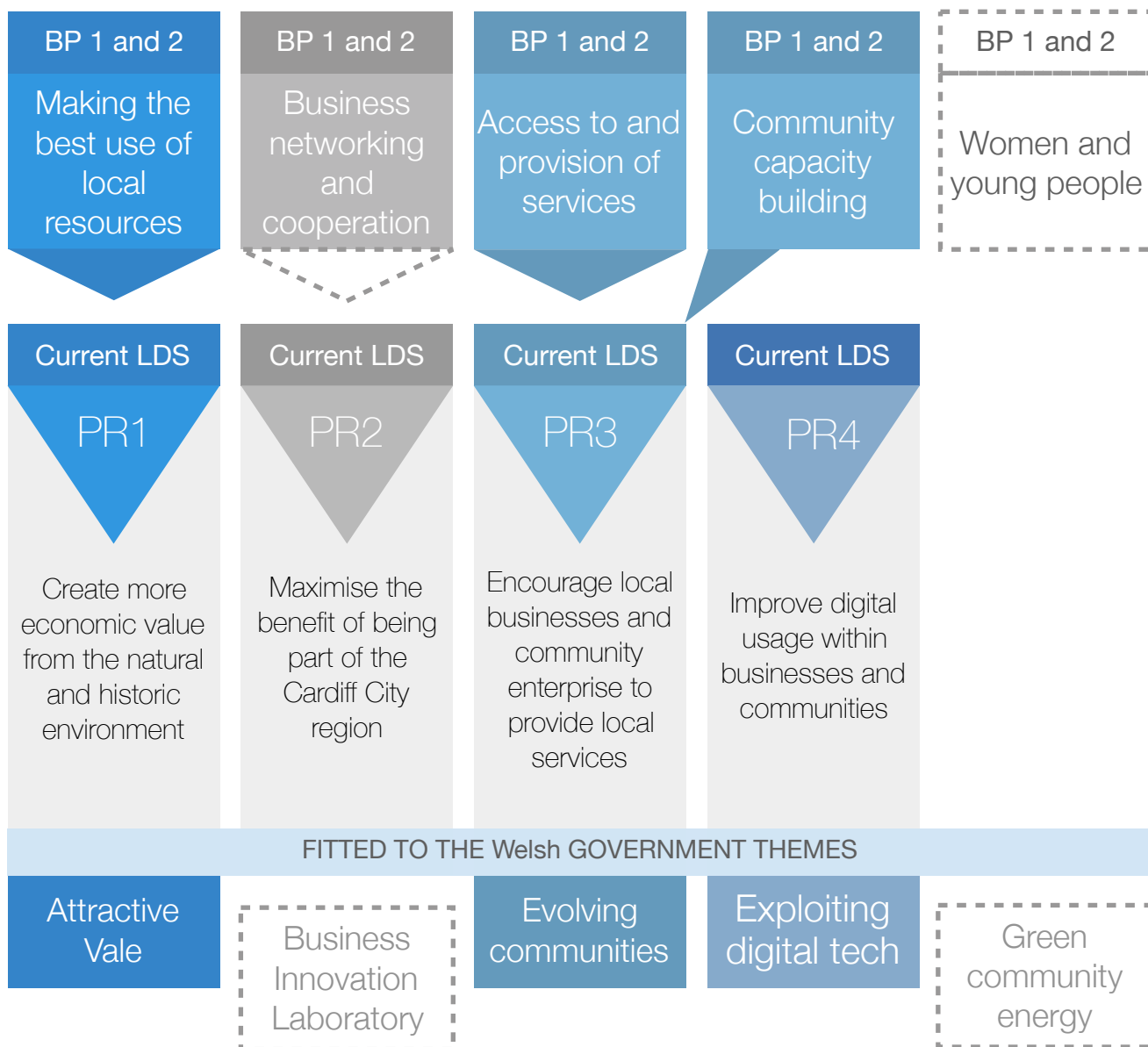
The LDS for the current programme set out four priorities:

- PR1 Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment
- PR2 Maximise the benefit of being part of the Cardiff City region
- PR3 Encourage local businesses and community enterprise to provide local services
- PR4 Improve digital usage within businesses and communities

Three of these continued themes that were a focus in BP1 and BP2 - PR1, PR3 and PR4. The second priority responded to high degrees of out commuting from the rural Vale to Cardiff for work and the opportunity to create more economic ties and benefits from the city region agenda. It too built on some earlier themes through one sub-objective in particular – to encourage more Cardiff visitors to use the Rural Vale for business and pleasure.

Subsequent to establishing these priorities, they were then fitted to five themes set out by Welsh Government for LEADER programmes⁸:

- Attractive Vale (Adding Value to local identity and natural and cultural resources)
- Business Innovation Laboratory (Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains)
- Evolving Communities (Exploring new ways of providing non statutory local services)
- Green Community Energy (Renewable energy at a community level)
- Exploiting Digital Technology



Evolution of the LEADER priorities in the rural Vale

(dotted lines represent themes where there is not a close connection between programmes)

The total budget for LEADER in rural Vale is some £2.2m of which c£1.8m is EU funded through the RDPW and the remainder is matched funding. In this programme, the budget is for revenue funding only. Unlike previous programmes, capital expenditure is not eligible this time.

⁸ The titles of these themes were nuanced locally to better suit the rural Vale. The Welsh Government theme title is that in brackets.

	RDPW funding	Match funding	Total
Implementation	£1,296,748	£324,187	£1,620,935
Animation	£273,000	£0	£273,000
Administration	£182,000	£0	£182,000
Co-operation	£68,249	£17,063	£85,312
TOTAL	£1,819,997	£341,250	£2,161,247

In the current programme, the Implementation budget incorporates the costs for CRC staff who may lead on project activities where projects are procured/commissioned, or support projects where funding is supporting other organisations to lead on them.

To date 36 projects have been approved (March 2019) and are either in progress or completed. These are across all five RDPW themes. The current programme is discussed in detail in a separate Mid Term Evaluation report, produced alongside this Legacy Report.

As the case studies in Section 3 demonstrate, there are projects and people who have progressed from earlier programmes into the current one. For example, the Cowbridge Food Collective and the Vale Makers Network are both projects in the current programme that have their origins in BP1 and BP2 projects.

A mid-term evaluation of the current LEADER programme in the rural Vale has been undertaken alongside this legacy report (and is available as a separate document). This has drawn a number of evaluation conclusions. The most relevant of these (to the legacy work) are summarised below and we have annotated these to draw out some particular points relevant to this legacy report:

- CRC is a very well regarded team and the programme has been managed and delivered to a high professional standard. It has also benefitted from being at some arms-length to the Council⁹. *This is consistent with all earlier evaluations.*
- Project activity is usefully contributing to delivery of LDS objectives. *This should therefore ensure longevity to activity started in earlier programmes.*
- Innovative solutions to rural development needs are being developed within the Vale, with the CRC team largely driving this. *This builds on innovative work through LEADER in earlier programmes where CRC had also been an important catalyst.*
- There appears to be a significant level of networking being achieved and CRC is critical in making this happen. The long-term relationships that the CRC team develop are often more important than the funding itself. *It is clear from our legacy work that these contacts are sometimes ones which have been developed over a number of years and through several iterations of LEADER activity.*
- The Leader principles are being achieved through the LEADER programme. However, because CRC is now driving a lot of the programme's activity it is not quite so explicitly community driven. Nevertheless, it remains a valuable locally focused programme.
- There is good evidence that a number of projects will deliver a positive impact. Some projects may not develop beyond the piloting stage. *However, as our legacy work demonstrates, positive impacts can take a long time to develop and can do this in a very iterative way.*
- The CRC team has supported integration and progression into other programmes where this is possible. However, our perception is that LEADER is less integrated with other programmes now (primarily because most programmes are centrally managed) – and there is also decreasing available funding in other programmes. *Feedback from our legacy work has shown how the link between Axis 4 and Axis 3 has been beneficial in some instances. However, the link no longer exists as there is now no direct locally administered connection into other RDPW measures beyond LEADER.*

⁹ Note that there are some concerns that its arms length standing might be eroding a bit



Impact

Positive outcomes take time



Great team

Professional and well-managed



Community

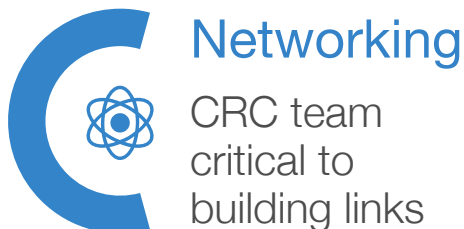
Maintained LEADER principles

2014-20
Positive value from piloting



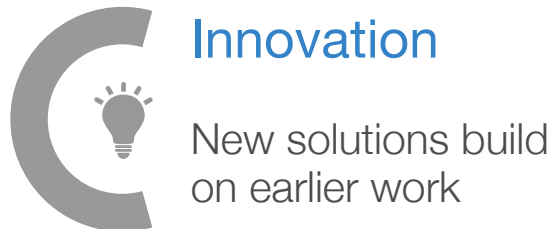
Linkage

Less integrated with other grant funds



Networking

CRC team critical to building links



Innovation

New solutions build on earlier work

However:

- More is needed to heighten the awareness of support provided being specific to LEADER rather than generically CRC (given that the LEADER programme largely funds CRC staff costs).
- Widespread engagement with the business community is significantly missing from the current programme. This is not the fault of how the LAG/CRC have delivered the programme but reflects the way in which the current LEADER programme is now set up in Wales.
- A stronger focus on supporting sustainability/mainstreaming would be beneficial. It is important to recognise that there is a risk that too much capability and capacity is concentrated within the CRC team – currently underpinned by LEADER funding – and is dependent on its future. Perhaps, in hindsight, the focus on building community capacity - stated as an LDS objective in the previous programme - could have been more explicitly maintained.
- Data collection is robust. However the PIs are not useful indicators of impact. Fuller insights into outcomes and impacts would be valuable. *Our legacy work reflects the value of more longitudinal impact measurement if this can be achieved, although we realise that is difficult based on how much of the programme is left and the continued focus on delivery.*

2.7 Conclusion

There has been a long, strong and consistent legacy of rural community led economic development supported by EU rural development funding in the Rural Vale, with CRC – the team resource, the LAG and VoG Council as administrative body – central to this. Use of LEADER funding to pursue the more innovative and pilot activity has also been a consistent feature, particularly in Business Plan 2.

The ability to deliver funding directly to participants has also been an important feature of these earlier programmes. Business Plan 2 had particularly good links between LEADER pilot activities and Axis 3 which then offered the opportunity of more direct grants to participants to take forward the LEADER pilot work. Those project themes which involved direct support to businesses were viewed as the activities providing the greatest 'impact' in economic terms.

3 Case studies – legacy mapping and accompanying narrative

As previously stated, a core part of this legacy report is to outline a number of case studies which illustrate how the LEADER programme has supported businesses, individuals and communities at various points on their 'journey'. The aim of the case studies was to show how small amounts of support have helped kick-start activities which have been sustained and grown over time. These are now illustrated in turn. The timeline maps are illustrative, rather than comprehensive.

OUT TO LEARN WILLOW - case study

Mel Bastier (a graphic designer) and Clare Revera (a teacher) initially set up Out to Learn Willow as a hobby business, running alongside their main jobs. It started out running one day courses in willow weaving. Mel and Clare then decided to go part time in their respective jobs and further establish Out to Learn Willow as a business. They were looking for funding when they first came across CRC.

The first projects

Mel and Clare wanted to run more and longer courses. This would also attract visitors to the Vale who could use local accommodation. In particular, they wanted to run a residential coffin-making course. Following support from CRC in developing this into a funding application, Mel and Clare were awarded a grant of £9272, from Business Plan 1 and the Visit Vale+ project LEADER funding. This enabled them to develop the business and move into it on a full-time basis.

They then went on to secure a smaller grant of £270 as part of the Coastal Activities pilot project. This support, which came through LEADER Business Plan 2 and its Slow Tourism pilot project, enabled them to purchase small tools and consultancy support from a well-known basket maker from Bristol. He also helped to teach the first course at the Monks Wood site near Wick.

The legacy from the first projects

Since this early start, Out to Learn Willow has gone on to grow its workshops and courses activities, providing both living and dried willow courses and workshops for adults, children and young people. It also makes and teaches traditional Welsh basket designs, designs and builds structures and sculptures to enhance school grounds, gardens and community areas, and undertakes bespoke projects on commission.

Courses now include teaching advanced and accredited courses across Wales and UK with course participants going on to set up their own businesses; examples are Hatton Willow, Seven Willow, West Wales Willow, Nortimer Willow. They are also Creative Practitioners for the Arts Council of Wales Lead Creative Schools Scheme. 'Out to Learn Willow' continues to thrive. www.outtolearnwillow.co.uk



Wider developments leading on from the first projects

This initial support has also spun out further activity more broadly. Both Clare and Mel have also gone on to set up their own individual businesses (as well as continue with Out to Learn Willow). Clare set up 'Welsh Baskets' - teaching basket making across the country - www.Welshbaskets.co.uk. Mel set up Lily Willow coffins (as a partnership with Sarah Hatton, also a willow weaver), providing willow coffins and ashes caskets made to order.

Clare is now renowned as a leading willow weaving practitioner and regularly teaches and exhibits at the Makers Guild in Wales amongst others across the UK. This year (2019) she is also teaching in the USA. She takes on commissions e.g. woven baskets to introduce the plant section of the National Museum of Wales. Mel is also renowned as a leading willow weaving practitioner and regularly teaches and exhibits willow sculptures at the National Botanical Gardens of Wales, at National Trust locations and others across the UK. Clare took on an apprentice in 2017 and has trained her to the point that she is now also able to teach workshops. Mel takes on seasonal staff for events with her business and to help with particular sculptures.

Clare also became involved in a two week 'pop up' festival organised by CRC with LEADER and Coastal Communities funding support in 2016, to test the potential for holding events at Dunraven Bay on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. The festival included a 'Crafts on the Coast' day and workshop, where Clare Revera held a willow weaving workshop as one of four artists/makers who organised this particular activity.



The crafts festivals highlighted a need for a crafts network in the Vale (called the Vale Makers Network) to encourage networking between crafters, develop opportunities for sales, exhibitions, teaching and learning. The Vale Craft Network pilot project was developed through CRC and with LEADER funding support. It has been operational for a couple of years. Objectives include the joint promotion of products in the Vale and creating a network of mutual support.

The 2019 festival is taking place over two weeks in September 2019 and is being promoted as the Vale Makers Festival 2019. It will coincide with the launch of their website.

“The support of CRC and associated funding was vital through various stages of development for the business. The CRC support and funding was a complete turning point in our journey. Without this we may not have done any of the work to build up Out to Learn Willow as it was a big leap going from a full-time job to establishing and working in our business. The grant was a catalyst to enable us to take this step. If we progressed our ideas without this support, it would have taken much longer to do.

More recently the support of CRC has been vital in helping to establish the Crafts Festival. CRC helped establish the festival in its early development stages and also supported us practically with information and help on hiring gazebos for events, marketing etc.”

Clare Revera (Out to Learn Willow)

SIAN BASSETT-ROBERTS - case study

The Background

Sian started Coginio (Welsh cooking) to promote Welsh food and food producers. Sian wanted to produce a DVD to promote Welsh food but realised that more would be needed to turn her interest into a business proposition.

The First project

Sian's first project with CRC came in 2010 when she secured a grant of £9181 to support setting up Coginio, which was used to promote weekend break Welsh cookery courses with the Vale Hotel and to buy equipment for mobile workshops. This linked the cookery courses with an overnight stay. Essentially the courses were showcasing Welsh produce and recipes. The grant came through Business Plan 1 and its LEADER funding for the Visit Vale+ initiative

Legacy from the first project

Having struggled to get sufficient numbers on the early courses Sian expanded her ideas to do workshops across the Vale of Glamorgan and then to develop from there into food tours – which led to her next project with CRC.

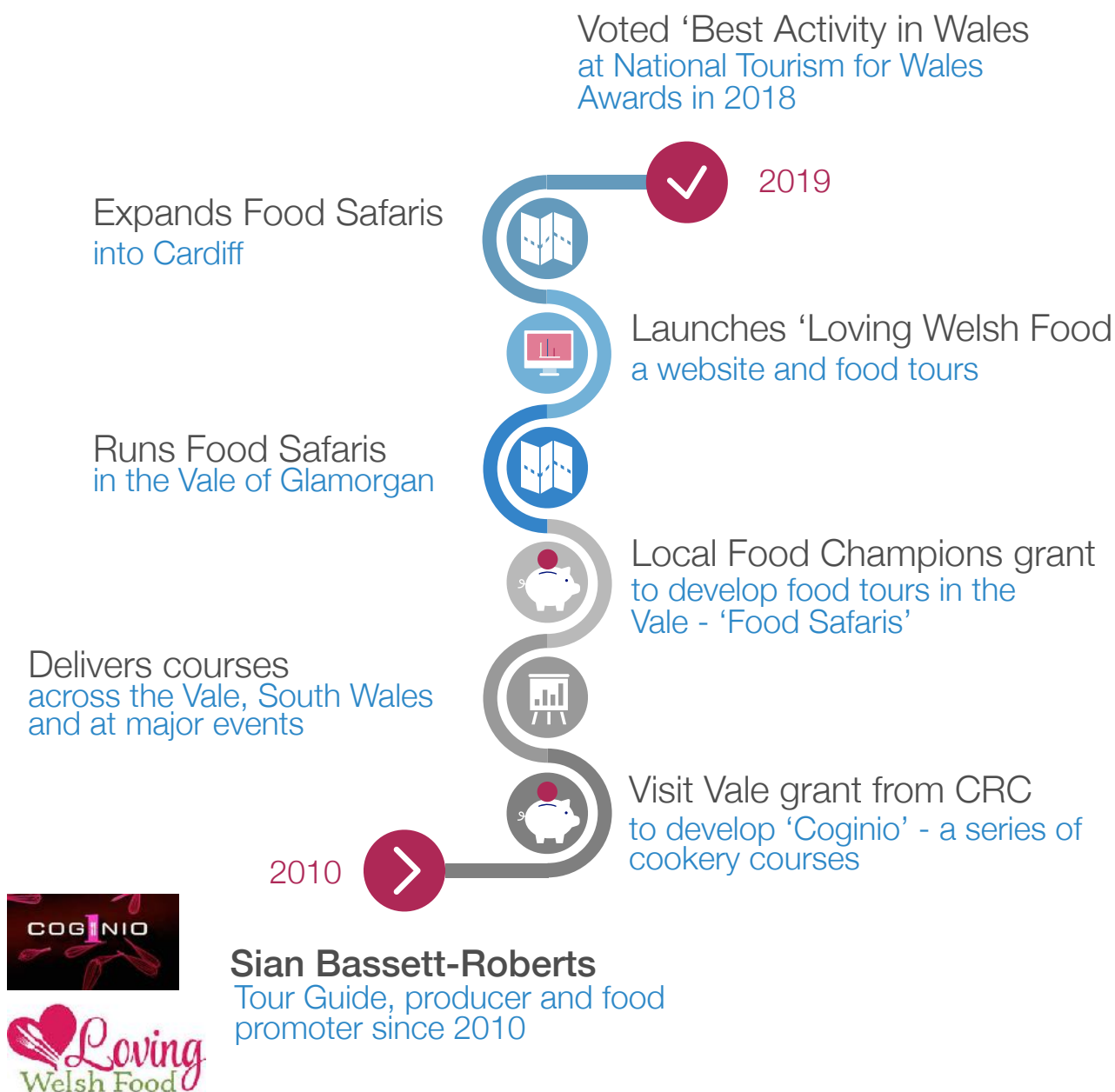


Wider development from the first project

Sian wanted to expand the business into food tours - walking and tasting tours. So in 2013 she secured more funding through Business Plan 2 this time (£1996), and its Local Food Champions project supported with LEADER funding, to set up Food Safaris in the rural Vale. These set out to introduce the Vale of Glamorgan's food & drink to local, national and International tourists. Whole, half day and tailor made tours enabled visitors to visit a selection of venues to taste different food & drink and to find out the stories behind the product.

Since then Sian has gone on to grow the business, which has now been re-branded as 'Loving Welsh Food'. It provides a range of food tours in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, including tailored tours for private groups, as well as Welsh food workshops and Welsh food talks and tastings. This helps to build an understanding in Cardiff, of what the Vale of Glamorgan has to offer as her tours incorporate food producers in the rural Vale. (www.lovingWelshfood.uk) . www.lovingWelshfood.uk

The Loving Welsh Food Tours were voted 'Best Activity in Wales' at the National Tourism for Wales Awards in 2018.



“The support and funding I received from CRC was motivational. It gave me confidence that others had faith in the idea. Having invested a lot of my own time and some money, the additional funding was very important. Although the equipment outlay was not massive, without the LEADER funding that came in, I feel that I may not have continued the project. The support of CRC through the process of applying for funding was essential. Without that support, the process may have been painstaking and without their support I may not have got through the process of grant application at all.”

Sian Bassett-Roberts (Loving Welsh Food)

MYFANWY EDWARDS - case study

Myfanwy Edwards set up the Vale Farmers Market in Cowbridge in 2001. She is a local farmer and producer. Pwllwyrach Farm near Cowbridge produces beef, whilst Myfanwy is also the owner of Artisan Cakes, making cakes for special occasions.

The first project with CRC: Vale Show Local Food Hall

The first project arose through a desire to get local produce in the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Show which had not been present at all. A referral from Cywain (the organisation that has been established to add value through collaboration amongst food producers) to CRC resulted in Myfanwy, together with CRC support, lobbying the Show Committee to include a local produce Food Court. This was included in the 2014 Vale Show for the first time, and was facilitated by a LEADER grant which covered the costs of the marquee hire and cost of the stalls for the 2014 event. The grant was provided through Business Plan 2: Pride in the Vale - Local Food Champions project.

In the same year the Vale Farmers Market was also represented at the Cowbridge Reindeer Parade – the annual Christmas event - for the first time.

The legacy from this first project

Myfanwy has gone on to organise the local food hall at every successive Vale Show. Initially the local producers were not allowed to sell anything which could be eaten immediately, only produce that could be taken away. This position has shifted in that there is now the ability for some sale of consumables on site, although this is still limited. The Food Court has gone from strength to strength. It is now in its 6th year and there have been 58 applications for 40 stalls this year. Priority is given to those who are members of the Vale Farmers Market or the Cowbridge Food Collective; then on the basis of how local the producers are.



The Vale Show Local Food Court now has a good following and Myfanwy has been able to get sponsorship for the Food Court to help cover costs. She notes that sponsorship has made the cost of attending more reasonable for producers. e.g. cost per stall this year would be £200 but the sponsorship has brought it down to £60.

Expanding from the Vale Farmers Market: the Cowbridge Food Collective

Separate to (but with links) to the Vale Show activities, Myfanwy was also aware that families were not coming to the Vale Farmers Markets in Cowbridge and Penarth as they can be hard to reach on Saturdays. She had been considering the idea of an online version of the Farmers Market for about 5 years, however she needed to set up a structure separate to the Farmers Market to make it happen.

The current LEADER programme facilitated a pilot project to set this up. Myfanwy's idea was to link to an existing structure (the EU Food Assembly network) and she approached CRC with a pilot, which was approved. The Cowbridge Food Assembly was set up with LEADER funding supporting start up costs such as room hire (for weekly food collection) and for promotional items.

However, about 6 months ago and after several months of operation, the EU Food Assembly withdrew from operating in the UK. Myfanwy decided to 'go it alone' and set up the Food Collective. This incurred more costs which CRC could not cover e.g. the banners had to be re-done to have the new brand name; and a e-commerce website had to be established to enable online ordering by customers. She invested her own money in this. Whilst she feels this investment has paid off, as it has enabled the Food Collective to continue operating, it was a bumpy ride and something which was not expected.



The developing outcomes of the Cowbridge Food Collective

The Food Collective now has 20 producers/members and covers a good range of products. Producers are all located within 40 miles of Cowbridge. Customers come from as far afield as Barry and Bridgend. Orders are made online and customers pick up their products every Thursday from Cowbridge school where the Collective rents a room. Orders close on Tuesdays, so each producer knows exactly what they need to take for the Thursday collection, between 5-7pm. As a consequence there is no food waste. Myfanwy comments that customers are often collecting as part of other trips e.g. children at school, or on the way home from work. The Food Collective is helping to reduce food miles, reduce waste, reducing packaging and is all local produce. All producers come on a Thursday if they have orders to provide, which gives an opportunity for interaction between customers and producers. Myfanwy is aware that being part of the Farmers market or Food Collective has been the way in which some businesses been able to start up; and as stated they are given priority for stalls at the Vale Show.

“Without the initial support from CRC to approach the Vale Show Committee about making local food produce available, and the subsequent financial support for the first local produce food hall at the Show, the local produce food hall at the Vale Show would simply not have happened. Equally the Cowbridge Food Collective would not have been set up if there had been no funding support through CRC as it was an experimental initiative. Support from CRC at key moments in time along the journey have been crucial.”

Myfanwy Edwards (Cowbridge Food Collective)

TOMOS A LILFORD - case study

Tomos & Lilford brewery was established by Rolant Tomos and Rob Lilford through their passion for brewing different beers. As with any new business it began life with very basic resources, with little available funds and borrowed equipment. It has since organically grown, carefully managed by Rolant and Rob.

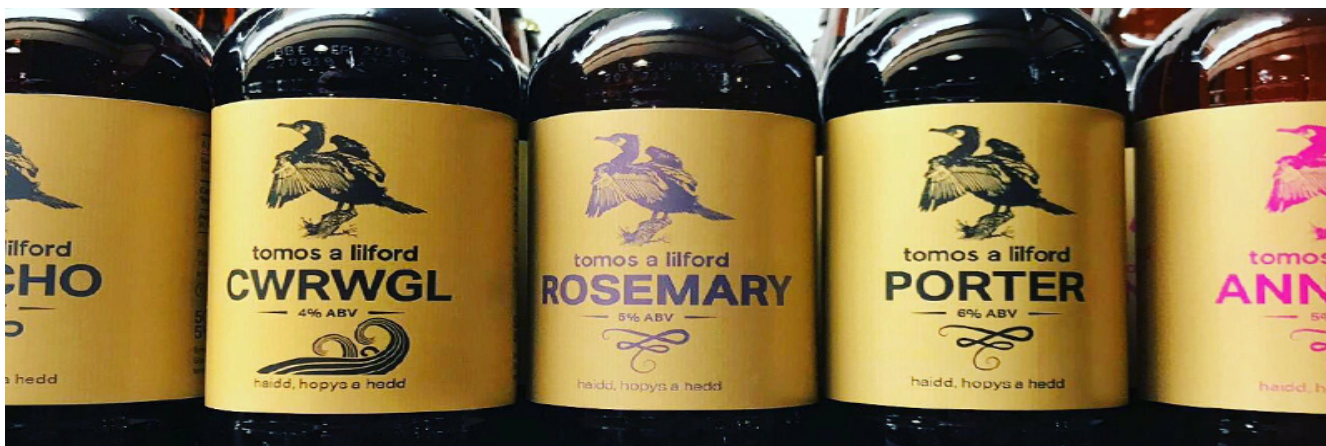
The first project with CRC: Branding support

The business recognised that it needed to develop professional branding to help the business and its products establish a presence in the crowded beer and ale market. It approached CRC for funding support and was awarded £2,000 grant funding to work with a branding agency. This allowed the business access to professional support which was helpful at the time. The brand was launched about 5 years ago in a local pub.

The business probably would have undertaken the branding themselves but it certainly would have been poorer quality and they feel it would have needed to have been revisited at some point which would have had cost implications.

The legacy from this first project

The professional support allowed the business to quickly establish a recognisable brand and marketing presence. It also allowed them to begin to showcase their products at events such as the Sense of Place Showcase event, which was set-up by the CRC team. The business received some orders through that event which was helpful in the early stages of its development. It also allowed them to take advantage of outlets such as local farmers markets and other specific events. The brand quickly became recognisable, allowing the business to focus on operations and expanding their product offering.



Brewery sells throughout Wales and is looking for new premises to increase production and employment

Brewery hosts CRC events
“Year of . . . workshops

Beer now stocked locally
in bars, cafes and delis

Receives grant from CRC
Local Food Champions - for
branding and web development

2019



New premises at Llandow
increases production; new
bottle shop and events

Newly branded product
now sold at Farmers Market and
other events

Showcases product
at CRC Sense of Place event

2015



Tomos Lilford
a hobby brewery operating from a
small container

Business growth

The business continues to grow, it moved into new premises at Llandow which allowed them to increase production, increasing from 350 litres to 700 litres. With plans to further expand production to 3,000 litres over the next couple of years the business may find itself in the position of needing to look for further premises. The business recognises that it will require further finance to facilitate the expansion of the business, and funding

may be part of this finance-mix. The business has recently taken on its first employee and continues to expand the range of retail outlets from which their products are sold. They now sell into local delis, cafes etc. and their products can be found across Wales and into areas such as Bristol, Gloucester and Ludlow. They have established a commercial relationship with the National Trust.

They regularly open the brewery for events (sometimes hosting CRC events) and bottle shop, increasing visibility in the local area.

Through this process of organic growth contact between the CRC team and the business has remained. The CRC team have attempted to help the business in several ways, through helping with its search for premises and contacts with planning, invites to local events etc.

“The initial funding support provided by CRC allowed us to more quickly and professionally establish our branding presence, allowing us to market our emerging products. The business uses social media as a means to increase awareness of its products and the brand has always been central to that activity. The CRC team continue to look for opportunities to help our business, making us aware of events where we can showcase our products and link in with other food and drink producers. This is invaluable for a small business.”

Rob Lilford (Tomos a Lilford Brewery)

PETERSTON SUPER ELY - case study

Peterston super Ely (Llanbedr y Fro) is a small rural village in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is situated on the river Ely, seven miles from Cardiff. Despite its proximity to Cardiff, the village is rurally isolated, set within a steep valley with single track roads. The village has local amenities including a primary school, village hall, pub, post office and garage. The village has an active community council.

The first project with CRC: Village Hall Improvements

The first project was to improve the village hall, focusing on the flooring and lighting. Through the improvements made, more rooms are available, with increased letting and usage. The improvements were jointly funded through the village's own funds and Axis 3 funding. The village hall is now a well run, community facility which has moved from making a small loss to a small surplus, putting it in a strong future position. Activities that are held in the village hall include sports clubs (badminton), youth club, cinema, playgroup and farmers market. The hall can also be hired for private events. LEADER funding was used to get a professional energy audit conducted to advise on the appropriate improvements.

The legacy from this first project

With a strong foundation, the community built on the facility through the development of a community cinema. Carefully trialling demand (via questionnaires, and borrowed equipment) it was shown that there was demand for more community entertainment – and the community cinema was born. In 2012, a grant for blackout blinds was received, followed by a grant for chairs and speakers in 2013 and finally an electric screen, HD projector and DVD player. In 2013, a total £6,000 in grants and match funding was spent on the community cinema. The group became part of the rural cinema pilot scheme, helping them meet with other areas to learn about good practice and share equipment. The chairs are also used by all village hall activities and have been very useful.

The cinema is well supported locally, with between 20-50 people per viewing, and always covers its own costs. It has won an award (£1,000 from the Film Bank Audience Award) and networks across the county via Vale Cinema network and Film Hub Wales. The local pub provides a bar, linked to events. The cinema runs a 'film club' for the local primary school and is also used locally as a means of fundraising – for example the PTA group running a film night to raise funds for the school. The cinema provides a social hub, especially for less mobile and retired population who are least likely to go to other cinemas.

Expanding from the Village Hall

In addition to village hall developments, Peterston Super Ely has also been proactive in attracting funds from CRC and a range of other sources to improve community facilities. These include the:

- Greenlinks community transport initiative, which employs mini bus drivers to supplement the rural bus network and take less independent residents shopping, hospital appointments etc.
- Energy audits for the village hall through LEADER – enabling them to apply for Axis 3 funding
- Community Orchard (with National Trust support)
- Multi-use Courts – revamping tennis courts with support from Charitable Trust, Sports Wales

Whilst the council no longer run the "Best Kept Village" scheme, the village still undertake work to upkeep and maintain the village flowers through volunteer time and donations. The success of schemes has required considerable volunteer input. LEADER and CRC support has been crucial to the village developments, but do not exist in isolation of the community infrastructure, and in particularly the local school and volunteer support.

As a community we commend the support and assistance that we have received from CRC over the years, and have found the team exceptionally helpful and open. Without the core grant funding received from CRC and Leader, none of the projects would have taken place. Support from CRC and the Vale of Glamorgan Council has enabled our village to lever in additional funding from other sources.

Ian Pearson (on behalf of Peterston Super Ely)



PETERSTON SUPER ELY
Activity map



- A - New allotment
- B - Orchard
- C - Kids screenings
- D - Pub links

The 'map' below illustrates the huge range of interconnected activities that have spun out of the initial support from the three LEADER programmes.

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST - case study

The Background

There has been a long term aspiration through rural development programmes, to make more of the opportunities of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast – its physical landscape assets and the opportunities they provide to contribute to rural economic development. All iterations of LEADER funding have therefore provided a framework in which different aspects of rural economic opportunity can be pursued. Although disparate activities in their own right, cumulatively they show a progression in realising the potential of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

The Progression

The first support came through Business Plan 1 and its Visit Vale+ strand of activity. This supported new pilot tourism initiatives whilst pre-commercial testing the projects - such as Southerndown Surf School. It also ran an 'Inspire the Vale' bursary programme to support young people setting up in business. One recipient of this was 'Cobbles' Kitchen and Deli, near Ogmere by Sea.

Business Plan 2 had a wider focus which took the Glamorgan Heritage Coast as a theme in its own right, through the Slow Tourism project within the 'Pride in the Vale' theme. Slow Tourism aimed to get a coordinated approach across attractions/destinations along the Coast and sought to encourage people to less visited parts of the coast and its heritage. Slow Tourism had several elements.

Glamorgan Heritage Coast specific:

- Glamorgan Heritage Coast Sense of Place activities: Support to visitor facing organisations to develop their 'Sense of Place' so that they can support their visitors understanding and appreciation of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast area.
- Coastal camping pilot project: The Perfect Pitch pilot project was a trial to assist landowners in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast with the support to try out low key sustainable camping on their land for a limited period. Facilitated through CRC, it involved five different farmers and landowners in a trial in 2012, with two further farmers also involved in some marketing aspects.
- Coastal activities pilot project: which enabled six new activity providers to pilot or 'trial' their activity during July-September 2014.
- Glamorgan Heritage Coast interpretation project: initially an interpretation strategy leading on to placing of interpretation boards, and the development of various augmented reality apps and activity packs; and public art gateway features through a Coastal Communities funded project.

Less specifically but supporting a Glamorgan Heritage Coast focus:

- Vale Trails – raising the profile of walking in the Vale with the production of 10 self-guided walks of which three were in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast and linked to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Interpretation Strategy. These built on walks already published by Valeways.
- Tourism Ambassadors – addressing a need for more quality visitor information through tourism ambassadors who share and build on their knowledge of the area to communicate it to visitors to encourage them to stay longer, return and encourage others to visit.
- Tourism Information Points (TIP) - setting up of over 50 new TIPs including 5 new Tourist Information 'Hubs', following the closure of regional Tourist Information Centres.

The Glamorgan Heritage Coast focus has also been supported by funding through the Coastal Communities Fund, applied for by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in order to build on these LEADER supported projects. Coastal Communities funding was obtained to help maximise the employment potential of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast by encouraging the development of new businesses and supporting existing businesses along the coastline, as well as making capital improvements in the area e.g. Dunraven Bay slipway improvements.

More recently Coastal Communities funding has been a matched funder to support projects in the current LEADER programme. For example, Coastal Communities Fund support has helped storage units adjacent to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre at Dunraven Bay to encourage local businesses and activity providers to use the coastal location as a base for their business.

The current LEADER programme has allowed CRC to continue with its Glamorgan Heritage Coast focused work. The economic opportunities feasibility study in 2015/2016 explored commercial opportunities that could develop destination appeal and enhance the development of businesses in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, with three locations investigated in some detail – Dunraven Bay, the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre, and the new surf life-saving building and community facility in Ogmores-by-sea.

Following that, a pilot project of 'pop up' events was held for two weeks in September/October 2016 at Dunraven Bay, with four different events held; Crafts on the Coast, Slow Food Fest, Lost Lands outdoor cinema events and Autumn Gardens Food and Drink. The crafts event has continued since then, highlighting the need for a crafts network - becoming the Vale Makers Network, also supported by CRC through LEADER funding.

Other projects also continue to develop aspirations. Developments from the Vale Trails include dog friendly walks through the 'Paws in the Vale' LEADER supported project, and the 'Digital Tourism Information Points' LEADER supported project which is exploring how visitors can be encouraged to donate to the cost of printed materials such as walks leaflets, if information is also available online.

The Festival of the Sea (see below for a more comprehensive description of this project) supported through the current LEADER programme is continuing to develop the opportunities for outdoor activities through feasibility work and a showcasing event (held June 2019) to test a variety of outdoor activities at different locations along the coast.

The legacy from the developments

CRC and others have sought to achieve legacy from individual projects within this range of Glamorgan Heritage Coast focused activity in various ways which was needed to maintain momentum:

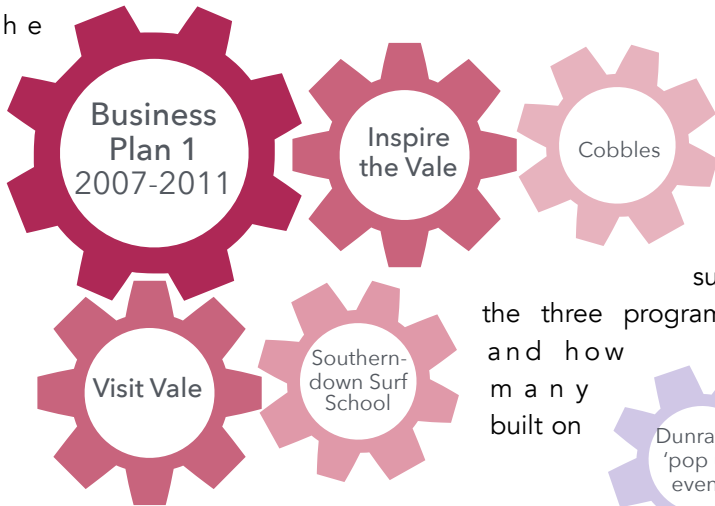
- A number of the tourism related activities are now part of Visit the Vale and the work of the Council's tourism officers. Visit the Vale has adopted some of the branding developed through the Glamorgan Heritage Coast projects on the premise that businesses now know and value this.
 - ▶ The Glamorgan Heritage Coast has a page on the 'Be Inspired' section of the website, and the family activity packs and augmented reality apps are available to download
 - ▶ Vale Trails are available on the Walking in the Vale webpage linked to the 'Be Inspired' section; and are also available through the Valeways website
 - ▶ The Vale Ambassadors have a page on the website with a number listed, where they can be contacted. Others are not listed but act as advocates through their own businesses. Whilst the Vale Ambassadors now meet together without the need for ongoing CRC support (although CRC do provide some admin support), some Ambassadors now feel less engaged and feel the Vale Ambassadors programme is not as well known as it should be, including with local tourism businesses. Re-invigorating the network would be valuable as this seems a resource for the Vale which should not be lost
- The Council's planning department published some supplementary planning guidance on tourism development (2019) in support of the Local Development Plan's aspiration to maximise opportunities for rural diversification such as low impact, sustainable tourism and leisure uses. This incorporates references from LEADER supported projects, including an approach to developments in the Heritage Coast such as those developed through Perfect Pitch.

There are still a number of initiatives in development and continuing to plot how these can be sustained and developed over the longer term will be important, for example the findings from the Coastal Activities feasibility study and Festival of the Sea. CRC and the Council more broadly will continue to have a vital role in this.

The

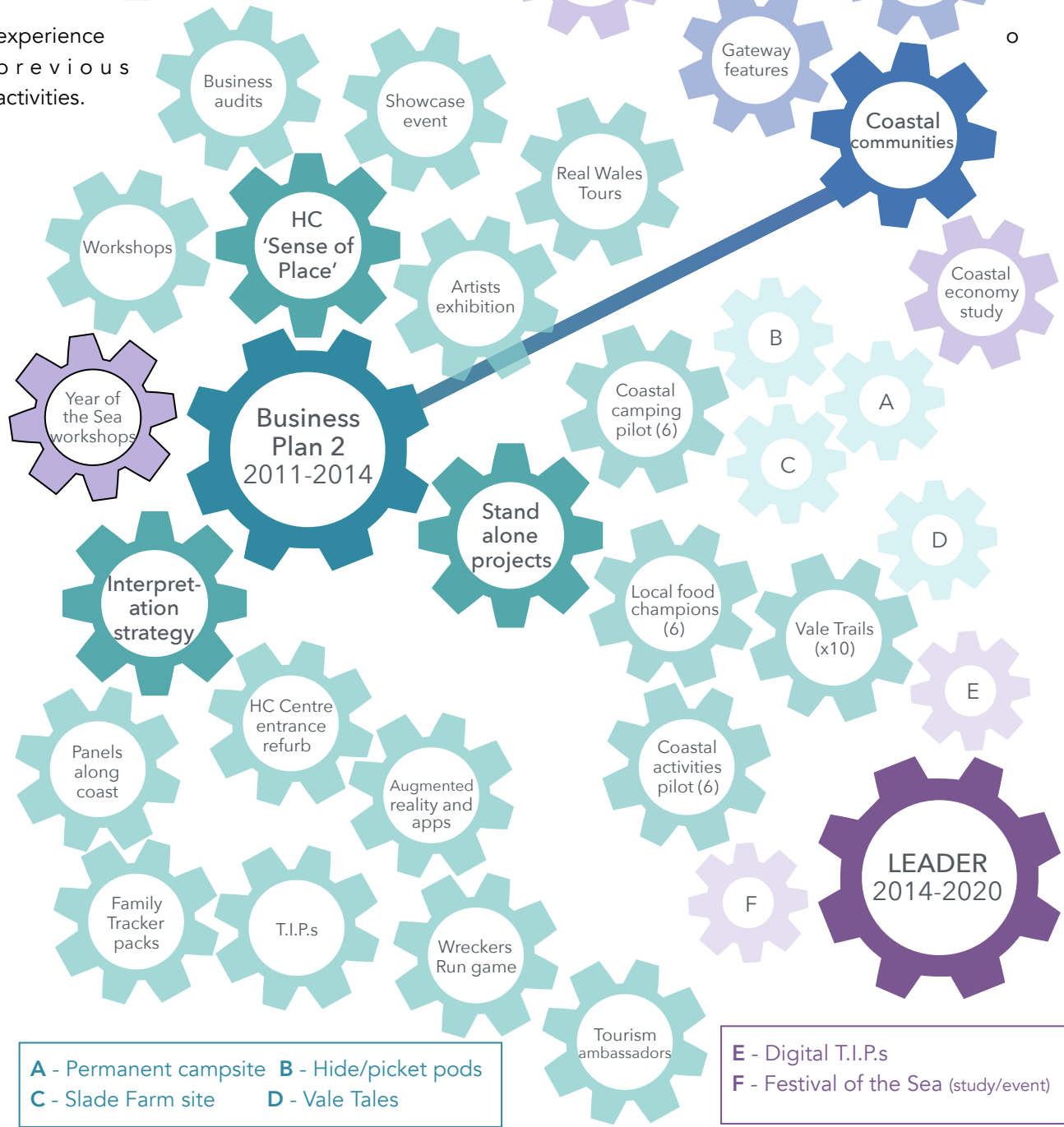
HERITAGE COAST Activity map

'map' below is an illustration the projects that have been



supported by the three programmes, and how many built on

experience previous activities.



A - Permanent campsite **B** - Hide/picket pods
C - Slade Farm site **D** - Vale Tales

E - Digital T.I.P.s
F - Festival of the Sea (study/event)

FESTIVAL OF THE SEA

Development of the project

It has been a long term aspiration of rural development programmes in the rural Vale, to make more of the opportunities of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast given its physical landscape assets and the opportunities they provide in terms of contributing to rural economic development. All iterations of LEADER funding have progressed separate projects to achieve this. Acting together they have enhanced the potential of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast as a destination and driver of the local economy.

The Festival of the Sea is continuing to develop the opportunities for outdoor activities in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast through feasibility work and a showcasing event (held June 2019).

- The work in earlier programmes had highlighted the potential for more activities on the coast, and the first part of the Festival of the Sea project sought to test the practical potential for this. It has looked at who might be the 'buyers' for outdoor activities, both in terms of the outdoor activity providers and also the participants (visitors to the vale and local people) opening up their knowledge of the opportunities. Consultation activities have been held with activity providers and tourism businesses in the rural Vale, and an audit done of all coastal sites looking at their existing recreational/commercial activities.
- The second part of Festival of the Sea was a showcasing event to test a variety of outdoor activities at five different locations along the coast, including linking into an already planned event at Atlantic College, St Donats. The Wales Activity Tourism Organisation (WATO) and CRC supported the organisation for this, aiming to break down perceived barriers of operating on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast by activity providers, whilst also drawing in new footfall through outdoor activity participation from visitors and locals.

Delivery

The project is led by the CRC Local Action Group, working with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Heritage Coast Rangers, who has been in a support role from a land management perspective. The CRC team, on behalf of the LAG, carried out an open tender process to secure expertise for the feasibility study work and to organise the showcasing event. The tender was won by WATO, a forum which links outdoor activity providers in Wales with the aim of sharing best practice. WATO has worked closely with the CRC team in carrying out the work.

Other stakeholders have been involved in the project, notably Atlantic College, where various outdoor activity providers ran events and demonstrations for the showcasing events, whilst local tourism businesses were also present with stands.

The Budget

The Festival of the Sea project had a budget of £31,700.

The outcomes

The main outcome will be a report setting out recommendations built on the experience of the showcasing events and the feasibility work, for developing outdoor activities in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast in the short, medium and long term.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation was seen as significant issue in the Vale of Glamorgan, which the three LEADER programmes have sought to address. The following 'map' sets out the projects that have been tackling social isolation in the rural vale. This is supplemented by case studies below.

GLAMORGAN SMALLHOLDERS

Development of the project

It was recognised that it was a difficult job being a smallholder, it can be socially quite isolating and difficult to share best practice. Smallholders felt that they are often seen as 'hobby farmers' which isn't true, they are still required to meet many of the same regulations and requirements as large farmers but without the same support network. The idea for establishing a network initially came from three smallholders who wanted to establish a network and they approached CRC to secure some seed funding to make the relationships and networking more formalised. This has led to the establishment of the Glamorgan Smallholders network. 20-25 smallholders regularly attend meetings.

One of the underlying objectives of the network is to reduce isolation amongst the smallholder community and to improve the effectiveness of their operations. For example, investigating joint purchasing to help reduce costs and to improve the scope for revenue potential.

Delivery

The network has been established by energised individuals who have taken forward the project. Whilst CRC have convened a couple of useful meetings much of the impetus has been provided by the network itself. The group is now formally constituted and has just received some further funding support from Cywain to take forward its plans for joint marketing. The network sees this as a big step and part of the potential journey towards branding. It has established its own Facebook page and received circa 7,000 hits.

The Budget

Glamorgan Smallholders had an allocated budget of £764, against which it pulled in matched funding. The project expanded due to significant volunteer time from the network, allowing it to increase activity/scope. For example, it was part of the marquee at the Vale Show.

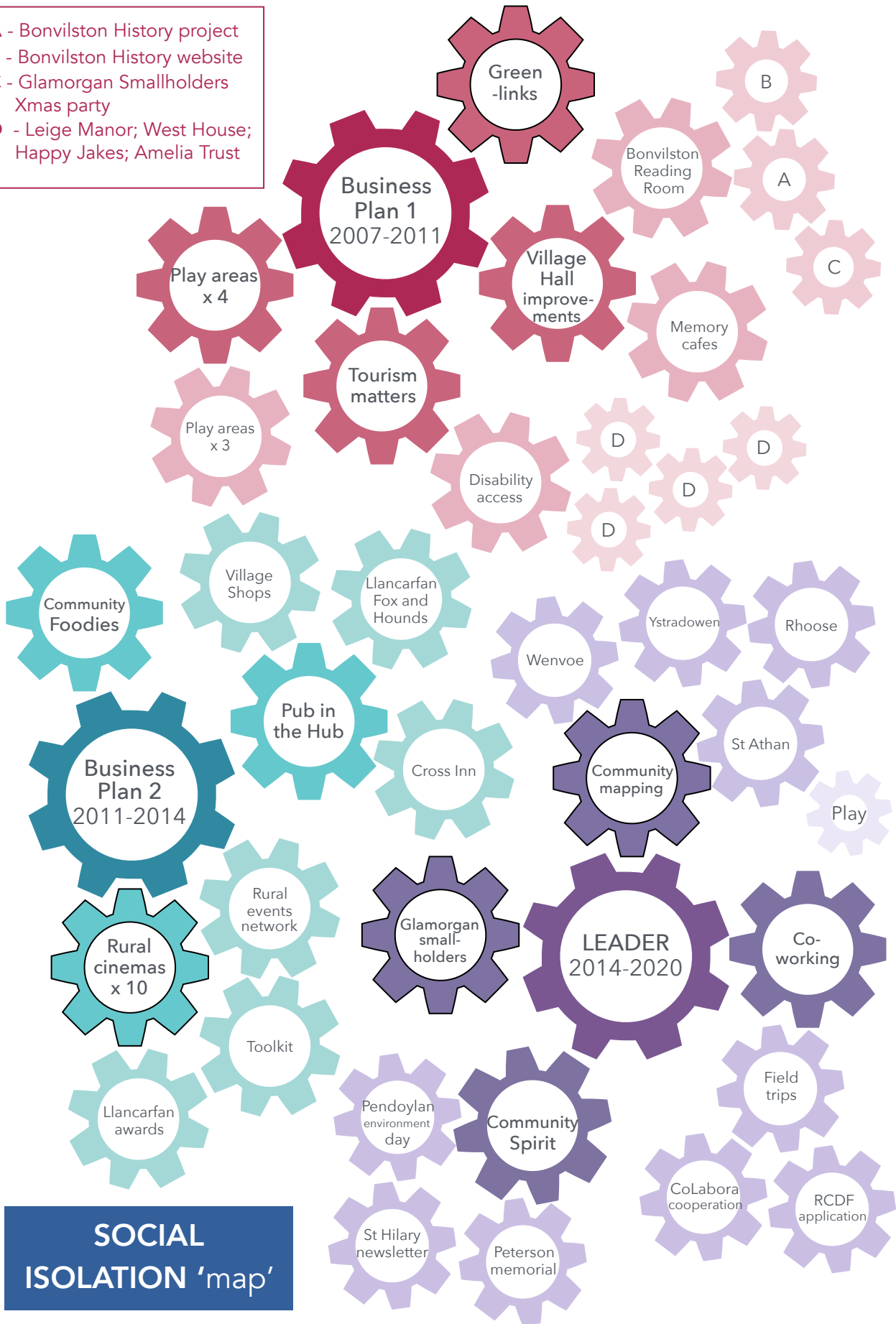
The outcomes

The network had a trade marquee at the Vale of Glamorgan Show where it won the award for best trade tent. Plans for the coming year's show is to have a tent where many smallholders will be able to exhibit. A representative from the network now sits on the committee for the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, and the Vale of Glamorgan has been chosen as the 'showcased' area in 2021. This could be an important step. It is also going to be represented at Welsh smallholders conference.

It has developed further plans – such as the idea of having its own caravan which could provide mobile accommodation and office for smallholders travelling to showcasing events – but this is funding dependent. The network feels that continued support in terms of going through grant application processes remains important and highly valued. It continues to develop plans for a specific smallholders brand, working with a marketing agency.

The network was very clear that the benefits provided in terms of the personal development of those individuals involved should not be overlooked. It is a key outcome of the project. The transformation of some individuals – often working alone and in rurally isolated environment – has been notable. Some individual's lives have been transformed through their involvement in the network.

- A** - Bonvilston History project
- B** - Bonvilston History website
- C** - Glamorgan Smallholders Xmas party
- D** - Leige Manor; West House; Happy Jakes; Amelia Trust



RURAL CINEMAS

In 2012, bringing the big screen to small venues was the aim of Creative Rural Communities' Vale Rural Cinema project. Following the success of Cowbridge Big Screen, CRC identified a demand for local film screenings across rural Vale, recognising that all not residents could travel to the cinemas in Bridgend, Barry or Cardiff, but also realising that this was an excellent tool for tackling social isolation, encourage local residents to attend a community event that they could attend alone to connect with other people.

Cowbridge Big Screen had already demonstrated that a number of local residents were visiting the monthly cinema, and that they had claimed that this was one of the few social outings they would make in the month, in part due to its affordability, accessibility and that they felt comfortable attending alone on occasions due to the nature of the activity. The community cinemas also adopted Big Screens approach to a mid film break, allowing the sale of icecreams, and a chance to chat and meet other cinema goers.

CRC launched a trial that involved training film-loving volunteers in the use of newly purchased mobile film screening equipment. Following the trial, several communities bid for their own set of equipment and were successful in receiving Axis 3 funding. All venues hold regular community screenings and Llancafarn Community Cinema even won Best New Film Society at the Cinema for All 2013 Film Society of the Year Awards.

Venues supported:

- Llancafarn Community Cinema
- Big Screen Cowbridge
- Peterston Super Ely Community Cinema
- The Murchfield Cinema – Dinas Powys
- Colwinston Community Cinema
- St Donats Arts Centre

In 2019, all of these cinemas are still going, and a number of new cinemas have set up as well, including Sully and St Athan, making use of the Rural Cinema Toolkit from 2012. A number of these have also recently engaged in the new rural Vale film Festival led by CRC, and have proposed to expand their offer of film viewing to animation workshops and themed events to develop their demographic interest in their cinemas.

FILM FESTIVAL 2019

Appetite for film viewing in the Vale has continued to grow, the rural cinemas, originally developed though CRC funding thrive expanding in numbers as well as outdoor cinema locations attracting crowds and bespoke cinematic experience selling out. Over the last 7 months Creative Rural Communities been working with an active group of stakeholders to bring a film festival to this rural community animating its unique venues with films, workshops, creative talks and immersive events. The aim of the festival is that it is not just limited to screenings, it helps in developing the night-time economy of the rural vale and offering commercial opportunities for historic venues.

The project initially approached the Vale Venues with regards to involvement in the festival offering the opportunity to engage with their immediate and local community as well as tourist in a unique way.

Dyffryn House, St Donat's Castle and Llancafarn Cinema have jumped at this opportunity to pilot new events that will engage their community whom may have otherwise not felt able to access theses venues cinema due to times or programming. In particular, St Donat's Castle will be opening their doors from 9am and showing back to back screenings of the Jurassic Park films and hosting free workshops on animation. Llancafarn cinema using a different space to host a screening, St Cadocs Church. The aim is to highlight this unique local space in the community and bring everyone in the village together regardless of age and demographic to celebrate this historic venue.

After these initial meetings the festival has approached a broad range of business owners and community spaces in the vale offering them the opportunity to engage with the festival. Both Corntown and St Hilary are piloting film & events hoping that it will add social and economic value to the local community 'creating a sense of place' and creating a feeling of 'spirit' with residents tackling and providing a remedy to rural isolation.

Moreover, Coed Hills are using the festival to commission a short film with the creative company, "Griot and The Peoples Voice". They will be following and filming The Big Issue Vendors that are in the Vale of Glamorgan and whom are a familiar presence in our communities. This part of the community run a businesses in our midst without us understanding whom they are and we hope this project will help integrate these valued business owners more deeply into our community.

Llansannor Primary School are commissioning an oral history project, which hopes to highlight the different voices the differing voices in a small community that has experienced change with regards to farming advancements and subsequent displacement of employment. With generations in this small community having such different voices and feeling isolating with regards to understanding one another's perspective we hope this project will allow deeper understanding of these differing views and bring a community closers in understanding each other.

GREENLINKS

Greenlinks Rural Community Transport Service is a project which has the objective of reducing social isolation at its very heart. A pilot scheme was developed in BP1, with further support provided in BP2 – capturing significant support though the rural development programmes. The pilot phase was important in terms of proving that there was sufficient demand for such a rural transport scheme. It is a membership scheme and it grew during this period. It directly addressed the theme of 'Access to and provision of services' in the Local Development Strategy.

It plays an important role in regularly connecting people to important services such as shops, health related visits and community events. It is used by people who may be without their own transport, suffer from health conditions etc. Therefore, it clearly helps connect people to the services which are required to lead a more complete and fulfilling life.

The importance of scheme was recognised by the Council who resolved to support to continue to support Greenlinks through use of S106 (Planning Agreement) funding and also extended the service into the Vale's urban areas – recognising that access to services isn't necessarily just a rural issue. The scheme is now coordinated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Therefore, it has been 'mainstreamed' in terms of service provision. It currently runs four accessible minibuses and two accessible cars.

ST ATHAN

St Athan is one of the most disadvantaged communities in the rural Vale. We include one case study of a supported project and the 'map' to illustrate how projects have helped address social exclusion in this community. There is some overlap between the Social Exclusion and St Athan 'maps'..

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Development of the project

Community Spirit is a village networking project where villages in the rural Vale can learn from each other's activities which help develop and promote community spirit. The project has provided funding to trial new events and activities.

Community Spirit grew out of an earlier LEADER project called Community Mapping, another project which sought to bring communities together by exploring new ways of delivering non-statutory services by mapping what already exists and establishing how gaps in provision might be filled. Community Spirit was therefore seen as a potential way for some of these gaps to be filled.

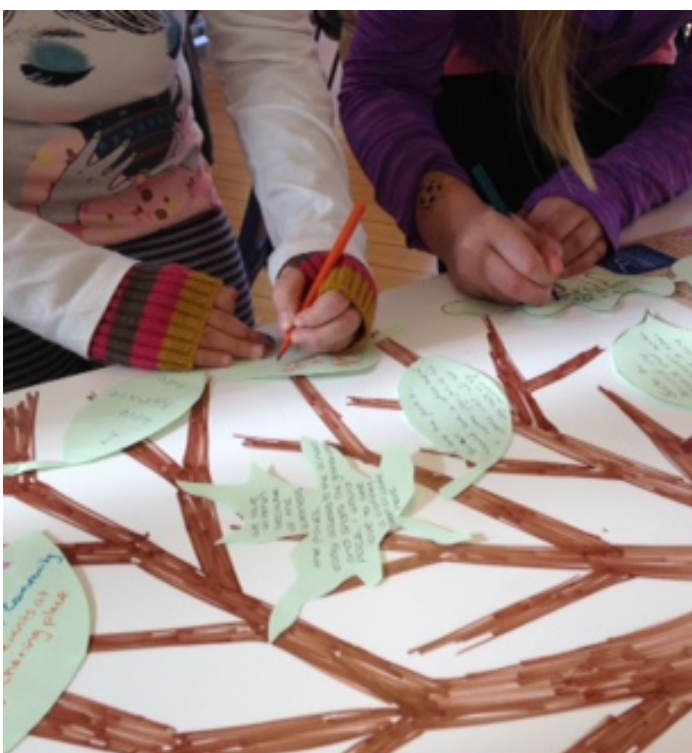
Delivery

The project was initiated by the LAG through the CRC team. An expression of interest for participation initially identified 20 interested communities. Four networking meetings were held with different presentations of ideas of things communities could do. From this four communities were supported with awards for new events/activities. They were all very different but each would bring something new to that community:

- an environment day in Pendoylan which made useful links into the school;
- a World War 1 event in Peterston, with the community choir established for the event still continuing;
- the Saints Group in St Athan who held a wellbeing and health day linked to the football club;
- St Hilary who started a community newsletter.

The Budget

Community Spirit has a budget of £32,188.

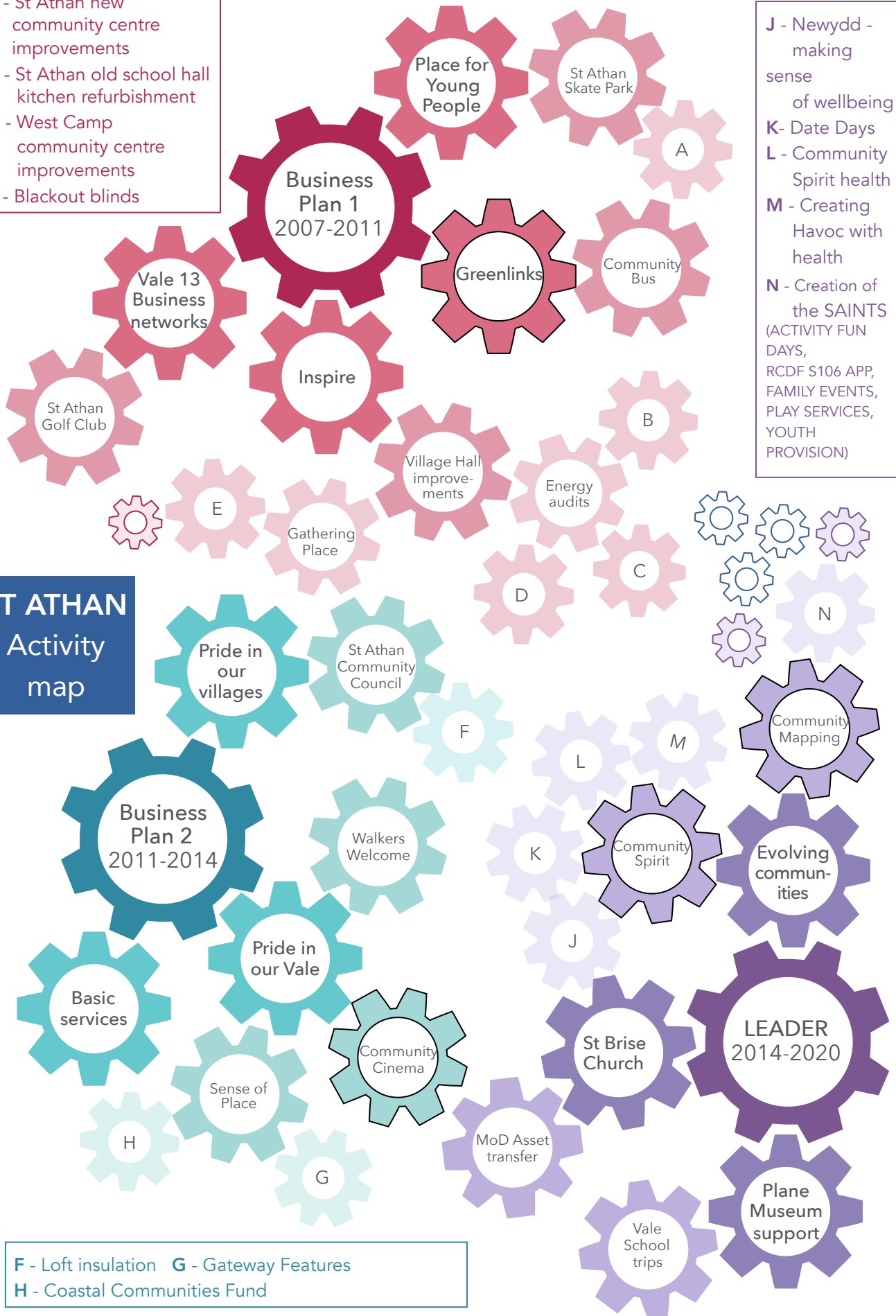


The outcomes

The direct outcomes have been the events/activities held in the communities who received an award. It has also achieved other outcomes e.g. in St Hilary it led to the formalisation of the community group with a constitution and a bank account. This has made it easier to apply for funding and the group has already secured a grant to bring a theatre group to the village. It could not have done this without being a constituted group. In St Athan, participation in the Community Mapping and this project has led to securing significant capital funding to upgrade the sports/play area in the local park and provide improved changing facilities. This has brought more young people into sports and enjoyment of the park and increased volunteers helping with events and activities. The need is now to secure ongoing sustainability for what has been initiated.

- A** - Vibe experience
- B** - St Athan new community centre improvements
- C** - St Athan old school hall kitchen refurbishment
- D** - West Camp community centre improvements
- E** - Blackout blinds

- J** - Newydd - making sense of wellbeing
- K** - Date Days
- L** - Community Spirit health
- M** - Creating Havoc with health
- N** - Creation of the SAINTS (ACTIVITY FUN DAYS, RCDF S106 APP, FAMILY EVENTS, PLAY SERVICES, YOUTH PROVISION)



ST ATHAN
Activity
map

- F** - Loft insulation
- G** - Gateway Features
- H** - Coastal Communities Fund

Conclusions – what the case studies illustrate

Through developing these case studies and, importantly, speaking with key individuals we have been able to better understand some of the key consistent issues. These are now discussed in turn:

- It is clear that there are extensive inter-linkages between supported projects/initiatives. Some of the case studies, such as the one focusing on improving social isolation or the place-based stories in Peterston Super Ely and St Athan demonstrate that it has been an iterative and evolving story. By having LEADER in place for over a decade (and importantly the CRC team too) there has been a consistency of support which has allowed support to have been 'layered', addressing the issues through small building blocks.
- Following on, there are few examples of where support from the programme has been truly 'transformative' in one step. In fact, most of the businesses/communities hadn't necessarily got the capacity to make big changes in one step. Therefore, LEADER's ability to provide small amounts of support at various times has corresponded with the need of the business/organisation or community to take the next step in their development and grow organically.
- In our view, there are some clear examples of where the original LEADER support has acted as the catalyst for subsequent delivery. Peterston Super Ely could be cited as an example in this context. That small initial support has kick-started community activity which has continued to develop over time.
- It is clear that CRC team's relationship with supported projects has been in place for many years. This relationship has not simply stopped when the LEADER support has been complete. The CRC team regularly check back with supported projects to see how things are progressing and what other help they may need. This is not necessarily financial but through softer support such as links to forthcoming showcasing events etc. The original intervention has rarely been the end of the interaction. The consistency of CRC, effectively acting as a 'hub' for the community in rural Vale, should not be underestimated. We doubt whether the impact of the LEADER programme would have been at the same level without the CRC team acting as a *consistent* resource.
- The case studies illustrate some real success stories where a business has continued to develop from that initial LEADER support. The Cowbridge Food Collective is a good illustration of a project which was previously supported by the programme and is delivering real benefits to the rural Vale business and farming community – it is having a 'ripple effect'. In many senses, it represents the essence of what the LEADER programme was set up to achieve.
- Some of the other stories are more mixed – some of the subsequent development is quite difficult to express in tangible terms and/or attribute to that original LEADER support. In evaluation terms, we feel it is appropriate to question how much of the subsequent development of a business can be attributed to that original LEADER support. This will vary on a project-by-project basis and cannot be quantified but is still an important factor to be recognised.
- We would say that the visibility of the LEADER programme is mixed – both within the previous and the current programmes (as argued in the mid-term evaluation). Most of those projects we spoke to associated the support they had received with the CRC team and not with the LEADER programme. This does raise an important question about how the programmes have been perceived – "what has LEADER ever done for us".
- Finally, we feel that there is good evidence of integration into mainstream support. In particular, the development and management of the 'Visit the Vale' brand has acted as the umbrella branding initiative under which several tourism-related initiatives are now channelled. This has been important in developing a more coordinated approach. Without that, there was a danger that several of the activities (and associated brands) would have developed in a piecemeal fashion which would have presented a confusing picture. In that sense, the close relationship that Vale of Glamorgan Council has had with the LEADER programmes has been beneficial. Our view is that the Council has acted as a strong advocate and supporter of the programme over the past decade, something which may sometimes be overlooked.

4. Legacy impact evidence

Online Survey

Approach:

As part of the evaluation activity that focused on better understanding the legacy impact of the support provided through the previous programmes, an online survey was developed. The survey was sent to project leads, or those individuals closely associated with supported activities. The online survey concentrated solely on those projects which had been supported through LEADER in BP1 and BP2, covering a period from 2007-2014 (not Axis 3 and 4 projects).

The aim of the online survey was to complement the deeper case study approach, which has been detailed previously. It aimed to obtain more feedback at a higher-level and for that to be semi-structured. Two versions of the survey were developed, recognising that projects had different aims:

- A survey that focused on those BP1 and BP2 themes which involved direct support to businesses (the 'business survey')
- A survey that focused on those BP1 and BP2 themes which involved support to community and heritage projects (the 'community and heritage' survey)

The link to the survey was sent out through the CRC team. The survey was 'live' during May 2019. Given the time that had elapsed since some of these projects had been supported i.e. 10 years, it was always likely that it would be difficult to get a comprehensive response. Despite several reminders being sent by the CRC team, the response levels were disappointing. In total, the 'business survey' received 23 responses, whilst the 'community and heritage' survey only received 3 responses. Certainly, not all of those who responded answered every question.

Given the relatively low number of responses, we feel it appropriate to aggregate responses between the two surveys. Where questions have differed we highlight responses from the two surveys, although given the very low number of response to the community and heritage survey there is limited value in that. We have not detailed the responses to all questions that were included in the survey, only highlighting those which are relevant to understanding the legacy impact of the support provided.

As always with survey responses, it is always important to be mindful of 'positive bias' in the responses. That is, those which are positively minded towards the support provided through the rural development programmes and/or the CRC team may have been more inclined to respond to the survey. As a consequence, the responses from the sample of businesses/organisations may not be completely representative of the views of all the projects that were supported through the previous programmes. This is a point about careful interpretation of the findings.

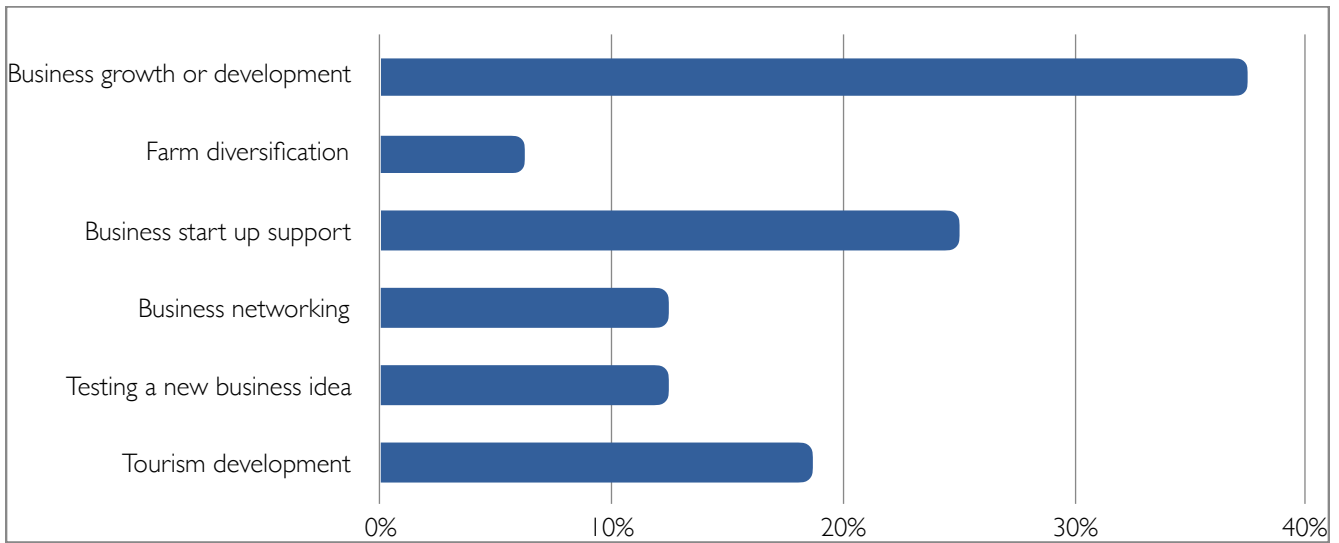
Survey results:

The businesses that responded to the survey were involved in a wide range of activities, as shown in Chart 1. The three projects that responded to the community and heritage survey were all related to 'making improvements to community facilities'. The majority were involved in one project only, 20 (on a combined basis across both surveys) had been involved in one project supported through the rural development support, whilst a further 5 had been involved in more than one project.

Of those who responded that they had been involved in more than one project, most felt that the project activities developed as the business required and the funding opportunities presented itself. Only one (of the 5) felt it was part of an overall strategy to develop their business, whilst another said they were developed in a more piecemeal fashion.

Chart 1

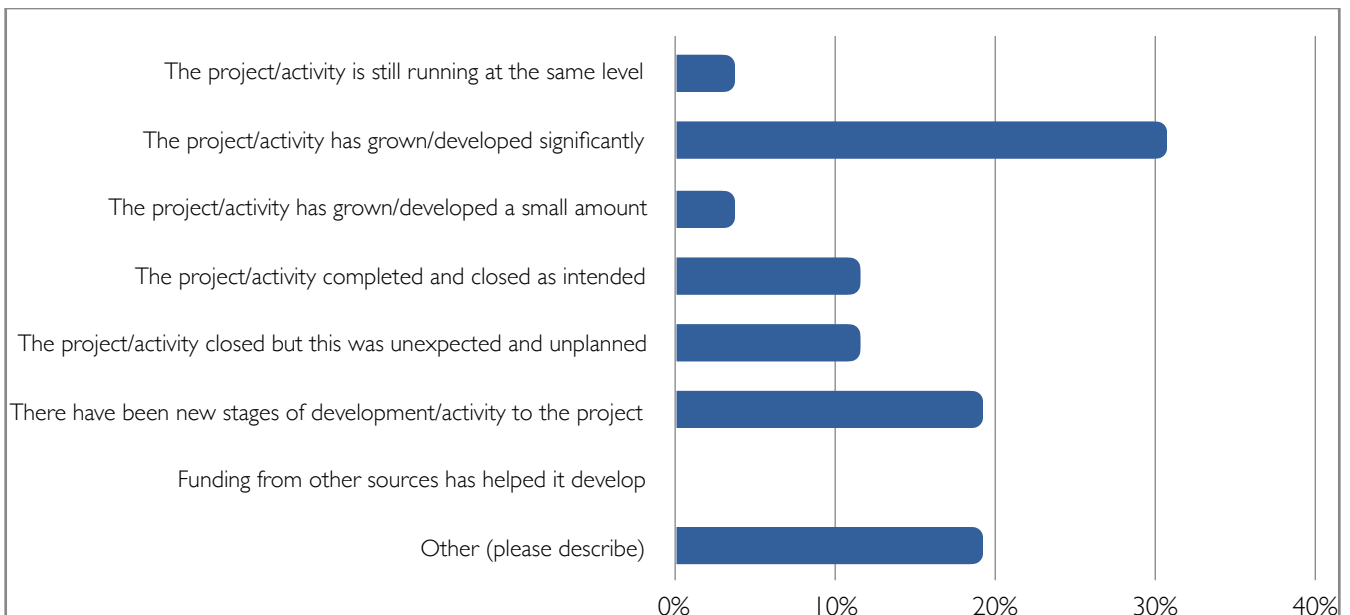
What type of business project(s) did you get involved in/receive funding (Tick all that apply) (n=16)



They were then asked whether the project that was originally supported through rural development support was still active. Survey respondents were only able to choose one of the options provided. As Chart 2 illustrates, around a third (31% - 8) felt that the project/activity had grown or developed *significantly* since it was funded, with a further fifth (20% - 5) stating that there had been new stages of development/activity since it was initially funded. Around a quarter fed back that the project/activity had closed since the initial funding, although half of these responses was because the project had completed as intended. Therefore, only 3 of the 26 projects we received responses from had finished unexpectedly. This is a positive finding, *indicating that the funded activities have had good longevity.*

Chart 2

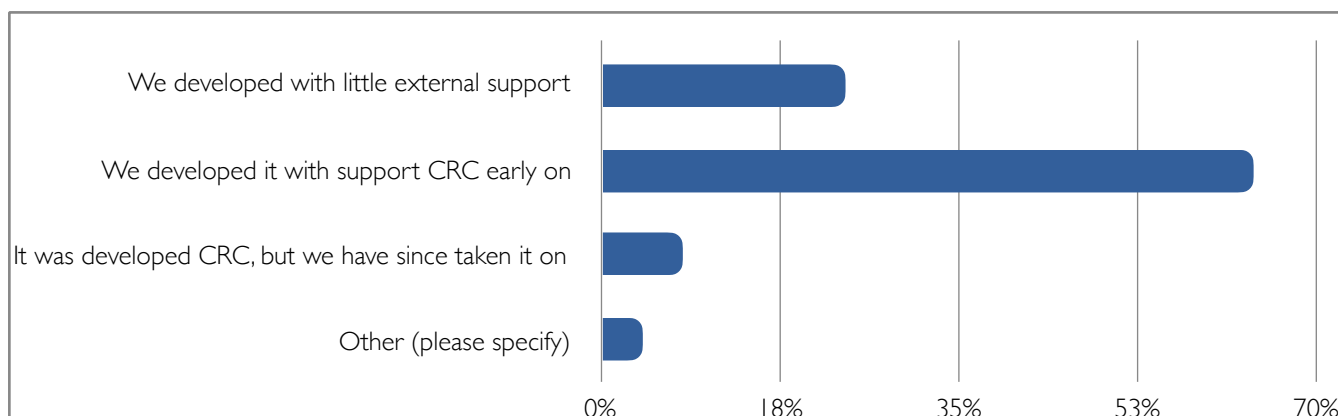
Is your project/funded business still active today? (n=26)



We were keen to understand the role that the CRC team played in developing the projects. Chart 3 shows that in our survey sample, the majority of projects had been led by the business/organisation but they had received support from the CRC team in the early stages. Around three-quarters (72% - 19) were developed with input from the CRC team, with the remainder being brought forward by the business/organisation itself.

Chart 3

How would you describe how the project was developed at the time? (n=25)

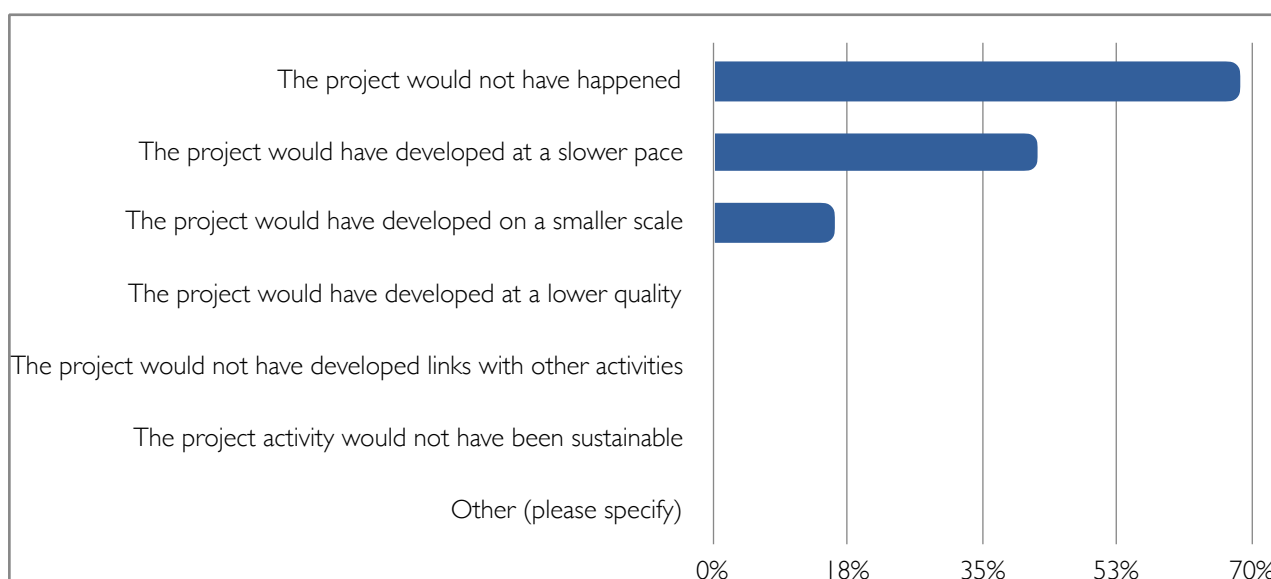


Those that had received support from CRC were then subsequently asked about how important that support had been. Of the 19 project leads that responded to the survey it was clear from the responses received that it played a highly important role. When asked 'how important was the support provided by the Creative Rural Communities team to the development of your project'¹⁰ *all of those who responded stated that it was 'very important'*. Clearly, this is a clear indication of the value that projects attached to the support they received from CRC in the previous programmes (and confirmed by the feedback we have received in relation to the current LEADER programme).

They were then asked about the implications for their project development if that CRC support hadn't been provided. Again, the feedback was very positive. Just under 70% indicated that the project would not have occurred at all, with the remainder indicating that it would either have happened at a slower pace or on a smaller scale. Again, this illustrates the integral role that the CRC team played in developing activities through the previous programme (confirmed by our findings in the mid-term evaluation). Projects were able to choose more than one options.

Chart 4

Using the options below, what would have happened in the absence of the support received from the Creative Rural Communities team? (n=19)



¹⁰ They were given the option of 'not at all important', 'not very important', 'quite important', 'very important'

Turning to understanding the impact of the rural development support, the survey asked whether the support had led to positive outcomes. The survey provided a range of options and projects were able to choose more than one option. Chart 5 illustrates that there was a wide range of benefits. The most popular benefits included greater organisational financial security/stability and allowing the business to develop new products and services. One-fifth felt the support had enabled them to promote the Vale as a destination (partly reflecting the type of businesses as shown in Chart 1). 28% (6) felt it had enabled the business to increase turnover – mostly moderately since the support had been provided. More negatively, a quarter (24% - 5) of those who responded felt it had generated no longer-term impact.

Chart 5

What has been the impact over the longer-term for your business/organisation of receiving rural development support? (Tick all that apply) (n=21)



One of the questions asked in the evaluation brief was to understand the employment impact of the supported projects. What scale of job creation did the programme indirectly support? *The evidence from the survey sample suggests that employment impact has been relatively minimal.* Only one business that responded indicated that they had been able to create/support more jobs after receiving rural development support, although this business had created 3-5 FTE positions. As perhaps would be expected, none of the community and heritage projects had supported any new jobs. One community and heritage project did state that it now benefited from more volunteer time as a consequence of the rural development support (broadly estimated at between 5-9 hours per week).

We are also keen to understand wider benefits or outcomes that had been associated by the programme support, beyond simply being expressed in commercial terms. The responses are illustrated in Chart 6 and provide encouraging feedback. Again, respondents were able to choose more than one option. Chart 6 only

shows those responses from the business survey, given the options in this question were specific in this instance. 70% (11) of projects which responded to this question felt that the support had directly led to a greater sense of community 'togetherness', with the business acting as a focal point for their community. Equally, 44% (7) also felt that it had led to a reduction in social isolation through the services they provide. This is important in the context of the rural focus of the programmes and the focus on reducing social isolation which has run through the various iterations of the programme.

Chart 6

Do you feel that the project has led to wider important benefits? Using the list below are you able to identify these wider outcomes? (Tick all that apply) (n=16)



In response to the same broad question, although with differing options, the small number of community and heritage projects felt that the project had allowed individuals to improve and develop their own personal skills e.g. confidence and created a greater sense of community 'togetherness'. Therefore, broadly corresponding to the feedback received in the business survey where community cohesion is seen as one of the main positive outcomes.

Chart 7 illustrates that there is a broad 50/50 split between those projects which are continuing to develop the original funded project activity, and those where the development has stopped – either because the business/organisation has developed in other directions or that the original activity is no longer relevant. In one respect, this feedback slightly counters that shown in Chart 2 and suggests that longevity of the original activity may not be as strong as previously indicated. However, it is worth bearing in mind that some of these projects may have been supported up to 10 years ahead and therefore circumstances/markets will have obviously changed over time. Businesses/organisations need to be flexible to respond to the changing environment and this feedback is not surprising in that context.

Again, referring back to a previous answer (Chart 5), the importance of the rural development support seems to be connected more to improving financial sustainability which acts as a base for the business to subsequently develop.

A key question in the survey – which was further elaborated on in our consultations with project leads – was to understand how important the original rural development support had been. Had it acted as a catalyst for the longer-term impact as described above. *The responses to this question were highly encouraging and suggests that the previous rural development programmes do have a significant legacy.* 82% (18) of projects who responded to this question said that the original support had been either 'very important' or 'quite important' to achieving the benefits which the activities had delivered. Around one-fifth felt that the support had 'not been very important' or 'not at all important'. Clearly, for some projects the rural development support is not viewed as crucial to the subsequent impact of the project activity.

Chart 7

Do you have plans to continue developing the activity associated with the original project supported through rural development? Please tick one that best describes situation (n=19)

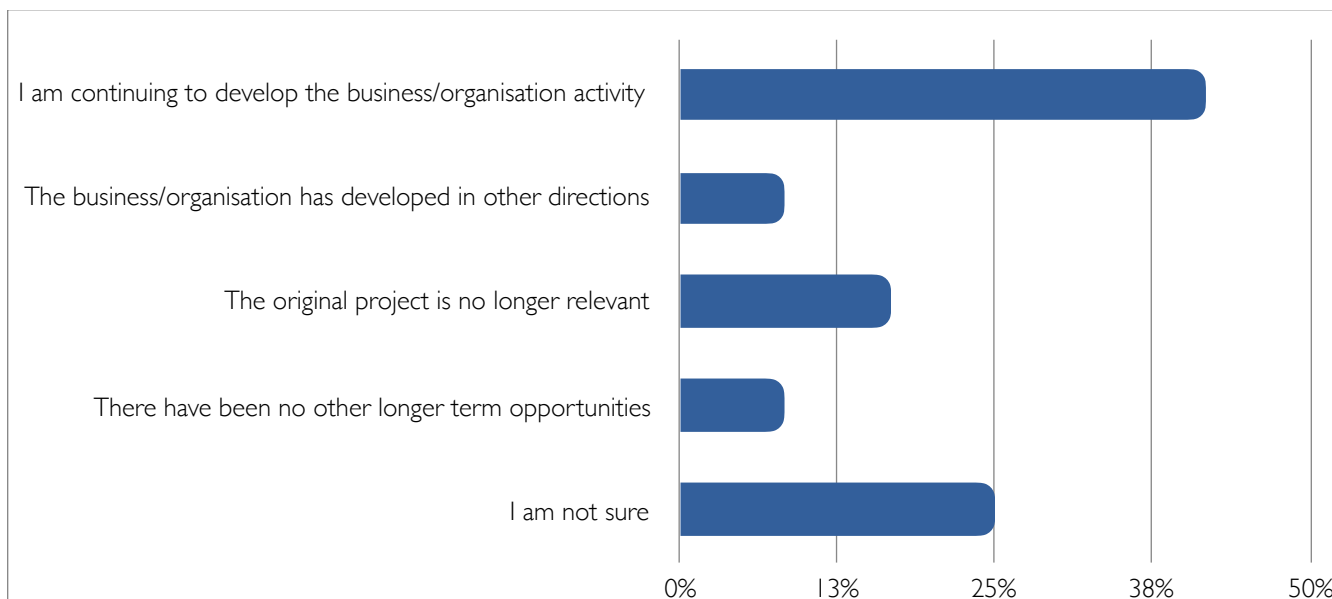
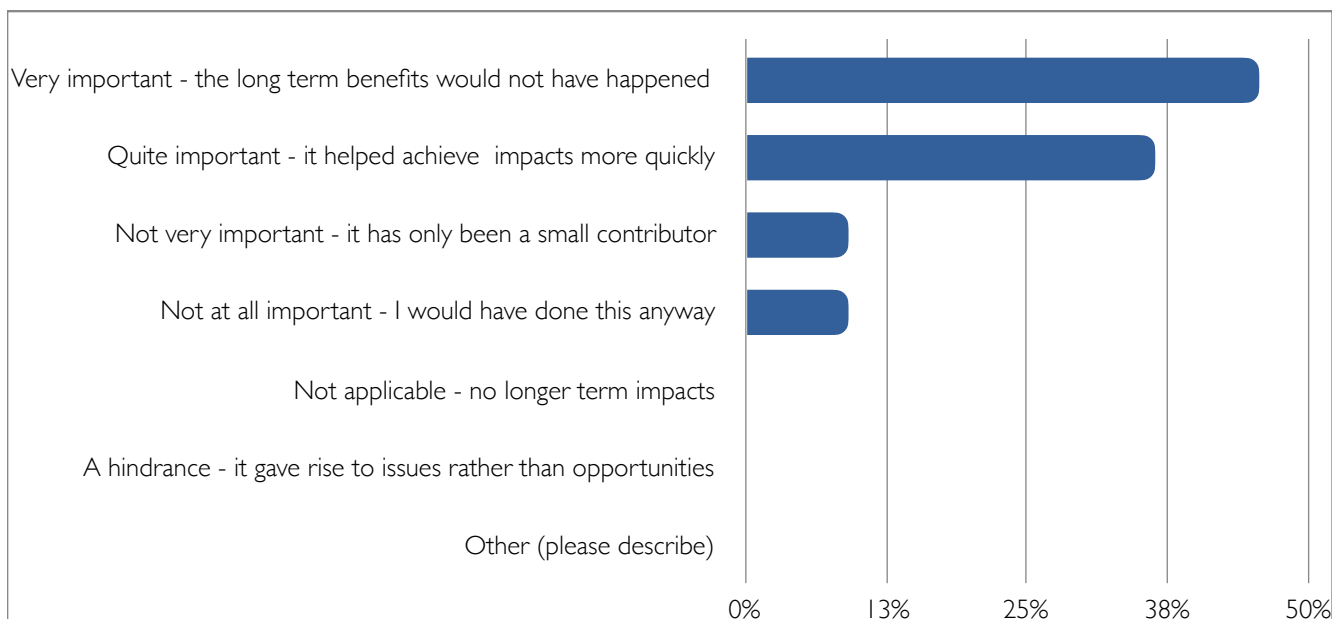


Chart 8

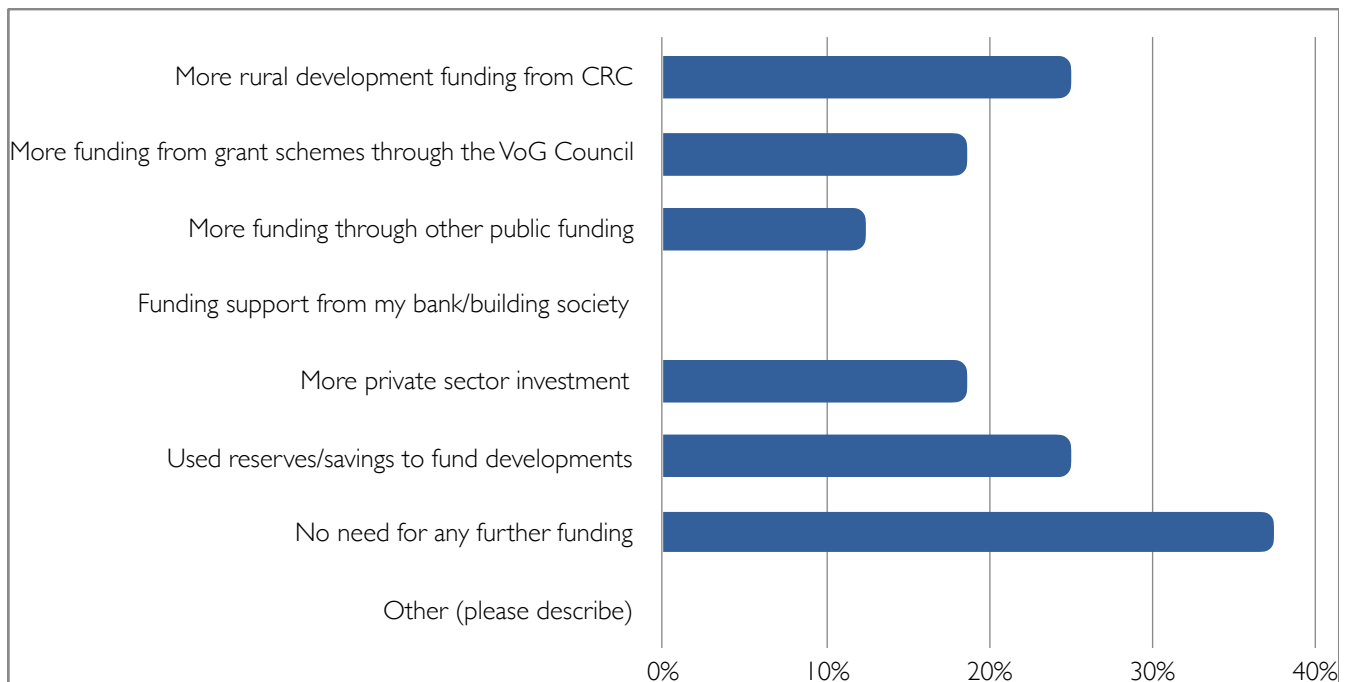
How important was the original rural development support that you received in being the catalyst to help you achieve the longer term impacts you have previously described? (please tick one) (n=22)



Finally, we were also interested to understand whether the original rural development support had helped unlock further funding/investment in supported organisations. One-quarter (4) of those who responded to the question had subsequently received funding support from CRC (presumably through subsequent LEADER programmes). Only 2 organisations had accessed funding support through national programmes. Therefore, the feedback indicates that beyond locally oriented funding programmes the projects did not leverage in significant amounts of funding from elsewhere. Interestingly, though a small number of supported businesses had subsequently obtained further private investment e.g. debt/equity/crowdfunding. This was an encouraging finding, even if based on a small number of businesses.

Chart 9

Have you gone on to obtain funding or investment from other sources, building on the opportunities from the rural development support you received? (Tick all that apply) (n=16)



Conclusions – online survey

The online survey results provide another useful source to understand and demonstrate the long term legacy of the previous programmes. Whilst response rates was disappointing, this is not surprising as projects were supported many years ago. The conclusions drawn from the 25 responses received are as follows:

- Of those who responded, the majority were still active, with very few instances of activities finishing on an unplanned basis. However, many of the funded activities have subsequently altered, flexing to meet changing context and requirements from the supported businesses.
- The support provided by the CRC team (for those projects which were received that support) was universally viewed as very important in the development of the activities.
- Respondents claimed that without the support provided by CRC, it is likely that projects would not have happened at all or occurred at a slower pace or lower quality. This conforms to the feedback found in the previous programme evaluations (and within the mid-term evaluation of the current evaluation).
- The main benefits to the supported organisations appear to focus on improving their financial robustness and sustainability, allowing them to develop new products/services and diversity their activities. There is more mixed evidence in terms of the impact from a commercial revenue perspective.
- The survey found little evidence that the programmes have had a significant impact on employment within the supported businesses, or at least attributed to the rural development support received.
- However, the projects have supported a wider set of benefits that should not be overlooked and linked to the objectives of the funding programmes. Not least, helping to facilitate a better sense of community and reducing social isolation in rural communities.
- Finally, the survey found limited evidence that funding from wider national programmes had been accessed to a wide extent. However, projects had accessed more local funding opportunities (not least from subsequent LEADER programmes), or been able to leverage in private investment.

5 Conclusions – legacy impact

Our conclusions come back to the questions posed in our brief and we discuss each of these in turn.

5.1 Ongoing positive impacts on projects, villages and sectors that have received RDP support since 2007

We feel that the case studies included in this report illustrate that the initial support provided through the previous LEADER programmes have continued to have a positive benefit on the communities within the rural Vale. Importantly, this initial support – often small-scale financial assistance – has been supplemented by the ongoing relationship that the projects have maintained with the CRC team. It is this combination of ‘hard’ (in the form of financial assistance) and ‘soft’ (in the form of ongoing CRC support) support which has provided the conditions in which individuals and communities have developed over time.

The case studies – and associated interviews – have demonstrated that positive impacts tend to develop iteratively over time, and certainly not in a linear fashion. On some occasions, businesses and organisations have encountered problems which has meant a change of direction. This is where the CRC support has often proved invaluable. They have been on hand to help the business/organisation to take advantage of the new opportunities which may have been provided through the different programme periods. In many senses, this explains why some projects or individuals have been supported through each of the programme periods.

Another point to highlight is that the rural Vale is a relatively affluent area – deprivation and poverty is not as noticeable as in some other LEADER areas. One outcome of that is that it has often been harder to notice the impact that the LEADER programme has had. It is difficult to pinpoint a specific intervention which can be used as an example to illustrate that socioeconomic conditions have changed as a result of LEADER support. Rather, the benefits have tended to be built in small iterative steps – almost ‘layering’ support from the various programme periods to achieve objectives. The case studies from St Athan and the wider social inclusion themed case study illustrate how several LEADER supported projects have combined over time to help address longstanding issues. Many of these issues remain, but in a small way the LEADER programme has contributed to making things better.

Similarly, the various tourism initiatives – such as Vale Trails, Glamorgan Heritage Coast and Explore and More – are all combining over time to help shift perceptions of the Vale as a destination in its own right. Feedback from Explore and More’ felt that several local businesses had benefited from the increase in volume of people visiting heritage assets in the Vale, although this is difficult to evidence. Many of the stakeholders/partners we interviewed felt that the image of the area had changed over the course of the LEADER programme and that it played an important part. It is impossible to attribute this change to any one project, rather it has been a combination of funded activities – again, working iteratively.

5.2 The “ripple effect” of funding from LEADER leading on to further developments at the individual project level, with networks, partnerships and other groups, at community level or at the wider rural VoG level

It is clear from the case studies – and principally from the interviews we have undertaken – that LEADER support has often played an important role at the outset of a journey. The small amounts of financial support provided at an early stage of development for businesses has often been crucial. In many respects, that support helped boost the confidence of the business – from which it has grown in its own terms. Tomos & Lilford brewery, Loving Welsh Food, the Food Collective and Out to Learn Willow act as good examples in this respect. For projects such as the Food Collective and Out to Learn Willow, it is clear that the benefits have also ‘rippled out’ to other organisations and businesses. For the Food Collective, local suppliers are benefiting from having a dedicated resource/portal through which they can connect to local customers. This is a similar aim to which the Schools Catering project in the current programme is aiming towards. There are secondary impacts which are extending beyond the benefit felt by the initial beneficiary of programme support. The Schools Catering project has the potential to have a significant positive impact in the Vale by creating new routes to market for local suppliers. While there are several hurdles to cross before local suppliers are fully embedded in school catering supply, there are already emerging examples of positive impact.

5.3 How LEADER delivery has worked in tandem with other RDP funds such as Axis 3 and RCDF, alongside organisations such as Farmers Union Wales and Farming Connect

The feedback that we received during the course of this evaluation – principally covering the mid-term evaluation – is that partners and stakeholders felt that the Vale had lost an important support tool with the loss of Axis 3 and replacement (although not direct) by RCDF. Crucially, moving from a locally influenced capital programme to one which is centrally administered by Welsh Government was seen as detrimental. The fact that the RCDF is also seen as a slow and cumbersome programme further accentuates that view.

Therefore, the view from stakeholders – including LAG members – was that the previous programme worked much better in tandem with other RDPW funding. This was also positively drawn out in the previous programme level evaluation.

Whilst the CRC team works with projects to draw up applications to the RCDF, a review of the applications submitted, and approvals received (noting that some have been rejected) show that many of these come from the Vale of Glamorgan Council as the applicant. It may be that only larger organisations, such as the Council, have the necessary time and expertise to work up applications. Axis 3 was seen a more 'local' programme, and in some respects was viewed with less suspicion.

Having stated that, based on the evidence reviewed as part of this legacy work, we have not found widespread occurrences of projects going onto other larger funding programmes. As shown in Chart 9, very few of the organisations that responded to the online survey had progressed onto accessing other national programmes. The case studies also illustrate that local small-scale funding and support was often more important than large-scale national programme support.

5.4 Variation in how different approaches to LEADER methodology/eligibility criteria has impacted on their expected outcomes such as job creation

One of the questions defined in the brief was to understand whether the previous programmes had a more discernible positive impact on job creation. Based on the evidence we have collated for this evaluation our view is that it is too difficult to tell. Whilst the programme evaluation of BP2 cited examples of projects where there had been positive job outcomes, the most notable route had been through Pride in our Farming Families which is not LEADER funding directly¹¹. Our work in this evaluation has not been able to corroborate this job creation or identify any other.

The businesses that we illustrate as case studies have not had a highly significant employment impact. They tend to still be small businesses employing small numbers of people. This was reinforced by the findings in our online survey. The responses of circa 30 projects suggested that the employment impact in those organisations had been minimal. Case studies also indicated the importance of Visit the Vale in helping to mainstream some tourism activity; and for one project it was a springboard into other projects. In such cases there will be further funding coming but indirectly and as follow on.

Whilst every job is important (particularly remembering that during this period the UK and local Vale economy has largely been at full employment), it tends to suggest a relatively weak impact at an aggregate level.

Whilst the narrowing of eligibility within the current programme will limit the scope for job creation (specifically the inability to support business), evidence from the previous programmes does not suggest that this is substantial.

However, it is our view that the LEADER programme should be considered on a much wider basis, it has delivered a whole range of benefits beyond simply commercial benefit which have been highly important. Not least, the feedback we have received suggests a strong impact in terms of greater community togetherness and a reduction in social isolation for many individuals and communities.

¹¹ This accessed rural development funding through Axis 3

How changing regulations may have affected the delivery of LEADER through the rural Vale

In addition to the evaluation questions in the brief that we have responded to above, we are also aware of concerns about the way in which delivery of rural support in the current programme differs from the earlier programmes and may therefore have been detrimental to achieving rural development impacts.

Our interviews and analysis shows that the removal of the State Aid cover by the Welsh Government, and consequently the inability to provide any grant support to individual businesses in the current LEADER programme, has had mixed effects.

Several people, including past and existing LAG members, commented on the fact that they felt less engaged and perhaps less relevant than previously. The ability to make decisions locally that could produce tangible results relatively quickly had been lost.

Another impact has been that local businesses are less directly involved than previously and the lack of small, locally administered, grants using RDPW funding is felt to have reduced opportunities for new and scale up business ideas. It is acknowledged that it has remained possible to bid for RPDW support through the RCDF, but this has been more bureaucratic, based on national criteria and managed nationally. It is also not a business related grant opportunity.

A number of people made the point that even very small amounts of local catalyst funding could provide the means for businesses and local projects to step up in scale or to bring forward a new product or service.

However, the new regulations have inspired the CRC team to work in a different way with communities and businesses across the rural Vale. They have lived up to their name and been highly creative in designing and managing projects which have the potential to make a difference to the area. Some of these will support businesses albeit in a more indirectly way than previously – nevertheless business impact should increase. It is likely that some projects will take longer to mature than before - but they have established solid foundations for future development.