

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

12 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Forum on the outcome of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and provide an update on progress with proposals for the 2014-2020 programme.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report covers an area of work that contributes to the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) priorities of People in Bridgend County to benefit from a stronger and more prosperous economy and Bridgend County is a great place to live, work and visit. The area of work covered in this report also contributes to the Corporate Improvement Plan priorities of working together to develop the local economy and working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles.

3. Background

- 3.1 The RDP for Wales forms part of the European Commission's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The RDP 2007-2013 ended on 31st December 2014. There is now a further 7-year programme 2014-2020 available to Bridgend County as an eligible area.
- 3.2 The RDP 2007-2013 had 4 major components:
- Axis 1 – improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sections
 - Axis 2 – improving the environment and countryside (all Natura 2000 sites are eligible for funding)
 - Axis 3 – improving the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy
 - Axis 4 – sets out the LEADER¹ programme methodology rather than specific areas of activity. LEADER is an established approach to community led regeneration projects that responds to local needs
- 3.3 Bridgend County Borough has 21 wards outlined in table 1 below, with a population of 53,584, classified as "rural" as detailed below. **For many, RDP funding through Axis 3 and 4 is the only source of regeneration funding available through the Council.**

¹ The name LEADER comes from the French abbreviation for 'Liaison Entre Actions pour le Developement de L'Economie Rurale' (which roughly translates to 'links between actions for developing the rural economy').

Table 1: Bridgend County Rural Wards

Aberkenfig	Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	Hendre	Ogmore Vale
Betws	Cefn Cribwr	Llangeinor	Penprysg
Blackmill	Coity	Llangynwyd	Pontycymmer
Blaengarw	Cornelly	Nant-y-Moel	Sarn
Bryncethin	Felindre	Newton	Ynysawdre
Bryncoch			

3.4 Axis 3 and Axis 4 were implemented through the Rural Partnership and the Local Action Group (LAG), chaired by the Deputy Leader.

3.5 An overview of the impact of that programme and its alignment to Corporate Priorities can be seen in table 2 below. A pen picture of each can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

Table 2: RDP 2007-2014 alignment to Corporate priorities

SIP/ Corporate Priorities	RDP Impacts
People in Bridgend County benefit from a stronger and more prosperous economy Working together to develop the local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Centres of Rural Enterprise • New micro-enterprises • New social enterprises • New jobs • Financial support to existing micro-enterprises • Diversification of rural businesses • New training opportunities • Investment in community renewable energy schemes
Bridgend County is a great place to live, work and visit Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for management and development of BCBC and community assets • Enhancement of community venues and facilities • Business support services for local food producers, to facilitate economic growth through access to supply chains and joint marketing • Establishment of community growing schemes to address food poverty and improve access to healthy food • Financial support for rural events

3.6 The financial value of the 2007-2013 programme can be seen in table 3 below:

Table 3: RDP 2007-2014 financial value

Financial make up	Value	%
RDF	£ 4,479,297.15	31.96%
Private match funding	£ 435,794.13	7.97%
BCEC match funding	£ 549,912.91	10.06%
Total	£ 5,465,004.10	100.00%

3.7 For every £1 of BCBC contribution, £9 is drawn down via RDP and private match funding. The RDP programme therefore currently represents a significant return on investment, with an intervention rate of 1:9.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 Welsh Government (WG) commenced the development of the RDP 2014-2020 alongside the other main European funding programmes in 2012, and has set out a broad framework of thematic options for the next RDP. These are:

- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable energy at a community level
- Exploitation of digital technology
- Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources

4.2 Following approval to operate a Local Action Group and act as lead body, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) submitted a Local Development Strategy and proposals for delivering LEADER funds for the period 2014-2020 by the deadline of 30th September 2014.

4.3 During the period June-September 2014 the consultation on the development of a LDS has involved:

- Review of existing research, consultation and evaluations undertaken by the current programme;
- Community Councils and Elected Members informed of the process and invited to contribute;
- An evening event to raise awareness of the current programme's achievements and lessons learnt was attended by 100 people from rural Bridgend and partner organisations;
- Consultation held at a wide range of thematic network meetings, including, Bridgend Local Food Network, Bridgend's Heritage Network, Bridgend Countryside Volunteers Network, plus community and rural events;
- Discussions held with local policy leads;
- A thematic SWOT analysis and community needs analysis developed and discussed with the LAG and Rural Partnership;
- Stakeholder event held with partner organisations representing the local community and members of the LAG and Rural Partnership to look at the priorities identified and develop the planned actions;
- Stakeholder meeting held with BCBC colleagues delivering across other regeneration and community programmes;
- Independent scrutiny by an external agent; and
- Peer review by a neighbouring Local Authority

- 4.4 This process has led to the creation of an LDS with the following aim and objectives:

Table 4: LDS 2014-2020 aim and objectives

<p>Achieve self-sustaining, diverse and vibrant rural communities.</p>
<p><i>A place to live - Creating self-sustaining rural communities</i></p> <p>SO1.1: To facilitate the identification and prioritisation of rural community needs and aspirations focused on sustainable futures and innovation in economic rural development.</p> <p>SO1.2: To implement a pilot suite of innovative projects in rural communities, based on identified needs and aspirations, with the aim of developing sustainable rural services, exploring new ways of providing non-statutory services, and strengthening economic rural development.</p> <p>SO1.3: To implement a pilot package of rural heritage activities that use an integrated community development approach to research, interpretation, upskilling, upgrading, conservation and co-operation, in order to contribute to rural Bridgend's 'sense of place' and to increase the business and employment potential of the heritage economy.</p> <p>SO1.4: To implement a pilot package of 'Our Green Spaces' projects, working with community groups, volunteers and agencies to strengthen the potential economic benefit between the area's natural assets and community wellbeing, tourism and environmental sustainability.</p>
<p><i>A place to visit - Developing diversified rural enterprises</i></p> <p>SO2.1: To implement a pilot package of innovative activities that facilitate access to, and demand for, rural products and experiences that link producers with the hospitality sector to contribute to an integrated visitor economy.</p> <p>SO2.2: To implement joint-marketing initiatives with rural enterprises, communities and partners that promote a coherent offer of rural Bridgend and maximise the potential to tap into business, family, cultural and heritage visitor economy markets.</p> <p>SO2.3: To facilitate activities that lead to the development of, and sustainability of, a range of visitor accommodation and attractions that exceed customer expectations and cement a perception of rural Bridgend as a 'great place to visit'.</p>
<p><i>A place to work - Supporting vibrant rural economies</i></p> <p>SO3.1: To facilitate activities that identify the extent and effects of outward commuting and migration from Bridgend's rural communities, and pilot innovative interventions that create opportunities for community-based earning.</p> <p>SO3.2: To identify options for renewable energy opportunities and work with stakeholders to develop a green economy for rural</p>

Bridgend.

SO3.3: To facilitate activities that identify diversification and entrepreneurship options in rural communities, and pilot innovative interventions that create opportunities for non-agricultural sustainable development.

SO3.4: To increase the use of digital technology among rural businesses and communities to maximise productivity, sales and marketing profile.

4.5 As part of the RDP 2014-2020 the Bridgend LAG will be made up of a cross-section of local communities and LAG members include representatives from, among others, local authorities, business groups, third sector organisations and environmental bodies. This will bring together a large knowledge base of skills and ensure an equitable coverage of interests.

4.6 There are three themes that cut across the whole of the LDS and its action plan:

- Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming
- Sustainable Development
- Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

In addition, full consideration will be given to the Welsh language in order to promote and facilitate its use throughout all programme activity.

4.7 There are legal implications for the Council arising from the approval of the LDS. Acceptance of the funding offer will require the Council, as Lead Body, to enter into a funding contract with the Welsh Government. Where resources are allocated to third party for the delivery of activities in line with the LDS via a commissioning process, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules will be followed and action will be in line with WG and EU guidelines.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An EIA has been carried out and the programme has low impact on equalities.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Eligible Town and Community Councils could consider setting aside some resource as potential match-funding for RDP projects they may wish to pursue in their areas.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Forum is recommended to note the contents of this report.

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Background documents

Local Development Strategy (Draft) Submitted to Welsh Government 30th September 2014.

Appendix 1: RDP 2007-2014 impacts pen pictures

Impact	Detail
Establishment of Centres of Rural Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first Centre of Rural Enterprise which is a hub for media and technology micro businesses funded through Green Shoots is based within the Sony complex in Pencoed. The Centre provides excellent premises- small business units, business support, networking opportunities and transport links as well as the prestige and support that comes with being based at the Sony UK Technology Centre. The Centre was officially opened by the Minister for Natural Resources and Food Alun Davies. Janice Gregory AM, Darren Mepham CE, Cllr Mike Gregory and Sir Howard Stringer – former Chair of Sony UK also attended. Currently, six out of the ten units created are occupied and Sony have continued interest in the remaining four. The second Centre of Rural Enterprise is situated in the Garw Valley and is due to open in January 2014. Based in an old Church Hall which has been totally renovated to a very high standard, the project will provide small business units and facilities for health and fitness micro enterprises.
New micro-enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26 individuals have been financially supported to create a new micro enterprise 24 of the 32 existing micro-enterprises we have financially supported have been trading less than 2 years 16 individuals have been advised or assisted to support the creation of micro-enterprises
New jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 new micro enterprise jobs have been created through funding and support from Green Shoots covering a diverse range of sectors. Two thirds of those jobs created were for females and most jobs went to people aged 25-49. The value per job created currently stands at £2,160.65 which represents even better value than the Local Investment Fund (LIF).
Financial support to existing micro-enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 existing micro-enterprises have been financially supported. Most businesses supported under the project were owned by males and the majority of business owners were aged 25-49 <p>A further 5 micro-enterprises have been supported through the 'Let's innovate' fund</p>
Diversification of rural businesses	<p>Through the 'Let's innovate' fund some examples include:</p> <p>The New House Inn Pub has been funded to trial a community parcel drop off service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Welsh Caravans were funded to develop and install a compost water heating system to compliment a solar thermal system. Wiggleys Fun Farm was financially supported to create a nature trail through Wiggley Woods using digital technology, an outdoor classroom and wildlife habitat areas. The Prince of Wales Inn was funded to tell the story of the history of the Prince of Wales Inn pub and local area through a series of six short films available through an app.
New training opportunities	<p>Through the RDP over 300 people have received training in a wide range of skills. This has included skills relating to natural resource management, business development and project management.</p>
Investment in community renewable energy schemes	<p>Through the Innovation Fund the Community of Evanstown have received funding for a project to produce a feasibility study and design for the potential for Hydro Electricity from the Ogwr Fach in Evanstown from TGV (The Green Valley organisation).</p>
Development of Bridgend Local Food Network	<p>The Bridgend Local Food Network brings Bridgend producers together to promote local produce, identify and pursue existing and new market opportunities for each other, as well as sharing best practices and pooling resources.</p> <p>The local food network holds local produce markets twice a year and is currently supporting the trial of a local food app by supplying their produce for the trial. The aim of the project is to encourage families to source and cook local food with the help of a smartphone app.</p>
Enhancement	<p>The programme has supported the development of 14 community venues or site</p>

of community venues and financial support for management and development of BCBC and community assets	throughout the County Borough. Examples include: Llangynwyd Community Association Gilead Church Community Centre Heol y Cyw Growing Group Coytrahen Community Centre Tondu Wesley Centre Ogmore Washeries site
Establishment of community growing schemes	Community Foodie has developed and implemented a successful programme of support for the establishment of community gardens across Bridgend. It has advised and assisted 13 individuals, 8 groups and financially supported 8 projects, 1 of which is operating as a social enterprise.
Financial support for rural events	Through the reach events budget 15 rural events have been supported ranging from heritage events to promote the local history of the Borough, to mountain bike and horse riding events which promote the use of bike tracks and bridleway in the valleys of Bridgend. Events in local parks and nature reserves have also been supported to promote the use of these areas and outdoor skills. Examples include Feastival, Bushwaka and Love2Walk