

LEADER in the Shropshire Hills – Interim Guidance on Funding Measures

This interim guidance is to assist people in developing Project Ideas for the first year of LEADER in the Shropshire Hills. It should be read in conjunction with the 'LEADER in the Shropshire Hills Information Sheet, April 2008'.

LEADER funding is allocated to a number of 'measures' from the European Rural Development Regulation. In the West Midlands the measures available under LEADER are:

- Measure 321 Basic Services for the economy and rural 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 (non-agricultural activities)

There are also measures about delivery of the LEADER programme and co-operation, but projects are not likely to draw on funds from these.

What follows is a page for each Measure, which will give a clearer idea of what can be funded. This is mostly taken from national Defra Guidance on the Rural Development Programme for England. At this stage it is intended to help people develop project ideas. More detailed guidance will be issued before full applications for funding are requested.

April 2008

Measure 321 Basic Services for the economy and rural population

Proposed Shropshire Hills LEADER objective:

Improve wellbeing, through better access to services, support, places, transport and facilities.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rationale for intervention

In England basic services are generally of a high standard. They are the responsibility of various government departments, and Defra has an important role to play in ensuring policies and developments take account of circumstances and issues particular to rural areas. However, there are issues that adversely affect the rural population's ability to access services. Provision of local services such as small-scale transport arrangements, local shops and community facilities would help to this end. Often, this targeting can be most effectively done by local people with a detailed understanding of their needs, so this measure may be selected for use by Local Action Groups under the Leader Axis. The overall availability of broadband services (using a basket of technologies) in the UK (England figures not available) is now 99.8%, with rural coverage at 99.2%, though the actual take up of broadband services in rural areas is lower than urban areas. This is therefore not a priority for the England Programme.

Objectives of the Measure

To improve or maintain the living conditions and welfare of those living in rural areas and to increase the attractiveness of such areas through the provision of more and better basic services for the economy and the rural population.

Eligible Activities

This measure will support the setting up of basic services in rural areas. The needs of rural communities are often most effectively identified by the communities themselves, and we expect this measure to be used in England, for the most part, through the bottom-up Leader approach to delivery. It is therefore not possible to give a definitive list of activities. However, financial support may be provided for, amongst others:

- cultural and leisure activities;
- development of community buildings to provide services;
- developing community enterprises to provide key services e.g. childcare/eldercare;
- energy services – e.g. woodfuel based heat/and or power system for village /community buildings;
- shop/retail services;
- training services.

Eligible Costs

Support will be provided through:

- grant aid towards the costs of small-scale capital costs;
- community capacity building activity, training and facilitation/technical support;
- costs associated with the establishment (but not the ongoing maintenance) of the new basic service.

Measure 322 Village renewal and development

Proposed Shropshire Hills LEADER objective:

Strengthen community capacity and cohesion by broadening participation in community activity.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rationale for intervention

Quality of life in rural areas will benefit from high quality local amenities such as community buildings and public spaces and from strong social capital to sustain local capacity for development. The needs of rural communities are often most effectively identified by the communities themselves. There are opportunities to build on and sustain existing community ties, capitalising on the strong traditions of civic engagement in rural areas, to close local access gaps through the co-production and community ownership of services and facilities. In this context there are potential roles for the third sector and parish councils to build community cohesion and develop the capacity of rural communities to meet their own needs where possible.

Objectives of the Measure

To support integrated village initiatives which promote cross-community development and regeneration.

This measure will support animation and capacity building within and between villages and their surrounding rural areas, the improvement of the village environment and the provision of community areas.

Eligible Beneficiaries

Businesses, social enterprises, charities, and other formally constituted groups.

Eligible Activities

This measure will support village renewal and development. The needs of villagers are often most effectively identified by the communities themselves, and we expect this measure to be used in England, for the most part, through the bottom-up Leader approach to delivery. It is therefore not possible to give a definitive list of activities. However, financial support may be provided to:

- **develop community capacity and increase the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm of local people;**
- **support small-scale infrastructure projects to develop or enhance: village approaches, main streets, community buildings, amenity spaces workspaces, village landscapes**
- **where possible, some aspects of the measure will be linked with environmental land management support under Axis 2;**
- **the encouragement of collaborative, networking social enterprises;**
- **support of ICT for community benefit;**
- **improving the functionality of community facilities; and**
- **community renewable energy projects.**

Support will be provided through:

- grant aid towards the costs of small-scale capital and resource investment;
- marketing support;
- bespoke training intrinsic to individual project applications.

Measure 323 Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage

Proposed Shropshire Hills LEADER objective:

Develop sense of place and community pride around the Shropshire Hills as a basis for sustainable regeneration.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rationale for Intervention

England has a rich archaeological and built heritage which includes archaeological sites, monuments and listed buildings. Sustainable development within England requires the protection, management and conservation of these historic resources. The natural and built environment can be used as a basis for economic growth in rural areas, particularly in relation to recreation and tourism. Such development brings benefits to the rural economy and communities but it also means that the use and management of such resources must be soundly based on the principles of conserving and upgrading the rural heritage.

Support provided through the Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme will focus on field monuments and vernacular buildings associated with the farmed environment. This measure will complement this activity by focusing on the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of other cultural and heritage features of villages and the rural landscape.

Objectives of the Measure

To conserve and enhance the rural heritage as the basis for sustainable economic growth in rural areas.

Eligible Activities

As this measure may address needs identified both strategically, and by the rural population through the Leader “bottom-up” approach it is not possible to give a definitive list of activities. However, support under this measure could cover the following activities:

- identify local community needs and develop environmental audits and action plans;
- undertake small-scale infrastructural improvements;
- studies and investments associated with maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural heritage, such as the cultural features of cultural and environmental heritage.

Support will be provided through:

- grant aid towards the costs of capital investments;
- interpretation and materials;
- research studies;
- audits.

Measure 331 Training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3 (non-agricultural activities)

Proposed Shropshire Hills LEADER objective:

Improve local learning and networking opportunities for businesses and improve infrastructure to enable them to grow.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rationale for Intervention

Whilst skills need in rural areas is similar to that of the national economy the delivery of education and training in rural areas can present challenges. By encouraging more highly skilled, possibly high technology based, employment into rural areas, there will be an equal need to make appropriate training opportunities available to provide the skilled, flexible workforce these businesses would demand. Small businesses, which are a significant part of the rural business stock, could face problems releasing employees for training purposes in terms of time and funding. However, rural businesses are also less likely to have training plans, dedicated training budgets and training management compared to their urban counterparts. Planning and undertaking such activity in small rural businesses would help to overcome these barriers.

Objectives of the Measure

The objective of this measure is to enhance human potential required for the enhancement of the rural economy. It will support the achievement of the outcomes listed for the measures under their Axis (diversification into non-agricultural activities, developing micro-enterprises, encouraging tourism etc) by developing the skills of the economic actors in the rural area.

Eligible Beneficiaries

Eligible beneficiaries under this measure are:

- economic actors envisaged as beneficiaries;
- businesses, social enterprises, charities, and other formally constituted groups.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities under this measure are:

- **provision of training and information, including business skills and technical skills, in support of rural micro-enterprises, non-agricultural farm diversification businesses and rural tourism businesses;**
- **support shall not include courses of instruction or training which form part of normal education programmes or systems at secondary or higher level.**

Eligible Costs

The following costs will be eligible for support (in accordance with the training block exemption):

- trainers/facilitators/mentors;
- training needs assessments;
- training venues and refreshments;
- course materials and examination fees;
- course evaluation costs;
- project management costs for training organisers;
- small scale infrastructure/capital costs.