

# LEADER in the Shropshire Hills

Information Sheet, April 2008



## What is it?

LEADER is a rural development funding programme operating throughout Europe, and in this country now forms part of the government's Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Regional Development Agencies are responsible for LEADER, and Advantage West Midlands has provisionally approved a bid by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership to deliver LEADER in the Shropshire Hills from 2008-2013.

The West Midlands priorities for LEADER are focussed on social and community issues, and LEADER in the Shropshire Hills seeks to link these to the area's high quality environment, with these overall aims:

**To improve the quality of life and wellbeing of people in and around the Shropshire Hills.**  
**To build on sense of place and attachment to the Shropshire Hills landscape as means of improving people's quality of life and wellbeing.**

## How will it work?

LEADER will offer grants to projects which meet the priorities of the programme. Around £200,000 per year is likely to be available in the Shropshire Hills. Delivery of LEADER will be led by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is hosted by Shropshire County Council, who will be the accountable body from whom formal grant offers will be made. An Appraisal Panel and a LEADER Action Group to approve grants will be formed, and will be part of the AONB Partnership's formal structure. These groups will have appropriate representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors. A detailed Strategy is currently being developed from the bid, and on completion of this Advantage West Midlands will confirm funding. Detailed guidance for applicants will then be drawn up.

## What are the priorities?

A number of key social and community issues in the Shropshire Hills have been identified which LEADER will aim to address:

- Real disadvantage suffered by a significant minority of the population
- Benefits to people's wellbeing and quality of life from the high quality environment are not reaching potential
- Uncertainty over the sustainability of communities in the area
- Potential to increase volunteering capacity and harness people's interest in the landscape to support local regeneration
- Uncertainty over the sustainability of the economy of the area
- Inadequate structure and capacity to address the needs of the area in an integrated way

Projects should therefore aim to meet these objectives:

- **improve wellbeing, through better access to services, support, places, transport and facilities**
- **strengthen community capacity and cohesion by broadening participation in community activity**
- **develop sense of place and community pride around the Shropshire Hills as a basis for sustainable regeneration**
- **improve local learning and networking opportunities for businesses and improve infrastructure to enable them to grow.**



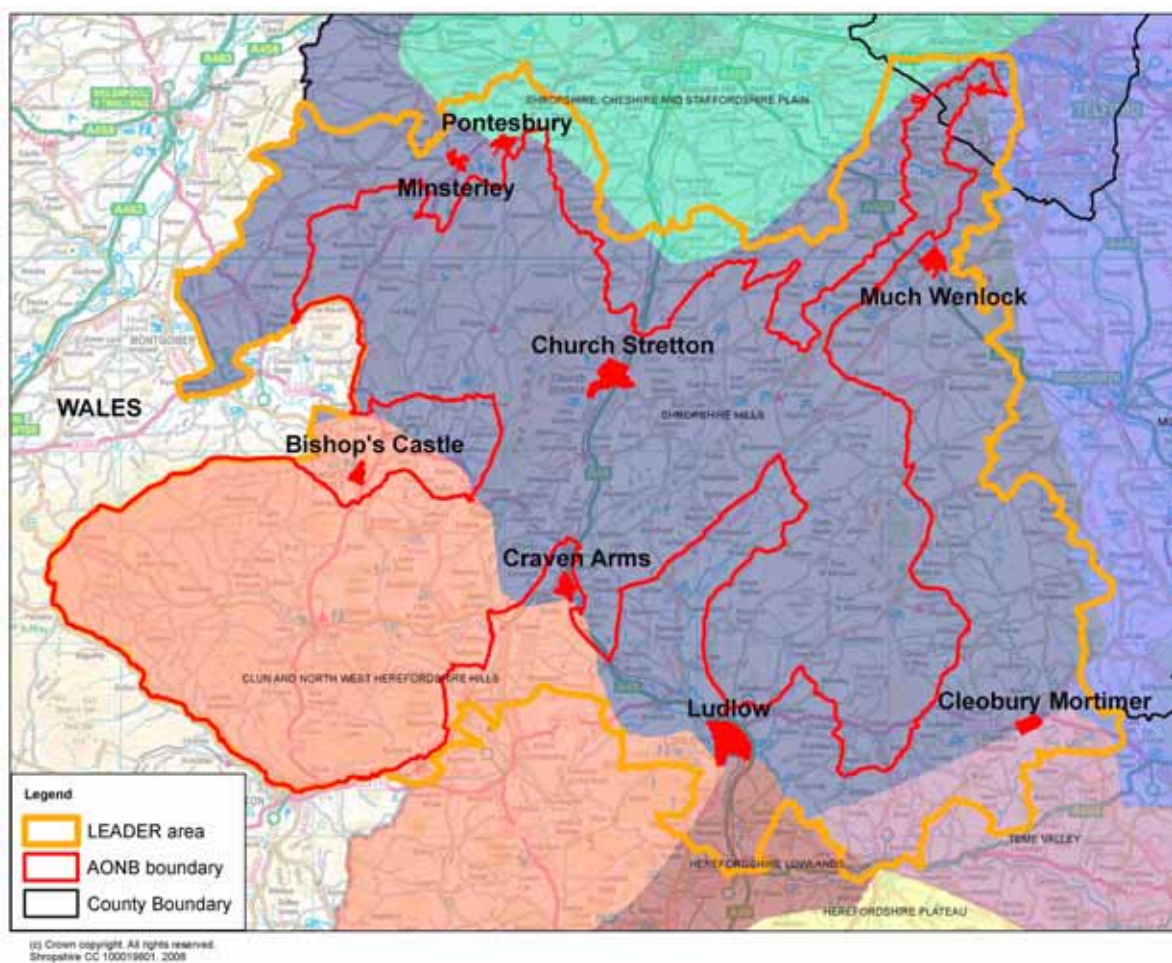
LEADER will take a sustainable development approach, meeting social, economic and environmental goals together. Delivery will aim also to provide integration with other elements of the Rural Development Programme, principally farm conservation and woodland grants, and economic projects relating to food and drink, environmental technology, livestock and tourism. A West Midlands network of LEADER groups will encourage exchange of ideas and good practice, and wider links with LEADER groups around Europe is encouraged.

LEADER in the Shropshire Hills has been built on the AONB Partnership's experience of community work through the Blue Remembered Hills project and the Sustainable Development Fund, on Shropshire County Council's work on access to services including through the Rural Pathfinder, and on the local authorities' regeneration activity including through Local Strategic Partnerships and Market Town Initiatives.

For further information see [www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk](http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk), [www.shropshire.gov.uk/ruralservices.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/ruralservices.nsf) and [www.southshropshire.gov.uk/static/page3820.htm](http://www.southshropshire.gov.uk/static/page3820.htm).

### What is the area?

The Shropshire Hills LEADER area is centred on the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but includes a wider surrounding area with a number of market towns. The population of the area is around 54,000, and much of it is classed as economically lagging. The LEADER area mostly follows parish boundaries, and aims to include communities which are strongly influenced by the upland landscape.



### How can I find out more?

Please contact the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership at the Old Post Office, Shrewsbury Road, CRAVEN ARMS, SY7 9NZ, Tel 01588 674080, Email [shaonbo@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:shaonbo@shropshire.gov.uk).