

Welsh-English Border Strategic Regeneration Programme

Strategic Delivery Plan

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Rationale for Programme	4
2.1. Need for a new programme	4
2.2. Rationale for the programme	5
2.3. Geography of the programme	6
2.4. Rationale - Community-based Interventions for Sustainable Economic Regeneration.....	8
3. Description of Programme	9
3.1. Vision	9
3.2. Mission	9
3.3. Overall Objectives	10
3.4. Underlying Values	10
3.5. Summary of proposed interventions	10
4. Funding Sources	13
4.1. Funding Opportunities	13
5. Strategic fit of programme	16
5.1. Introduction	16
5.2. Significant strategic linkages	18
6. Preparing for delivery	22
7. Appendix 1 Delivery Plan Tables	24
8. Appendix 2 Significant Strategic Linkages	24

1. INTRODUCTION

Resources for Change (R4C) were commissioned to develop a Sustainable Regeneration Strategy for the Welsh-English Borders by the Offa's Dyke Country Partnership. The basis for the study was a hypothesis from the Partnership that there are common opportunities and challenges facing communities along the England-Wales border, which make sense to tackle together. The Partnership was keen to investigate the opportunities to develop a more sustainable rural economy, based on the high quality natural and cultural assets of the area.

The Partnership recognised a need to generate additional income to the English/Welsh border businesses and communities whilst minimising the environmental impact. The rich natural environment was seen as underpinning both the quality of life and economy of the area.

This study was commissioned to identify how this could be achieved and was funded by Welsh Assembly Government, Advantage West Midlands and Natural England. The objective of the study was:

“To assess the opportunities to develop a more sustainable rural economy based on the high quality natural and cultural assets of Offa's Dyke and the surrounding landscape.”

This Strategic Delivery Plan is one of three reports for the study. It presents the findings of our research and explains how they were developed to support the programme delivery plan. The Summary of Findings and the detailed Methodology are presented in separate reports.

2. RATIONALE FOR PROGRAMME

2.1. NEED FOR A NEW PROGRAMME

The basis for the study was a hypothesis from the Partnership that there are common opportunities and challenges facing communities along the England-Wales border, which make sense to tackle together. The Partnership was keen to investigate the opportunities to develop a more sustainable rural economy, based on the high quality natural and cultural assets of the area.

The Partnership recognised a need to generate additional income to the English/Welsh border businesses and communities whilst minimising the environmental impact. The rich natural environment was seen as underpinning both the quality of life and economy of the area.

From an initial base of interest focussed on sustainable tourism and transport (reflecting early Partner organisation areas of activity), the scope of the enquiry grew to include broader economic and community/social considerations, in line with the Partnership's objective to develop a strong, diverse and sustainable rural economy for communities and businesses, reducing poverty, valuing diversity and promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.

The Partner organisations were able to identify a number of common, and recurring, issues that affected the delivery of services and economic development in the England-Wales border areas. These can be summarised as:

- Administrative barriers relating to the England-Wales border, in particular relating to cross-border service delivery and different funding regimes.
- The 'edge' effect i.e. being at the edge of England, Wales and regions.
- The rurality of the area; affecting the infrastructure e.g. transport, broadband.

However, the Partnership lacked detailed information about the nature and scope of these issues - and conversely, the benefits or assets of the area – as well as about other key organisations' views and experiences. This meant that there was consensus about the need for a new way of working in the England-Wales border areas, but a lack of certainty about its direction. It was important to gain clarity on a number of points:

- How significant were the issues that Partner organisations had already identified and were there other important issues.
- What were the natural and cultural assets that underpinned the economy,

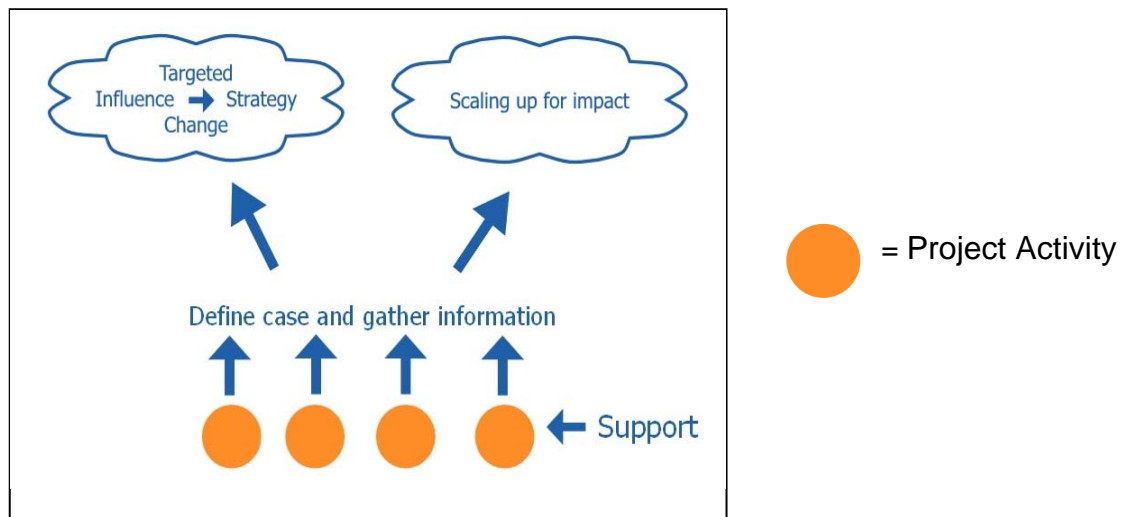
environment and community of the area.

- Whether there was sufficient unity of need and interest in regeneration throughout the England-Wales border area and whether there was a benefit in working the length of the border and across it.
- What was already being done, and whether this was sufficient in itself, or if there could be added value from a new strategic programme.

2.2. RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAMME

The programme that is proposed is a strategic programme made up of a linked series of interventions that together are intended to bring about sustainable economic regeneration.

Figure 1 Schematic of Strategic Programme Role



Community-based interventions are at the heart of the programme. This meets the clearly expressed need to make a difference on the ground. A small number of themes are recommended (see Section [3.5](#) below); these capture the topics that were considered by stakeholders to be the most important in terms of need, and where also there is a real will to bring about change and a realistic chance of achieving success. An important feature will be to pick those interventions where a strategic programme can add value, rather than continuing what is already being done or at worst, replicating or replacing current successful activity.

However, on their own, community-based interventions will not be enough to bring about the scale and types of changes and benefits that the Partnership are aiming for, so additionally, a small number of process interventions are proposed. The strategic programme will provide the opportunity for three key pathways to added value:

- Scaling up the intervention to have an impact over a broader geographical area or a wider audience;
- Sharing of information and networking to enable other programmes and/or organisations to benefit from the learning;
- Providing robust evidence with which to try to influence key organisations at local, regional or even national level in terms of policy-making and service delivery. Also, the programme will be able to act as a co-ordinated ‘voice’ for the England-Wales border areas, reaching out to policy makers.

The kinds of issues that have been identified as suitable for this element of the programme include:

- Demonstrating the ‘edge effect’ of the border area.
- Developing a ‘framework for the border’, which maps out what constitutes sustainable development for the Wales-England border area. This would provide a basis for measuring performance and would build on existing performance indicators such as National Performance Indicators.

These examples (and others as they are brought forward) could become specific actions within the strategic programme.

2.3. GEOGRAPHY OF THE PROGRAMME

The Partnership began with a concept of ‘Offa’s Dyke Country’ which ran the length of the England-Wales border, and included a stretch of land on either side in England and Wales, covering a number of different political and administrative regions. The border was not defined; rather there was the idea of a ‘fuzzy border’ (see Findings Report for detail).

The responses from the consultation confirmed the wisdom of taking a non-specific view on the geographical area to be covered by a programme. However, there were some guiding principles that should be taken into account:

- Including key settlements and market towns that provide a focus for service provision for residents, workers and visitors.
- Following key transport corridors, including road and rail.
- Responding to significant natural environmental and landscape features, such as rivers or hills.

The decision about whether to aim for a project running the entire length of the border was complex. The consultation returns showed divided views. However, the

Partnership took into consideration the practicalities of developing a new strategic programme, as well as existing mechanisms and relationships. The 'central zone' of Powys, Shropshire and Herefordshire, is currently served by the Central Wales-West Midlands Cross Border Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which is based on a formal commitment for cross-border working and already has several thematic working groups in place. Also, there is clearly strong positive feeling towards a new strategic programme amongst many key organisations within this zone. With the MoU in operation, there is potentially an ideal framework on which to build and embed a programme.

In the North, the Mersey-Dee Alliance may be a suitable vehicle, but this would need further exploration. This cross-border partnership is well established, serving a geographical area which can in many ways be considered to be distinct from the 'central zone'.

In the South, there is currently no regional-level structure in place for cross-border working. However, significant cross-border working does take place on the ground. For example the Wye Valley AONB straddles the English-Welsh border and Offa's Dyke Path and has extensive experience in cross-border working.

The recommendation is therefore that in the first instance, the programme is focussed on the 'central zone'. With firm foundations in this 'central zone', and with ongoing work to develop potential relationships to the north and south, it will be possible to extend collaboration along the border. This collaborative work should focus on interventions where there are real gains from a holistic north-south approach, such as sustainable transport and tourism. In this way, there is an opportunity for other areas, such as Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire, to get involved in the strategic programme, and perhaps build from joint interventions on a pilot basis to a more established framework over time.

2.4. RATIONALE - COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Whilst the research has identified a multitude of opportunities where intervention might be beneficial, there are only a limited number of areas of activity where this combines with serious interest in and potential for their implementation. These themes are:

- Sustainable Tourism.
- Border Link.
- Sustainable Business-Eco-Innovation.
- Thriving Communities.
- Benefiting from Natural Resources.

Together, these make up a 'Menu of Opportunities' from which particular community-based activities could be developed. A key next step for the Partnership will be to prioritise which Themes and activities they want to pursue.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

This section describes the programme: its vision, mission, objectives, values and each intervention proposed. Please note that the concepts which underlie the vision are presented and will be developed by the partners as the programme goes forward.

3.1. VISION



3.2. MISSION

"To enable communities in the England-Wales border areas to work together for common purpose - to thrive and be sustainable"

3.3. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

- Creating strategic and operational change that allows smooth cross-border working reflecting how people live and work.
- Supporting local level activity that brings about sustainable development.
- Sharing the learning internally and externally, to benefit this and other projects.
- Creating added value by linking up activities and strategic working.
- Showcasing the unique identity, spirit and drive of the England-Wales border areas.

3.4. UNDERLYING VALUES

- **Reflect the geography and landscape of the area.** We can develop and deliver services in a way that is a better reflection than at present of the area's natural environment and the people living, working and visiting there.
- **Better delivery through co-operation.** We can develop and deliver services better than at present if organisations working locally, regionally and nationally work in closer harmony.
- **Build on border country identity and sense of place.** The England-Wales border areas have an identity of their own, based on a historical legacy of being 'border country'. This identity should be valued in its own right; it makes the area what it is, and offers numerous opportunities for sustainable development.
- **Natural resource base.** The area's natural resources have been and should continue to be fundamental in shaping the economy and the communities.
- **Community led.** The delivery needs to be strongly based on the needs expressed by communities, and to work in ways that fit the communities' ways of working. This all needs to happen within the key strategic drivers that are in place, but it should also be seeking to influence those strategies as needed.

3.5. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

As noted in [Section 2.2](#) (Rationale), the strategic programme is based on a menu of proposed theme-based community-based interventions, combined with a small number of process interventions.

The proposed interventions are summarised in

[Table 1](#) below. For each, an outline delivery plan is presented in tabular form in Appendix 1 following. The Delivery Plan breaks down each Theme into specific actions that would enable implementation of the Strategic Programme as a whole. It is intended to summarise what each objective could achieve, what needs to be done and who needs to be involved.

However, the Partnership is not yet ready for full implementation, and needs to carry out a number of preparatory steps. These should be considered in tandem with the Delivery Plan, and are presented in [Section 6](#).

When reading the Delivery Plan tables, please note:

1. There is such a wealth of data that the tables can only provide key examples of existing information. (Please also refer to the Findings Report and appendices, which contain more detail).
2. The suggested outputs are our recommendations based on the actions we have identified as having most support and most potential for delivering economic regeneration, as a result of the feedback from the consultation. However, these will need to be confirmed by the Partnership, as one of the preparatory steps towards implementation.
3. The research project has been iterative and the interventions identified earlier in the process are therefore better developed. It has not been possible to test the individual intervention ideas with all key players, so this is recommended as another preparatory step towards implementation.

Table 1 - Proposed Interventions

Intervention	Description
PROCESS INTERVENTIONS	
Stronger Strategic Voice for the Border	Influencing and advocacy at national, regional and local level.
Framework for the Border	Framework mapping out the key elements of sustainable development for the border, so empowering local communities to drive their own agenda and providing a basis for managing and measuring performance.
Better Networking and Information Sharing	Enabling communities and businesses to share good practice to meet their common challenges.
THEMATIC INTERVENTIONS	
Sustainable Tourism	Strengthen the existing tourism offer in the England-Wales border areas, creating a distinctive sustainable tourism offer that supports and promotes the local brands.
Border Link	Pro-active support for business (especially micro-business), social enterprise and individuals and for community groups. This would complement existing services with an engagement and sign-posting role.
Sustainable Business - Eco Innovation	Demonstrate how businesses can meet the challenge of climate change.
Thriving Communities	Increasing the resilience of local communities.
Benefiting from Natural Resources	Making use of and showcasing the area's natural resources in a responsible way.

4. FUNDING SOURCES

4.1. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

At the end of this scoping study committed funding for this programme ends. Any further programme development will be dependent on new funding and in-kind contributions from partners and stakeholders. In order to gain momentum, new seed corn money will be needed. There are two different elements to consider:

- Funding to administer the programme as a whole
- Funding to enable implementation of specific activities.

In the current financial climate, sources of funding will be scarce and competitive. Respondents to the consultation were clear about the need to consider how the use of existing funding sources could be maximised.

In relation to funding specific activities, many of the activities that are proposed overlap or build on existing activities that are currently funded e.g. from Rural Development Programme, Local Authority budgets or European programmes. Therefore, in developing the programme, there is a need for the Partnership to identify ways in which existing budgets could be allocated to enable them to meet needs more effectively at a community level. For example, by joining together communities across the border to work together on a common problem, such as failing village halls, a better service may be able to be provided at less cost. For the Border Link, existing resources across business support services could be brought together to provide a programme on the ground. This approach to funding relies on activities carried out through the Strategic Programme adding value over and above what is already in place.

In relation to funding to administer the programme as a whole, there are likely to be more challenges. There will be considerable work needed to raise awareness of and to evidence the need for core funding or in-kind support for programme administration. If the Central Wales – West Midlands MOU agrees to absorb this programme into their work plans, the new MOU officer role may be able to provide some co-ordination resource to help get the programme moving.

Partner organisations were asked for suggestions about potential sources of funding for the proposed activities. The responses are shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2 Potential Funding Sources

Intervention	Potential Funding Sources
PROCESS INTERVENTIONS	
Strategic Voice for the Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Transnational Funding
Performance Framework for the Border	
Networking and information sharing	
THEMATIC INTERVENTIONS	
Sustainable Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCW: Wales Communities and Nature Strategic Programme: improving accessibility, interpretation and visitor facilities at natural heritage sites. • Visit Wales Sustainable Tourism: developing centres of excellence for tourism activities, focusing on walking, cycling, fishing, riding, watersports, adventure tourism etc. • CADW Heritage and Tourism project: £19m - improving access /interpretation • Rural Development Programme • Destination Management Partnerships in Shropshire and Herefordshire - Rural Development Programme for England Measure 313 Tourism funding • AWM and Mid-Wales Tourism Partnership
Border Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWM / Rural Development Programme for England • Business Link • WAG • Social Enterprise West Midlands • Partners for Social Enterprise • Social Enterprise Coalition Cymru

Intervention	Potential Funding Sources
Sustainable Business - Eco Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWM: RE:think Energy - a capital grant scheme available to SMEs in the Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) areas of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire for the installation of renewable energy technologies and supporting infrastructure. • Cooperative FIRE [Shareenergy] providing risk finance to community investment into community owned renewable energy solutions. • Rural Development Programme for England Cross cutting theme across many measures. • European LIFE Funding for Sustainable Business/Eco-Innovation. The Chambers of Commerce along the border are seeking to prepare a bid for the LIFE Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme Eco Innovation funding. Deadline: September 2009. • Other European Transnational Funding • AWM: KITs
Thriving Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Strategic Partnerships and Joint Area Committees • Rural Development Programme/LEADER cross-border funding • AWM RRZ NEXUS Small Grants to improve access to services and facilities for rural communities • Sustainable Development Fund, Share Energy, Big Lottery and Heritage Lottery Fund • European INTERREG IVB
Benefiting from Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Development funding through Natural England, CCW , AWM and WAG, Heritage Lottery Fund (esp. Landscape Partnership Projects), Rural Development Programme and LEADER • Sustainable Development Fund, • EU LIFE + Nature and Biodiversity (September 2009)

5. STRATEGIC FIT OF PROGRAMME

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This emerging Strategic Programme sits within the context of a myriad of local, regional and national strategy and policy documents. The programme will also be informed by many relevant research reports and other studies.

[Table 3](#) below lists the strategies seen as core to the Strategic Programme as a whole, and also lists a number of relevant research reports and supporting studies relevant to particular Intervention Themes. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, but is intended as a baseline on which the Partnership can build. Also, a report listed in relation to one Theme may also be relevant to other Themes.

Table 3 Strategies and Key documents

Intervention	Strategies and key documents
Strategies core to the Programme as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan (2008 Update, WAG) • West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (GOWM & CLG, 2008) • The Wales Transport Strategy (2008, WAG) • W:AVE – Wales: A Vibrant Economy (2005, WAG) • Central Wales – West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding on Cross Border Collaboration (March 2007, WAG and WMRA) • Mersey Dee Alliance Business Plan (2008, MDA) • Connecting to Success: the West Midlands Economic Strategy (June 2008, AWM) and WMES Delivery Framework May 2008/09 (AWM) • West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan • West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy and Strategic Environmental Assessment Process Report (2006, Mersey Dee Alliance) • Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13 • Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-13 • Environment Strategy for Wales (2006, WAG) • Regional and Local Transport Plans • Corporate plans/business plans for Partner organisations. • Community Strategies for all Authorities. • Border LEADER LDG's
Stronger Strategic Voice for the Border	

Intervention	Strategies and key documents
Framework for the Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Community Strategies • Rural Development Plans , Local Strategic Boards and LAAs • Frameworks, LEADER Business Plans
Networking and Information Sharing	
Sustainable Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving our Potential: Tourism Strategy for Wales 2006-13 (WAG) • Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Transport Initiative Business Plan 2008-11 • Enhancing Inland Tourism in Central Wales (2007, TPMW) • Clwydian Range AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan • Sharing the best of Shropshire: An interpretation strategy celebrating Shropshire's culture, heritage, landscape and people 2006–2011 (Shropshire Council) • Beacons Bus 2007 Activity Report (BBNP) • Offa's Dyke Conservation Statement (2000, CPAT)
Border Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Support Simplification Programme • Social Enterprise Action Plan 2009 • Social Enterprise West Midlands Business Plan • Partners for Social Enterprise Business Plan.
Sustainable Business - Eco Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone Implementation Plan 2007-10 (West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone) • An Economic Development & Regeneration Study for the Severn Valley (WAG, Powys CC) • Social Enterprise Strategy for Wales (June 2005, WAG)
Thriving Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAG Making the Connections • One Wales: A Progressive Agenda for the government of Wales (2007, WAG), and One Wales Delivery Plan 2007-11 (WAG) • Community Strategies, LEADER Strategies, Rural Development Plan for Wales, Local Action Plans, National Park and AONB Statutory Management Plans • Rural Community Sustainability (2008, AWM & WMRA) • One Wales One Planet: The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government (2009) Parish Plans

Intervention	Strategies and key documents
Benefiting from Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park and AONB Statutory Management Plans • The Benefits To Business Of The National Trails In Wales (2006, CCW) • Woodlands for Wales: WAG's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees (2009) • Results Of The National Trail User Survey 2007 (CCW & Natural England) • Glasu studies Energy & Waste, Local Products and Food • EU Water Framework Directive and EA River basin Management Plans

5.2. SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC LINKAGES

For the strategies seen as core to the Strategic Programme as a whole, it is helpful to summarise where the strongest linkages lie, i.e. where the proposed Programme will be able to support the delivery of these core strategies. A brief summary of the relevant strategies is presented here, with more detailed analysis in Appendix 2.

Wales Spatial Plan

The vision for Central Wales is “High quality living and working in smaller-scale settlements set within a superb environment, providing dynamic models of rural sustainable development, moving all sectors to higher value-added activities”. This is very much in line with the ethos underlying the Strategic Programme and its own vision and objectives. Shared priorities include helping communities to become more sustainable, supporting the land-based economy, micro business and social enterprise and conserving the area’s natural and cultural assets.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

This is part of the national planning system. Its main purpose is to provide a long term land use and transport planning framework for the Region. It is a framework which guides the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans. It determines (amongst other things) the scale and distribution of housing and economic development across the Region, investment priorities for transport and sets out policies for enhancing the environment.

The rural areas of the West Midlands are noted as playing “an important role in the Region’s economic, social and environmental fabric”. The remoter areas on the western side of the region are described as having distinct needs partly arising from high levels of deprivation and low population densities. Also, the need to develop consistent and complementary spatial policy with adjoining regions, including Wales,

is noted, particularly in relation to transport. Key linkages with Wales are identified including strategic transport links and cross-border recreation and tourism links.

The West Midlands Economic Strategy: Connecting to Success

The vision for the West Midlands is “To be a global centre where people and businesses choose to connect”, wanting to “maintain and enhance its attractiveness as a location in which people and businesses choose to invest, work, learn, visit and live”. The strategy notes that a successful and vibrant economy requires a balanced and strong contribution from three components – business, place and people – as well as the need for a powerful voice for the region. Partnership working will be vital in achieving success for the Strategy. The particular challenges that the Strategy sets out to meet are: Skills, Enterprise, Innovation, Economic Inclusion, and Transport. Shared objectives include improving competitiveness (e.g. local supply chains), supporting sustainable communities.

Regeneration Zones are identified as one of three primary areas to be targeted for spatial intervention, and include a Rural Regeneration Zone which runs along the Welsh-English border in Shropshire and Herefordshire.

West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan

The vision for the RRZ is that “by 2020, the RRZ will be a connected rural area with a strong economy, a healthy environment and rich quality of life for all”. Within this, there are four strategic objectives:

- To develop a strong, diverse and sustainable rural economy, including developing the existing economies of food and farming, tourism and the creative industries.
- To develop a thriving economy through environmental excellence, with a focus on investment in wind technologies, bio-park developments, low carbon communities, combined heat and power, eco-cluster activity.
- To raise the skill levels of the workforce and those entering employment.
- To reduce poverty, value diversity and promote social inclusion and community cohesion by allowing full access to services and opportunities. This includes multi-use facilities, access to services partnerships, affordable housing, and supporting an effective voluntary and community sector.

The majority of investments will relate to: land and property; environmental economy; multi-use facilities and the enterprise centre network. Key indicators of change will include: increases in levels of employment in technology and knowledge intensive industries; improved access to services; and increased skills levels.

W:AVE – Wales: A Vibrant Economy

The vision is “of a vibrant Welsh economy delivering strong and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for all”. The approach is built around several core strengths: an increasingly skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce; an advanced technology and knowledge base; strong communities; a stunning natural environment; an exceptional quality of life. There are two main priorities: increasing employment, and raising the quality of jobs. Shared priorities include supporting regeneration of communities and economic growth and supporting sustainable development.

It is noted that there are a number of sectors which will be important for the future of the Welsh economy; the list includes agri-food, tourism and the creative industries. It is noted that there are key spatial differences across Wales; understanding these differences will be important in identifying effective approaches to stimulate economic development.

Rural Development Plan for Wales

Running from 2007-13, the RDP is part of a joint WAG/EU strategy to make Wales a better place to live and work. There is over £795 million funding. The Plan applies to all aspects of rural life. It “supports and welcomes ideas from local people who want to take action to make their own community a better place to live”. The Wales-England Strategic Programme is strongly aligned with the identified priority areas for support. Shared priorities include looking after the environment, encouraging sustainable economic development, creating more highly skilled jobs and supporting local community projects.

The RDP will shortly be refreshed, working at Local Authority level, which presents an ideal opportunity for the Partnership to feed into and influence RDP activities.

Rural Development Programme for England

The Programme sets out the strategy for rural development in England, focussed on similar areas as the RDP for Wales. Again, the Wales-England Strategic Programme is strongly aligned with the identified priority areas for support. These include sustainable farming and food, environmental stewardship, development of micro-enterprises and encouragement for tourism.

Central Wales – West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding on Cross Border Collaboration

The signatories to the MOU are keen to build stronger cross-border collaboration. The MOU is a voluntary arrangement. It aims to apply to all public sector organisations and public sector-led partnerships operating at the national, regional or

local level in Central Wales and the rural West Midlands. Voluntary and community sector, and private sector organisations are encouraged to follow the MOU's principles.

The MOU is intended to embrace all aspects of policy development and service delivery which impacts on social, economic and environmental well-being and sustainability in Central Wales and the rural West Midlands. The aims of the MOU include 'border proofing' proposals for changes in policy, funding or service delivery, seeking collaboration where it provides efficiencies and/or added value and sharing good practice.

A Strategic Forum meets at least once a year to oversee implementation of the MOU. They are supported by a Core Officer Group drawn from the signatories' respective organisations. Specialist thematic groups have been established to address specific issues. Currently, these are: Health and social care; transport; environment; communities and local government and food.

Mersey-Dee Alliance Business Plan

The MDA is based on a recognition of shared economic, social and environmental interests across the West Cheshire, Wirral and North East Wales area. The Partnership was formed in 2007, comprising the local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wirral, Wrexham, and WAG, North West Development Agency and Merseytravel. The Partnership's key aim for 2008-11 is to build on the area's competitiveness to secure its long-term future. The Plan builds on the recommendations of the North East Wales / West Cheshire Sub Regional Spatial Strategy. It aims to address the strategic, cross-boundary issues that affect the area as a whole so as not to duplicate local activity and to ensure it creates added value.

The Wales-England Strategic Programme has the opportunity to learn from this experienced cross-border partnership. Also, there are likely to be many points of similarity and complementarity between the two initiatives.

6. PREPARING FOR DELIVERY

The strategic delivery plan provides an outline of the shape and nature of the proposed Welsh-English Border Strategic Regeneration Programme. However, there is still a substantial amount of work needed before the Programme and the Partnership are ready for implementation. [Table 4](#) below lists the key tasks that need to be carried out. For example, developing an organisational structure which has the right representation and 'clout' to be able to prepare a detailed business case for the interventions and then to deliver them. In the long term this is likely to involve embedding the programme into existing organisations and delivery mechanisms, rather than about creating new structures. However, to be achieved there will need to be a managed process of change which will involve pilot projects and short term task and finish groups.

A culture of co-operation and commitment needs to be developed, building on the good will and effort that was evident from the consultation process. This will mean participants committing to invest time and resources in the programme and working constructively together to overcome the very real differences in how things are done each side of the border.

This outline of tasks needs to be developed to set out clearly the priority actions, their timetable and who is responsible for making them happen. This will be discussed at the Partnership meeting on 27th July 2009.

Table 4 Key Tasks to Move the Programme Forward (next page)

Key Task	Purpose	Notes
Decide on scope of programme to be taken forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve a defined and agreed way ahead 	The proposed programme is built up by the consultants on the basis of the consultation and ongoing work with the Partnership, but needs to be fully endorsed by the Partnership. The Partnership currently may not have the right representatives to take decisions.
Further discussions within and between MOU organisations and Mersey Dee Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify scope for integration and ensure their experience is learnt from 	There is a potential Interreg IV bid on rural leadership in border areas with Scotland.
Review Partnership composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get the right people round the table to be able to implement the proposed programme 	Important that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are of sufficient seniority to make decisions on behalf of their organisation There is the right geographical and thematic spread of organisations to reflect intentions of programme
Embed the programme in existing structures for delivery, adapting them where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To put appropriate structures and processes in place. To allocate clear responsibilities for overall programme and each intervention. 	Opportunity for MOU theme groups to pick up the thematic interventions and the Forum and Core Officers Group to pick up the strategic interventions. A new economic regeneration group might be needed to pick up the full breadth of the proposals.
Detailed review of delivery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To decide which activities are to be progressed. To confirm the business case. 	
Change process for each intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key stakeholders Establish relationships Explore detailed strategic fit Develop detailed activity implementation plans Impact assessment Seek funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete all the necessary steps in order to be able to implement activities. 	Some of these interventions may be embedded into existing delivery models and systems, once the appropriate change process has been identified.
Ongoing communication with key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain and grow support for the programme. 	This will need to include feedback to those who participated in this research, as well as those essential to the future programme.
Develop monitoring and evaluation framework for the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand and demonstrate progress and impact. To capture learning. 	

7. APPENDIX 1 DELIVERY PLAN TABLES

Please see tables in separate document.

8. APPENDIX 2 SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC LINKAGES

Wales Spatial Plan

The vision for Central Wales is “High quality living and working in smaller-scale settlements set within a superb environment, providing dynamic models of rural sustainable development, moving all sectors to higher value-added activities”. This is very much in line with the ethos underlying the Strategic Programme and its own vision and objectives.

Priorities that are presented which the Wales-England Strategic Programme will support include:

- Strengthening Newtown and its hinterland, as part of the Spatial Plan’s hub and cluster approach;
- Helping communities to be more sustainable in a spectrum of ways;
- Supporting existing rural economic sectors including agriculture and food production as a sustainable basis for the area’s land-based economy;
- Seeking to broaden the economic base through supporting enterprise, including micro-businesses and social enterprise;
- Conserving the area’s natural environment and unique cultural identity;
- Helping to create higher value sustainable tourism;
- Enhancing the role that the area can play in responding to the effects of climate change;
- Supporting the development of business opportunities around renewable energies and other innovative technologies and product developments;
- Improving accessibility, including issues around car dependency and broadband;
- Building effective cross-border collaboration with neighbouring English regions, other Spatial Plan areas and the Mersey Dee Alliance;
- Increasing access to services and employment opportunities.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

This is part of the national planning system. Its main purpose is to provide a long term land use and transport planning framework for the Region. It is a framework which guides the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans. It determines (amongst other things) the scale and distribution of housing and economic development across the Region, investment priorities for transport and sets out policies for enhancing the environment.

The rural areas of the West Midlands are noted as playing “an important role in the Region’s economic, social and environmental fabric”. The remoter areas on the western side of the region are described as having distinct needs partly arising from high levels of deprivation and low population densities. Also, the need to develop consistent and complementary spatial policy with adjoining regions, including Wales, is noted, particularly in relation to transport. Seven key linkages with Wales are presented:

- Strategic transport links by road and rail
- The A5 as part of the Trans-European Transport Network Route
- The need for complementary rural regeneration policies across the boundary
- The consequences of different grant/funding regimes
- Important cross-boundary recreation and tourism links
- The National Trail follows the boundary
- Hereford and Shrewsbury provide for some higher level service needs of Mid-Wales.

The West Midlands Economic Strategy: Connecting to Success

The vision for the West Midlands is “To be a global centre where people and businesses choose to connect”, wanting to “maintain and enhance its attractiveness as a location in which people and businesses choose to invest, work, learn, visit and live”. The strategy notes that a successful and vibrant economy requires a balanced and strong contribution from three components – business, place and people – as well as the need for a powerful voice for the region. Partnership working will be vital in achieving success for the Strategy. The particular challenges that the Strategy sets out to meet are: Skills, Enterprise, Innovation, Economic Inclusion, and Transport. Related to these, the Strategic Objectives that the Wales-England Strategic Programme will support include:

- Seizing market opportunities, including developing new products and services.

- Improving competitiveness, e.g. local supply chains, market profile.
- Harnessing knowledge and creativity, based on local skills and attitudes.
- Improving infrastructure, including transport and ICT, and making more efficient use of natural resources.
- Supporting sustainable communities – urban and rural – including retaining a thriving workforce and with access to services.
- Supporting sustainable living, including new ways of doing business.
- Contributing to the voice for the West Midlands, providing articulate and convincing advocacy about needs, challenges and priorities.

Regeneration Zones are identified as one of three primary areas to be targeted for spatial intervention (along with concentration of knowledge assets and Birmingham). These include a Rural Regeneration Zone which runs along the Welsh-English border in Shropshire and Herefordshire. Additionally, the Strategy will focus resources on other areas of need, including market towns, as they act as important centres for the rural economy. Tourism & Leisure, Food & Drink, and Environmental Technologies are identified as three of the priority business clusters, all of which the Wales-England Strategic Programme could contribute to.

In terms of the Economic Strategy's aims for cross-regional activity, tourism links, complementary rural regeneration policies, shared use of physical natural resources and the Central Wales-West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding are all directly relevant to the Wales-England Strategic Programme's proposed interventions.

West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan

The vision for the RRZ is that “by 2020, the RRZ will be a connected rural area with a strong economy, a healthy environment and rich quality of life for all”. Within this, there are four strategic objectives:

- To develop a strong, diverse and sustainable rural economy, including developing the existing economies of food and farming, tourism and the creative industries.
- To develop a thriving economy through environmental excellence, with a focus on investment in wind technologies, bio-park developments, low carbon communities, combined heat and power, eco-cluster activity.
- To raise the skill levels of the workforce and those entering employment.

- To reduce poverty, value diversity and promote social inclusion and community cohesion by allowing full access to services and opportunities. This includes multi-use facilities, Access to Services Partnerships, affordable housing, and supporting an effective voluntary and community sector.

The majority of investments will relate to: land and property; environmental economy; multi-use facilities and the enterprise centre network. Key indicators of change will include: increases in levels of employment in technology and knowledge intensive industries; improved access to services; and increased skills levels.

W:AVE – Wales: A Vibrant Economy

The vision is “of a vibrant Welsh economy delivering strong and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for all”. The approach is built around several core strengths: an increasingly skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce; an advanced technology and knowledge base; strong communities; a stunning natural environment; an exceptional quality of life. There are two main priorities: increasing employment, and raising the quality of jobs. To do this, a number of key actions are listed, which it is clear that the Wales-England Strategic Programme could contribute to.

- Supporting job creation and helping individuals to tackle barriers to participation in work;
- Investing to regenerate communities and stimulate economic growth;
- Helping businesses to grow and to increase value-added per job by:
 - Investing in transport networks and other economic infrastructure
 - Attracting more high value-added functions and supporting businesses and sectors with growth potential
 - Helping businesses to become more competitive by supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, investment and trade.
- Supporting sustainable development, in particular clean energy generation and resource efficiency.

It is noted that there are a number of sectors which will be important for the future of the Welsh economy; the list includes agri-food, tourism and the creative industries. It is noted that there are key spatial differences across Wales; understanding these differences will be important in identifying effective approaches to stimulate economic development.

Rural Development Plan for Wales

Running from 2007-13, the RDP is part of a joint WAG/EU strategy to make Wales a better place to live and work. There is over £795 million funding. The Plan applies to all aspects of rural life. It “supports and welcomes ideas from local people who want to take action to make their own community a better place to live”.

Particular priorities, all of which the Wales-England Strategic Programme are strongly aligned with, are:

- Looking after the environment
- Encouraging sustainable economic development
- Creating more highly skilled jobs
- Supporting local community projects.

The Plan consists of four main parts or Axes:

Axis 1: Making farming, forestry and food processing more competitive

Axis 2: Conserving our landscape and environment

Axis 3: Improving quality of life and encouraging diversification

Axis 4: Implementing the LEADER approach

The RDP will shortly be refreshed, working at Local Authority level, which presents an ideal opportunity for the Partnership to feed into and influence RDP activities.

Rural Development Programme for England

The Programme sets out the strategy for rural development in England, focussed on the same Axes as listed above. Again, the Wales-England Strategic Programme is strongly aligned with the identified priority areas for support. These include:

Axis 1

- Training and knowledge transfer
- Increased innovation, value-add, collaboration and entrepreneurship
- Sustainable farming and food, in particular livestock.
- Energy crops

Axis 2

- Safeguarding investments made to slow and reverse natural and cultural environmental decline, and to continue to protect and enhance the environment, in particular through agri-environment activities (Environmental Stewardship)

Axis 3

- Conservation and upgrading of the natural heritage and landscape (through Environmental Stewardship) and the England Woodland Grant Scheme
- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Creation and development of micro-enterprises
- Encouragement for tourism
- Increasing access to services

Axis 4

- Implementing the LEADER approach in the mainstream rural development programme

Central Wales – West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding on Cross Border Collaboration

The context for the MOU is that the boundary between Central Wales and the West Midlands is often an artificial line bearing little relationship to the patterns of life for local communities, although it does define operational units for national, regional and local governments, as well as many other public sector organisations and partnerships.

The signatories to the MOU are keen to build stronger cross-border collaboration. The MOU is a voluntary arrangement. It aims to apply to all public sector organisations and public sector-led partnerships operating at the national, regional or local level in Central Wales and the rural West Midlands. Voluntary and community sector, and private sector organisations are encouraged to follow the MOU's principles.

The MOU is intended to embrace all aspects of policy development and service delivery which impacts on social, economic and environmental well-being and sustainability in Central Wales and the rural West Midlands.

Signatories aim to:

- Share relevant non-confidential information

- ‘Border proof’ proposals for change in policy, funding or service delivery that could impact on communities on border communities
- Consult each other on proposals for change in policy, funding or service delivery that could impact on communities on the opposite side of the border
- Seek opportunities for collaboration on policy development and service delivery, where this could provide efficiencies and/or added value
- Share experience of good practice.

A Strategic Forum meets at least once a year to oversee implementation of the MOU. They are supported by a Core Officer Group drawn from the signatories’ respective organisations. Specialist thematic groups have been established to address specific issues. Currently, these are: Health and social care; transport; environment; communities and local government; food.

Mersey-Dee Alliance Business Plan

The MDA is based on a recognition of shared economic, social and environmental interests across the West Cheshire, Wirral and North East Wales area. The Partnership was formed in 2007, comprising the local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wirral, Wrexham, and WAG, North West Development Agency and Merseytravel. The Partnership’s key aim for 2008-11 is to build on the area’s competitiveness to secure its long-term future. The Plan builds on the recommendations of the North East Wales / West Cheshire Sub Regional Spatial Strategy. It aims to address the strategic, cross-boundary issues that affect the area as a whole so as not to duplicate local activity and to ensure it creates added value.

There are four main objectives for 2008-11:

- To take action to ensure the area’s long term competitiveness and sustain its economic, social and environmental future
- To jointly agree and outline the sub-region’s unique selling points to ensure its attractiveness as a place to invest, work, live and play
- To facilitate the development of high value added sectors/business in the economy
- To ensure sustainability underpins action.

Additionally the partnership will promote the existence and rationale of the Mersey Dee Alliance area, seeking to gain support and influence at the highest levels to accelerate delivery of the agreed objectives.

The Wales-England Strategic Programme has the opportunity to learn from this experienced cross-border partnership. Also, as can be seen from the objectives summarised above, there are likely to be many points of similarity and complementarity between the two initiatives.