

Primary Appraisal

Completed by the LEADER Coordinator

Project Name	
Project Reference Number	
Date	
LEADER Funding required	

Basic Information	Yes	No	Comments
Question 1			
Are the details of the organisation and lead applicants name given?			
Question 2			
Have details been given about the status of the organisation?			
Question 3			
Have project partners and roles been identified?			
Question 4			
Is the project within the geographical LEADER boundary?			
Question 5			
Does the project identify which Programme Objective it will meet?			
Question 6			
Is it clear what the project is going to do?			
Question 7			
Is there clear evidence of need?			
Question 8			
Is it clear what the project will achieve?			
Is it clear how success will be measured?			
Question 9			
Are the project outputs and results regarding the RDPE Measures realistic and cost effective?			
Question 10			
Are the project timescales and milestones realistic and achievable?			
Question 11			

Has the Sustainability Appraisal form been completed and are the answers satisfactory?			
Question 12			
Is it clear what will happen to the project once LEADER funding has ceased?			
Question 13			
Are the project costs realistic?			
Are the outputs being offered economic / does the project offer value for money?			
Question 14			
Has match funding been identified?			
Has it been secured?			
Question 15			
Are the project delivery arrangements realistic and appropriate?			
Question 16			
Have all necessary permissions been granted?			
Question 17			
Has the Risk analysis table been completed?			
Question 18			
Has the applicant organisation received any other public sector funding in the last three years?			
Question 19			
Has consideration been given to how the project will be publicised?			
Question 20			
Has all relevant supporting information been submitted?			
Question 21			
Has the applicant ticked the box confirming that they agree to the equal			

opportunity statements			
Question 22			
Has the application form been signed and dated?			

Recommend for secondary Appraisal?	Yes	No
LEADER Coordinator Signature		
Date		

SHROPSHIRE HILLS LEADER APPRAISAL PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose and Remit

1.1. The Panel will be a sub-group of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is formally the LEADER Action Group as well as the body formed by the local authorities to fulfil their legal duty to co-ordinate management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The primary role of the Panel will be to appraise projects that apply for a LEADER grant.

2. In particular the LEADER Appraisal Panel will:

- 2.1. Verify that each project proposal:
 - contributes to meeting the programmes' objectives and outcomes
 - clearly requires LEADER funding for the project to proceed
 - represents good value for money, including additionality
 - sets out appropriate management arrangements which will deliver results and monitor progress
 - has financial analysis on an activity basis which is consistent with the scale of outputs proposed
 - takes into account sound evidence of effective practice and establishes the plausibility of the proposed activity
 - uses comparative data (wherever relevant) to substantiate project planning assumptions
 - establishes credible and necessary links with other activities and its wider area of benefit.
- 2.2. Ensure that the appraisal is carried out in accordance with the requirements of AWM guidance and any changes that may arise.
- 2.3. Challenge proposals and seek additional details (not to just accept representations by applicants at their face value).
- 2.4. Press for analysis of information in such a way that it aids judgement about the quality and risks of the project proposition.
- 2.5. Make any of the following recommendations :
 - the project be recommended for approval
 - further information/clarification is required before recommending for approval/rejection
 - the submission be recommended for rejection
 - Conditions for funding.

3. Membership

- 3.1. The Appraisal Panel will consist of representatives from the Shropshire Hills LAG and where appropriate from individuals with a specialist knowledge or expertise that relates directly to the application. A pool of Appraisers will be developed and selected to appraise projects in accordance with their knowledge, skills and expertise. A representative of the accountable body, Shropshire Council, will be a member of the Panel.
- 3.2. The Panel can invite other persons to its meetings as observers, consultants or advisors. Such co-opted expertise may be arranged when needed.
- 3.3. The Panel may require project owners/developers to attend the meeting at which their submission is being considered to give a short presentation and answer queries raised by members.
- 3.4. The membership of the Panel will be reviewed every two years or as determined by the Shropshire Hills LAG. Members are requested to give two months notice if possible if they wish to stand down from the Panel.

4. Operation

- 4.1. The Panel will meet as necessary to appraise grant applications, and meet jointly with the Approvals Panel for steering purposes. Meetings are expected to take place on a quarterly basis.
- 4.2. The Shropshire Hills LEADER Coordinator will facilitate and call all meetings of the Panel.
- 4.3. A minimum of 5 trained appraisers drawn from the pool of appraisers and co-opted representative(s) from specialist areas of work, where necessary will appraise each project.
- 4.4. The Shropshire Hills AONB Team will provide administrative support. Agendas and any papers will be circulated by the Shropshire Hills AONB Team at least two weeks before meetings.
- 4.5. Members with an interest in a particular project should declare this at the meeting. If a member of the Panel may benefit themselves in any way from the award of a grant, they may provide information and advice but may not participate in the appraisal on that application.
- 4.6. The Shropshire Hills LEADER Coordinator shall complete the Appraisal Panel record for each project proposal considered. This will record recommendations arising from the meetings. The LEADER Coordinator will liaise with the projects to resolve the queries and submit a response which will be circulated to the Appraisal Panel.
- 4.7. Appraised projects with recommendations will then be presented to the Approval group.

5. Fulfilling of functions

- 5.1 The Panel will undertake its business with regard to the purposes of the:
 - Shropshire Hills LAG
 - the Shropshire Hills Local Development Strategy
 - Shropshire Hills Appraisal Criteria
 - guidance and grant conditions issued by the Advantage Wets Midlands.
- 5.2 Members of the Panel unable to attend the meeting may contribute their views by sending in their appraisal forms which will be taken into account at the meeting.
- 5.3 The Panel will be governed by and report to the Shropshire Hills LAG.
- 5.4 Updates on activity of the Panel will be given periodically to the AONB Partnership as the LEADER Action Group.

SHROPSHIRE HILLS LEADER PROGRAMME

APPRAISAL CRITERIA

The Shropshire Hills LEADER Appraisal Panel is responsible for appraising applicants against core criteria and against local criteria. The core criterion reflects the provision of the West Midlands Regional Implementation Plan; Local Criterion reflects the Shropshire Hills LEADER Local Development Strategy.

When appraising LEADER applications the Appraiser will use the following criterion that asks a specific set of questions which will be answered from the information provided in the application form and any supporting information. Project applicants, where requested, will attend the Appraisal Panel meeting to provide a brief overview of their project and to answer any outstanding questions that the Panel wish to raise.

Criteria for Appraisal

Technical criteria:

- consistency of proposed actions with eligible scope.
- whether all necessary permissions and consents have been obtained.
- whether the applicant has capacity to deliver the project.
- whether the need for grant aid is clearly demonstrated.
- whether the proposed actions are State Aid compliant.

Quality criteria:

- does the project demonstrate an understanding of the issues regarding Quality of Life and Wellbeing and are these factors promoted through the project activity
- the extent to which the project targets LEADER priority groups.
- the extent to which the project contributes to key local and regional policy themes and integrates or complements activities covered by other relevant initiatives.
- the extent to which the project responds to identified need and is supported by evidence of prospective demand.
- the degree of innovation & creativity within the project
- does the proposal comply with the Sustainability criteria
- inclusion of target groups – is the project inclusive
- does the project create an opportunity to network and develop partnerships
- does the project provide an opportunity for volunteers
- does the project improve the capacity of the targeted beneficiaries and or communities

Local Criteria as set out in the LDS:

- connection to the landscape – does the project understand and promote the integration of its activities to the natural and historical landscape
- use of ICT
- does the project involve farming and / or forestry
- has the project considered a green alternative to the transport element of the project

The Appraisal Panel will then consider the application with regards to the following questions:

Project Applicant			
Project Name		Reference Number	

Basic Information	Yes	No	Comments
Question 1			
Have project partners and roles been identified?			
Question 2			
Does the project identify which Programme Objective it will meet?			
Question 3			
Is it clear what the project is going to do?			
Question 4			
Is there clear evidence of need?			
Question 5			
Is it clear what the project will achieve?			
Is it clear how success will be measured?			
Question 6			
Are the project outputs and results regarding the RDPE Measures realistic and cost effective?			
Question 7			
Are the project timescales and milestones realistic and achievable?			
Question 8			
Has the Sustainability Appraisal form been completed and are the answers satisfactory?			
Question 9			
Is it clear what will happen to the project once LEADER funding has ceased?			
Question 10			
Are the project costs realistic?			
Are the outputs being offered economic / does the project offer value for money?			
Question 11			
Has match funding been			

identified?			
Has it been secured?			
Question 12			
Are the project delivery arrangements realistic and appropriate?			
Question 13			
Have all necessary permissions been granted?			
Question 14			
Has consideration been given to how the project will be publicised?			

Recommend for Consideration by Approvals Panel	Yes	No
Chairperson of Appraisal Panel Signature		
Date		

SHROPSHIRE HILLS LEADER APPROVALS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose and Remit

4.2. The Panel will be a sub-group of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is formally the LEADER Action Group as well as the body formed by the local authorities to fulfil their legal duty to co-ordinate management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The primary role of the Panel will be to make decisions on the allocation of LEADER grants.

2. In particular the Panel will:

- 2.6. Approve, reject and advise on applications for funding submitted in accordance with an approved process in an open and transparent manner.
- 2.7. Play a steering role to guide the operation of LEADER in the Shropshire Hills, and the development of working procedures.
- 2.8. Champion the LEADER programme, its aims and objectives, and encourage good partnership working between public, community and voluntary organisations/groups to ensure co-ordination/ collaboration of efforts within the programme area.
- 2.9. Act as advocate for LEADER in the Shropshire Hills and ensure integration of the purposes of the AONB and LEADER objectives where possible.
- 2.10. Ensure integration with other funding streams managed by the AONB and other organisations.
- 2.11. Be part of a network of LEADER Local Action Groups to share best practice and help contribute to the delivery of the LEADER approach within the Rural Development Programme for England.

5. Membership

- 3.5. The membership of the Panel will be determined from an application process overseen by the AONB Partnership as the LEADER Action Group.
- 3.6. The Panel will have 8 members comprising:
 - a representative of Advantage West Midlands
 - three other public sector representatives
 - four non-public sector representatives appropriate to the social and community priorities of LEADER
- 3.7. The membership of the Panel will be reviewed every two years or as determined by the AONB Partnership or Management Board. Members are requested to give two months notice if possible if they wish to stand down from the Panel.

6. Operation

- a. The Panel will meet as necessary to determine grant applications, and meet jointly with the Appraisal Panel for steering purposes. Around six meetings per year are expected.
- b. A Chair will be elected annually or as necessary by the Panel.
- c. The Shropshire Hills AONB Team will provide administrative support. In the event of dispute, guidance from the AONB Partnership or its Chair may be sought. Agendas and any papers will be circulated by the Shropshire Hills AONB Team at least a week before meetings.
- d. Updates on activity of the Panel will be given periodically to the AONB Partnership as the LEADER Action Group. Minutes of the Panel will be made available on the Shropshire Hills AONB website.

Shropshire Hills LEADER Local Action Group

Declaration of Interest Protocol

Conflicts of interest can and do arise amongst members of partnership organisations. This is particularly true of Local Action Group (LAG) members and Appraisers who are involved directly in the delivery of a programme and where they are often chosen because of their interests within the community.

Where a possible conflict of interest may occur the guiding principle should be to:

“declare an interest when involved with programme business and act at all times in good faith, in the best interests and for the benefit of the Shropshire Hills LEADER area”.

What types of interest should you declare?

A **Personal Interest** in a matter is one which can be reasonably be regarded as affecting the individual, family or friend more than other people in the area. A member may have a personal interest if it affects either:

- themselves
- their partner, relative or friend
- their employer, or the employer of their partner, relatives or friends
- any corporate body in which they, their partner, relatives or friends hold shares with
- any firm in which they, their relatives or friends are partners
- a member must also declare if discussion concerns an organisation in which they, relatives or friends hold a position of control or management.

If a member holds a personal interest, then they can still participate in the discussion and vote.

A **Financial Interest** in a matter is one which can be reasonably be regarded as affecting the individual, family or friend more than other people in the area financially. A member may have a financial interest if they could reasonably be anticipated to gain or lose financially as a result of a decision taken. In addition to themselves, this also includes the following where financially involved:

- their partner, relative or friend
- their employer, or the employer of their partner, relatives or friends
- any corporate body in which they, their partner, relatives or friends hold shares with
- any firm in which they, their relatives or friends are partners
- a member must also declare if discussion concerns an organisation in which they, relatives or friends hold a position of control or management.

If a member holds an indirect or negligible financial interest, then they can still participate in the discussion and vote. If a member holds a direct financial interest, then it should be considered prejudicial and therefore the summary below applies.

A **Prejudicial Interest** is where a member's personal or financial interest in the issue being discussed is determined as being so great by others that it is likely to prejudice that members judgement. If someone were to believe that an interest would be prejudicial, then that member must leave the meeting. A member must leave the room entirely and not seek to influence any decisions made.

A member must use their personal judgement when deciding if they have a prejudicial interest and where there is doubt, ask for advice.

Approval Panel Members

- ***A member of the Approval Panel shall not vote in respect of any project /contract, proposed project /contract, transaction or arrangement in which he or she is interested whether directly or indirectly or any matter arising out of such a project /contract or transaction. If he or she does vote, his or her vote shall not be counted, and therefore he or she shall not be considered to be entitled to vote for the purposes of establishing a quorum.***
- Where any item of business is dealt with at an Approvals Panel Meeting (where the point above applies) then the member interested in that item of business shall declare the nature of his or her interest to the meeting before that item of business is proceeded with and shall leave the room unless the Chair specifically authorise her or him to remain.
- Where a member of the LAG becomes interested in a proposed project /contract or during the process of developing/ delivering a project/ contract he or she shall declare the nature of his or her interest at the first meeting of the Panel after he or she becomes first interested.

Appraisers

- ***An individual shall not be allowed to appraise or to take part in an appraisal panel in respect of any project in which he or she is interested whether directly or indirectly or any matter arising out of such a project /contract or transaction.***

Registering Interests

Every member of the Approvals Panel, Appraisal Panel and the Programme Team must complete a register of interest form.

In Addition

- The LEADER Coordinator will maintain a register of the declared interests of Approval Panel members, appraisers and staff, detailing the nature and extent of such an interest;
- Without the prior approval of the LAG, no contract, offer of employment, grant or other resource or award should be made to a LAG member or staff member or a company, society or partnership in respect of which any LAG member or staff member has declared an interest.
- Whenever members are unsure of the seriousness of a potential conflict of interest, they should err on the side of caution.



Guidance Notes for Successful Project Applicants

To be sent with all Funding Agreements

1. What does my Funding Agreement mean?

The Funding Agreement you have been sent is an important document and forms the basis of a contract between the Shropshire Hills LEADER Action Group and your organisation. The following points are of specific relevance:

- **Date of the Funding Agreement**

The date of the Funding Agreement is important because work carried out (or equipment purchased) before the date of the Funding Agreement is ineligible for payment.

- **Reference Number**

Please quote the reference number when writing or telephoning regarding your project. This will help to quickly locate the information relating to your project.

- **Amount of Grant Offered**

Your Funding Agreement will specify an amount of grant, and this is the maximum payable. The letter also specifies a percentage. This has been worked calculated by working out what percentage the grant is of the total project cost. If, for example, the total project cost is £20,000 and your grant is £13,000, the maximum percentage payable will be 65% $((20,000 \div 13,000) \times 100)$. The specified grant amount and percentage are followed by the words "*whichever is the lesser*". This means that when you make a claim, the percentage rate will be applied to the total you have spent at the time of the claim, and payments will be made in this way until all your funding has been spent.

- **Funding Agreement Conditions**

You should read the conditions carefully, as they contain important information related to payment arrangements, guidance on tendering for contracts, monitoring the project, audit, assets and publicity. You have been requested to sign, date and return the copy of the Funding Agreement, but you should not do so until you have read and understood the conditions.

- **Project Schedule**

The Project Schedule forms part of your Funding Agreement and outlines the relevant information that we will use to monitor the progress of your project on a quarterly basis. The Schedule outlines the predicted expenditure, milestones and outputs which the project expects to achieve over the lifetime of the project and it is these that you will refer to when completing the quarterly Monitoring Reports. The Schedule also outlines any special conditions that have been identified for the project as part of the Appraisal process.

2. What is "evidence of match funding"?

“Match funding” is the money that will pay for your project that doesn’t come from the Shropshire Hills LEADER Programme. We will use the funding pages from your application form to find out where your project’s match funding is coming from.

“Evidence” is quite frequently a letter from a funder confirming that a grant has been awarded to your project. If your match funding is your own organisation’s resources, then you should supply a recent bank statement and a current balance sheet. This will show us that you have the funds available to spend on the project. Alternatively you could provide a letter from your organisation stating that a specific amount of funds have been set aside to support the project. Please let us know if the match funding for your project changes at any time.

3. How will LEADER funding be paid?

To claim LEADER funding, you need to submit **original** invoices, receipts, timesheets or other evidence to us and we will add up the amount of the invoices and calculate your grant payment using the percentage shown on the Funding Agreement. We will then arrange for a cheque to be sent to you by the Shropshire Council.

- **What are eligible items of expenditure?**

Before arranging payment, we will check that the invoices you have submitted relate to eligible items (detailed in your original application form), and that they are dated on or after the date of the Funding Agreement. If there have been any changes to the project or items of expenditure which are to be claimed against please outline the reasons for the change in writing and we will assess whether it is an acceptable change or addition. We understand that the details of many projects will change from time to time but it would only be deemed an unacceptable variation if the change has a *significant* impact on the whole nature of the project.

- **How often can we claim?**

Once you have supplied all the information requested in the Funding Agreement, you may start to claim your LEADER funding. We would encourage projects to claim on a quarterly basis at the same time as completing the quarterly Monitoring Reports, which enables us to monitor the expenditure on the project effectively. However, projects can claim more or less often if they wish to do so. This flexibility is intended to help projects which may need to claim more often to enable sufficient cash flow, or less often for projects from larger organisations that may have the capacity to fund the project for a longer period and submit a claim every 6 months or so.

- **Can we roll forward unspent funding?**

LEADER funding is allocated on a calendar year basis so it is important to claim as much of the predicted funding by the end of each calendar year. This is because there is only a limited amount of LEADER funding that we can roll forward from one calendar year to the next. Please let us know if you think you will need to roll forward any funding from one calendar year to the next.

- **How do we evidence volunteer time?**

Volunteer time can be evidenced by filling in timesheets. These should show the hours worked, the nature of the work carried out, be signed by the employee and certified by the employer or appropriate person in the organisation (eg Treasurer).

- **Do we need to evidence ‘In kind’ contributions to the project?**

Yes, ‘In kind’ contributions need to be evidenced in the same way as cash contributions so they can be included in the claim. For example, if this is for staff time

then this could be evidenced by timesheets, if it was for the use of office space then you could provide a letter from the organisation donating the space confirming the value of rental that would usually be charged. If it is for an asset such as a computer or other goods then provide either the invoice or a letter confirming the value of the goods.

- **How do we evidence overhead costs**

Some overhead costs such as rent, rates and electricity may not have an individual invoice if your project is delivered by a larger organisation, although we would encourage projects to obtain invoices where ever possible. If you can not obtain invoices then you will need to show how much of these costs can be apportioned to your project, which may be using a percentage of overall costs, such as 10%.

However you may have some other way of working out the apportioned costs so please let us know how you have worked the costs out and provide a written statement signed by an appropriate person in the organisation. Depending on your organisation this type of apportionment may also apply to other costs such as telephones and stationery. However, please supply any supporting evidence that you may have to back up your claim.

4. What reports do I have to produce?

We ask for Monitoring Forms to be completed at the end of every quarter, which we will send you towards the end of each quarter (the form is also available electronically). You will need to provide information relating to general progress of the project, expenditure for the quarter, and progress towards milestones and outputs. These Monitoring Forms are important as they give us information about how your project is progressing. However, the form does have space to explain where there have been any changes to your project. This maybe because the target date of a milestone has slipped, an item cost more than anticipated or one of your outputs can not now be achieved. We understand that elements of projects can differ from that originally outlined on the Application Form but if something has changed with your project it is important that you let us know and explain the reasons on the Monitoring Form.

5. Do I have to keep any other records?

On your original application form you identified certain outputs, e.g. number of people in rural areas benefiting from improved services, and milestones, e.g. one Project Officer employed by June 2003. These outputs and milestones will be included in your Funding Agreement and you will need to keep details of who you have trained, employed etc or details of events held etc. You will be asked for evidence to support achievement of outputs and milestones, so it is advisable to keep all documents and paperwork related to project activity undertaken.