

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Executive Summary

The 'Thriving and Sustainable Rural Communities' LEADER programme is a strategic investment in Worcestershire. This Local Development Strategy sets out what Worcestershire's Local Area Group (LAG), responsible for the development and management of the programme, aims to achieve and the context and rationale behind the programme's objectives and activities. An accompanying Business Plan sets out the programme's operational, financing, governance, monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements.

Worcestershire's LAG has agreed the following Overall Objective for the programme to achieve its stated LEADER vision in target rural areas:

By 2013 create vibrant, inclusive and connected local communities delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to social and environmental challenges that enhance individual and community well being.

The Worcestershire LEADER programme has set out five specific objectives through which it will achieve its overall objective. These are:

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| Specific Objective 1 | Increasing the ability of the target rural population to fully engage in their communities |
| Specific Objective 2 | Improving access to facilities for the most isolated rural communities |
| Specific Objective 3 | Enhancing social inclusion through recreational opportunities with a specific emphasis on young people |
| Specific Objective 4 | Protecting and realising the full potential of the natural and built environment. |
| Specific Objective 5 | Programme effectiveness. |

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	Sections	PAGE NUMBER
	Executive Summary	1
1.	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)	2
2.	CONTEXT FOR LEADER: a statistical perspective	7
3.	CONTEXT FOR LEADER: a consultation perspective	9
4.	THE STRATEGY	17

1 Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a mechanism for delivering funds allocated to England from the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the exchequer. The vision for RDPE in the West Midlands Region is:

By 2013 rural businesses in the West Midlands will be more sustainable, competitive and better connected to their markets, active management will have improved the rural environment and rural communities will have a better quality of life.

The RDPE addresses three key areas known as Axes set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra):

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector (AXIS 1)
- Improving the environment and the countryside (AXIS 2)
- Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (AXIS 3)

There is also a fourth axis for implementation of the LEADER approach.

1.1 LEADER

Since 1991, the LEADER Community Initiative has evolved a distinctive approach to rural development that comprises:

- **Area based approach:** focusing on rural areas with sufficient coherence and critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a development strategy.
- **Bottom up approach:** involving local players, including the population at large and encouraging participatory decision-making at the local level.
- **Local partnership:** a balanced and representative selection of public and private partners drawn from the different social economic sectors in the local area.
- **Integrated and sustainable development strategies:** consolidating and complementing existing activity by also putting forward new means of achieving sustainable development.
- **Innovation:** in the delivery of programmes, relationships and project activity;
- **Inter territorial and transnational co-operation between rural areas.**
- **Networking:** stimulating and achieving co-operation, providing information and drawing lessons concerning rural development.

1.2 LEADER in the West Midlands

In the West Midlands, LEADER resources will be focused on the social and community objectives of the West Midlands Rural Delivery Framework (WMRDF). These are:

- Places to meet, 'recreate' and communicate.
- Open, inclusive, representative and participative governance.
- The capacity to develop and maintain voluntary groups and activities.
- Access to a range of 'fit for purpose' housing stock.
- A strong sense of place, health, well-being, security and a demonstrable satisfaction with their environment.
- A positive culture of enterprise and economic purpose, supported by the relevant infrastructure.

Resources will be provided from the seven measures of the RDPE as a basis for LEADER Local Development Strategies:

- 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.
- Measure 41 Implementing local development strategies with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more
- Measure 421 Implementing co-operation projects
- Measure 431 Running LAGs, acquiring skills and animating the territory.

1.3 LEADER in Worcestershire

1.3.1 The Vision for Worcestershire

The Worcestershire LEADER Vision

is of vibrant, inclusive and connected local communities delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to social and environmental challenges that enhance individual and community well-being

1.3.2 The Worcestershire LEADER Area

The rural areas of Worcestershire are a combination of very vibrant market towns, villages and some very sparsely populated areas. The ‘Thriving and Sustainable Rural Communities’ LEADER Approach set out in this Local Development Strategy aims to provide a focus for sustainable development in the rural areas of Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Wyre Forest Districts. The chosen wards are all classified as ‘rural’ by the Office for National Statistics. These are listed below by administrative District.

Table 1: Wards included in the Target Area for the LEADER Approach

Wychavon	Malvern Hills	Wyre Forest
Bowbrook	Alfrick and Leigh	Blakedown and Chaddesley
Bredon	Baldwin	Rock

Wychavon	Malvern Hills	Wyre Forest
Bretforton and Offenham	Hallow	Wolverley
Broadway and Wickhamford	Kempsey	Bewdley and Arley
Dodderhill	Lindridge	Cookley
Eckington	Longdon	Wribbenhall
Elmley Castle and Somerville	Martley	
Fladbury	Morton	
Hartlebury	Powick	
Harvington and Norton	Ripple	
Honeybourne and Pebworth	Teme Valley	
Inkberrow	Tenbury	
Lovett and North Claines	Upton and Hanley	
Ombersley	Woodbury	
Pinvin	Broadheath	
South Bredon Hill		
The Littletons		
Upton Snodsbury		
Badsey		
Drakes Broughton		
Norton and Whittington		
Pershore		

1.3.3 The LAG Partners

The following organisations have been involved in developing the Strategy and Business Plan for LEADER and have made a commitment to delivering the ‘Thriving and Sustainable Rural Communities’ programme in Worcestershire. Other partners have expressed an interest in joining the LAG and their profiles and capabilities will be added as appropriate.

Table 2: Organisations involved in developing the LDS and Business Plan

Robert Barlow	Chaplain for Agricultural &	Diocese of Worcester
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	Rural Life,	
Chris Brooks	Regeneration Manager	Wychavon District Council
Cllr David Cropp	Chairman	Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils
Paul Esrich	Manager	Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit
Joel Killer	Economic Development Officer	Malvern Hills District Council
Serena Marshall	County Youth Worker	Worcestershire Federation of Young Farmers Clubs
Richard Quallington	Chief Executive	Community First
Steve Singleton	Economic Development & Tourism Manager	Wyre Forest District Council
Catherine Smith	Community Liaison Officer	University of Worcester
Paul Sampson	Partnerships Manager	Advantage West Midlands
Valerie Breakwell	Coordinator	Worcestershire Rural Hub

2 CONTEXT FOR LEADER: a statistical perspective

2.1 Social context

The ageing population

The proportion of retired/older people in the area presents both challenges and opportunities. The provision of and easy access to medical and social care services as well as opportunities for social support and networking for those older people with poor health and mobility is a key challenge. The dilemma for service providers whether public or voluntary sector is cost (viability) versus access. Local solutions may be facilitated by LEADER through investment in innovative approaches to transport issues and in community provision that supports volunteers to deliver social support to older residents and facilitate social networking within and between older people in a rural community. This might also include voluntary sector provision of services such as fresh food, financial and

postal services and shop facilities. The needs and opportunities of the active ageing population may also be addressed through innovative approaches facilitated by LEADER funding such as volunteering schemes that harness the time and skills of older people and bring benefits both to the volunteer and the potential recipient of a service.

The low level of skills within the working population particularly in Wychavon wards

It is not envisaged that Worcestershire's LEADER programme will significantly enhance educational levels of the rural population in the target area. Liaison with the Learning and Skills Council will ensure that interventions support existing provision, where appropriate. The 'Thriving and Sustainable Rural Communities' LEADER programme may attempt to help unqualified people into training, if it will have a sustained economic improvement on their quality of life. The sparsity of the rural population with its issues of remoteness and accessibility provide a challenge to the traditional form of skills development and will require out-reach solutions. There is considerable expertise in the voluntary and community sector in delivering access level learning and support especially to those who are hardest to reach.

Access to life-long learning has been identified elsewhere as a critical need for the local communities, especially as the area has a high proportion of people who are retired and no longer have access to employer led training and development services.

Deprivation in terms of barriers to services

Securing fair access to services is identified as the major challenge – if 'fair access' is realised, accessible and good quality public services will meet the needs of the majority of rural residents, targeting those with limited mobility and low incomes in particular. LEADER may be able to facilitate innovative approaches to mainstream delivery in rural areas and also to enable alternative modes of delivery through voluntary groups, social enterprises or locally developed innovative solutions.

2.2 Environmental Context

The need for conservation and preservation of the area's natural and built assets is widely recognised and significant support for this work already exists. For example,

the management of biodiversity in SSSIs is a target under Axis 2 of the RDPE and grants for the restoration of some built heritage assets are already available from bodies such as English Heritage and Advantage West Midlands (for example, through the Redundant Building Grant Scheme). However, many of the environmental assets in the Worcestershire LDS areas are not eligible for this support. In addition, many people in rural communities have become disengaged from their local environment and have only a limited appreciation or involvement with it.

Interventions under the LEADER programme can help in the restoration and upgrading of key assets which are not eligible for other forms of financial support. The programme also has a key role to play in reconnecting people in the LDS area to the landscapes, wildlife, and buildings which characterises Worcestershire's rural environment. This will be achieved through support for projects which raise awareness and engagement and which demonstrate how the area's natural and built assets can be used to bring socioeconomic benefits to local people. In this respect a key focus for LEADER will be the management and utilisation of the area's resources. Examples include local food and sustainable tourism initiatives, the provision of targeted education and training to enable people to use local environmental resources and projects which harness renewable energy such as effective and sustainable management of the broadleaved woodland that is a significant feature of the LEADER programme area. These woodland areas are not being properly managed, consequently their value for biodiversity and landscape conservation is diminishing. There is a need to train people to manage this resource for products such as wood for fuel. This will improve the conservation value of woodlands and provide an economic return for those who own and manage them. Stimulating demand for wood fuel e.g. from local community facilities, will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce energy costs to communities. Actions supported by LEADER could include feasibility studies to include linking supply and demand in a local area and support for installations.

3 CONTEXT FOR LEADER: a consultation perspective

3.1 Strengths and assets

Participants identified a number of strengths and assets in their communities and in the rural areas of Worcestershire:

- i) **Active Groups & Organisations** – The Village Hall and Village Hall Committee is at the heart of many communities and is considered a strength of their village. Active societies/groups such as gardening groups, playgroups and also organisations such as Age Concern and the Women’s Institute were also considered strengths. Several sports clubs were also mentioned.
- ii) **Active Organisations** - Respondents specifically noted the importance of the church to their community and also identified the Parish Council as a strength of their community.
- iii) **Rural Heritage** - The importance of rural heritage was a common theme identified as a main strength and asset of rural areas and communities. The safety of rural communities and low crime rates are strengths and add to the quality of village life.
- iv) **The Natural Environment** – The Natural environment/beauty of rural areas is considered a strength and these areas are a pleasant place to live.
- v) **Community Participation** - Community participation emerged as a strength of rural communities and is considered as such especially in relation to volunteering. Community involvement and spirit was a key theme in terms of the role played by Churches and the WI in rural communities.
- vi) **Other strengths** - The communities generally consider voluntary organisations and volunteering as a strength of rural areas. The presence of retail outlets such as shops or pubs was also noted as a strength.

3.2 Weaknesses and needs

As a result of detailed and in-depth research and consultations with communities and stakeholders a number of weaknesses of target rural areas and rural communities came to light. Some of these such as Internet access and flooding were specific to certain areas whilst others such as transport and infrastructure were common to many of the areas. Some of the main weaknesses are:

- i) **Access to services** - The most common weakness identified by respondents was the lack of public transport or bus services. In several cases this was noted as a problem in the evening or in the case of young people, outside school hours. Young people, in particular rely on parents or older friends who can drive to go out in the evening and take part in recreational activities such as those provided by Young Farmers groups.
- ii) **Village Hall/Infrastructure/Other buildings** - Some village halls and community buildings have very basic facilities and are in need of refurbishment.
- iii) **Shops/retail/employment** – Lack of retail facilities and other services such as post offices, surgeries or cafés was considered a weakness. This is further compounded by the closure of some post offices in these areas.
- iv) **Lack of community engagement** – Serious concerns were raised during the consultation process regarding the lack of community engagement. Concern were also raised that rural communities are losing a sense of community defined as ‘neighbourliness’.
- v) **Community activity/volunteering** - The sense of a decline in voluntary activity to support community and village life is considered as a major weakness. Respondents referred to the small number of individuals who did everything and the challenges of engaging newcomers to the area in local community activity. Some people defined this as a lack of ‘neighbourliness’; residents no longer knowing members of their community and supporting each other informally.
- vi) **Environmental awareness/pollution** Lack of environmental awareness and high dependency on oil can spoil the rural environment and cultural heritage.

- vii) **Affordable Housing** – Lack of affordable housing in rural areas is a key weakness. More affordable housing would reduce the out migration from rural areas, particularly of young people.
- viii) **Lack of communication networks** – Rural communities are not considered to be well connected with each other owing to a lack of communication networks.
- ix) **Lack of places for young people to meet** – Lack of facilities for young people such as play areas or sports pitches. Young people's groups are also sometimes refused use of village halls and community centres.

3.3 Opportunities for development

Detailed analysis of the strength and weaknesses of the target rural areas afford us the following opportunities for development:

- i) **Buildings/facilities** - The existence of village hall and community buildings is a source of strength in the rural areas however, in most circumstances improvement of these is considered paramount to ensure their viability and the future sustainability of rural communities.
- ii) **Strengthening Community Engagement** – Strengthening the sense of community and community engagement to develop well-knit and connected rural communities is considered a priority for development under the LEADER programme.
- iii) **Access to services** – One of the main barriers to access to services is the lack of public and community transport available in rural areas. The consultation clearly showed that addressing this weakness and providing innovative and sustainable transport solutions especially during evenings for young people is key to the development of sustainable communities.

- iv) **Youth Inclusion** – More places to meet and play and support with transport to enable young people to play an active part in village life and the rural community. Youth café projects in market towns to support village clusters.

- v) **Rural Heritage** - Environmental awareness training or conservation work was cited as an opportunity for development. Some participants identified arts exhibitions or installations such as sculpture, as a potential intervention whilst others considered increasing community activity generally to be an important intervention.

3.4 The proposed programme themes

During the consultation with communities, stakeholders and focus group members, the participants were specifically asked to identify priorities to be addressed by LEADER in Worcestershire. The issues raised and ideas for support interventions identified through discussions/consultations/research are discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Not all interventions perceived by the participants are considered appropriate for the LEADER programme therefore only those which can have implications for the Local Development Strategy are discussed below. Where appropriate these have been matched with national, regional and local strategic priorities and themes.

Generic issues identified were:

- Transport.
- Activities for young people.
- The sense of a decline in voluntary activity to support community and village life.
- Access to affordable housing for rural residents.
- The impact of new housing developments on village life.
- More effective and creative use of technology to increase access to services and improve communication in rural areas.

The themes as proposed by participants are summarised below. The extent of agreement of these themes are shown as percentages of the number of respondents to the consultation questionnaire.

It should be noted that these themes have been used to guide the derivation of the strategy. They are not directly related to LEADER regional themes or objectives.

Theme 1 – Village halls & community buildings/facilities

The most common theme proposed by respondents was to improve/enhance Community Buildings/facilities, creating more, and better facilities, for all members of rural communities and improving communication networks.

Extent of Agreement – 97% of the respondents agreed and highlighted this is as the priority theme for LEADER intervention.

Existing Activity, Scope for LEADER Complementarity – Almost every village in the target rural area has a village hall or a community building being run and managed by a committee. These village community centres have access to National Lottery Funds and some of these also generate revenue by renting their facilities. LEADER would be able to complement these ongoing activities and make these building/facilities more accessible and appropriate for all members of the rural communities.

Potential opportunities for Intervention - Provide grants scheme for community buildings to improve facilities including community Internet access points where appropriate. Developing pilot village hubs, installing message boards, internet access, interactive websites/ bulletin boards in existing local facilities e.g. shops/post offices. Developing mobile services as information hubs – library, mobile shops. These encourage people to congregate at a regular day and time and facilitate communication between villages. Increasing participation of young people on committees and in Parish Council activities to promote understanding and improve access of young people.

The Relevance of the Leader Measures - The theme has some synergy with the LEADER Measures of Basic services for the economy and rural population and Village Renewal and Development. It will also align with WMRDF measure of the 'Places to meet recreate, and communicate'.

Theme 2 – Improving Access to Services

Improving access to services is considered the most important element in the future sustainability of rural communities. The lack of public and community transport available to rural communities especially for young people and in the evenings, is a major impediment to accessing services.

Extent of Agreement – 97% of the respondents/participants agreed with the theme. The theme was also highlighted in several Community Plans. Many rural areas in Worcestershire are considered deprived in the Indices of Deprivation domain of barriers to housing and services.

Existing Activity, Scope for LEADER Complementarity – Currently many programmes/projects are in place to enhance/improve access to services in Worcestershire's rural areas. Initiatives under LEADER would be able to complement all existing activities to improve access to services for the target rural areas the LAG is working closely with the Rural Access to Services Programme, managed by Worcestershire Accessibility Partnership to avoid duplication of activity.

Potential opportunities for Intervention – Opportunities include initiating pilot car clubs and car sharing schemes to facilitate access to arts and leisure activities as well as medical services. Support should continue to make investments in transport schemes such as Dial a Ride, community car schemes for medical appointments and car schemes organised by surgeries.

The Relevance of the Leader Measures – This theme sits appropriately with the LEADER measure of Basic services for the economy and rural population and enhancing skills of economic actors in the rural areas. It will also address the Government's agenda of Inclusive Communities and would be able to reduce the social and economic exclusion of rural communities.

Theme 3 – Strengthening community engagement and community capacity building

Enhancing community capacity to strengthen community engagement and address the loss of a sense of community – ‘neighbourliness’. Improving volunteering activity in rural areas to generate a sense of belonging is also considered vital to create a vibrant village society.

Extent of Agreement – 90% of the respondents see this as very important for improving rural communities.

Existing Activity, Scope for LEADER Complementarity – Many voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS) and parish councils are trying to address this issue. However, currently few opportunities exist through major funding streams. LEADER would be able to complement the work of VCS organisations and parish councils to enhance community capacity and volunteering.

Potential opportunities for Intervention – Provision of training and development funds to enable village and parish council websites to include interactive bulletin boards. Grants for marketing and communication projects in villages such as free newsheets for distribution to every house. Supporting pilot projects for an interactive skills/needs database for villages to match needs in rural community with people able to help. People wanting to share transport could be put in touch with each other. Possibilities can be explored around recruiting and training volunteer ‘community facilitators’ to pro actively welcome new residents, get to know people in the community and facilitate community development activity.

The Relevance of the Leader Measures – The theme has good relevance under the LEADER Measure Village renewal and development. It will also match with the WMRDF objective of ‘The capacity to develop and maintain voluntary groups and activities and creating a strong sense of place, health, wellbeing, security and a demonstrable satisfaction with their environment’.

Theme 4 – Protection/enhancement of the rural heritage and environment

The landscape and the quality of the natural and built environment is regarded as the main strength of the target areas. The protection of the natural and historical assets of local villages is a key concern as is the potential impact of climate change.

Extent of Agreement – The majority of participants and respondents to the consultation process selected this theme.

Existing Activity, Scope for LEADER Complementarity – There are many national, regional and local ongoing activities supporting this theme for which LEADER will provide complementarity. These activities include ECO Schools, One Planet Worcester, Re-Think Energy Funding and on-going Community Fairs to assess and enhance energy efficiency.

Potential opportunities for Intervention - Environmental awareness training and activities that support conservation and enhancement of the rural environment are seen as opportunities for intervention under LEADER. Establishing better connections between communities and the natural and built environment and creating a better understanding of our distinctive heritage through environmental education and interpretation are perceived as important. Addressing climate change at a local level is also seen as a key area for intervention.

The Relevance of the Leader Measures – The theme matches with the LEADER measure of village renewal and of conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage.

3.4.1 Ranking of priorities

As part of the consultation process, respondents were asked to rank the priorities of four potential measures that could be delivered by the programme. The following table represents the average ranking.

Table 3: Ranking of Priorities by Theme

Theme	Average Rank (where 1 is highest priority and 4 is lowest priority)
Rural Services	1.6
Rural Renewal	2.5
Rural Heritage	2.8
Skills in Rural Areas	3.1

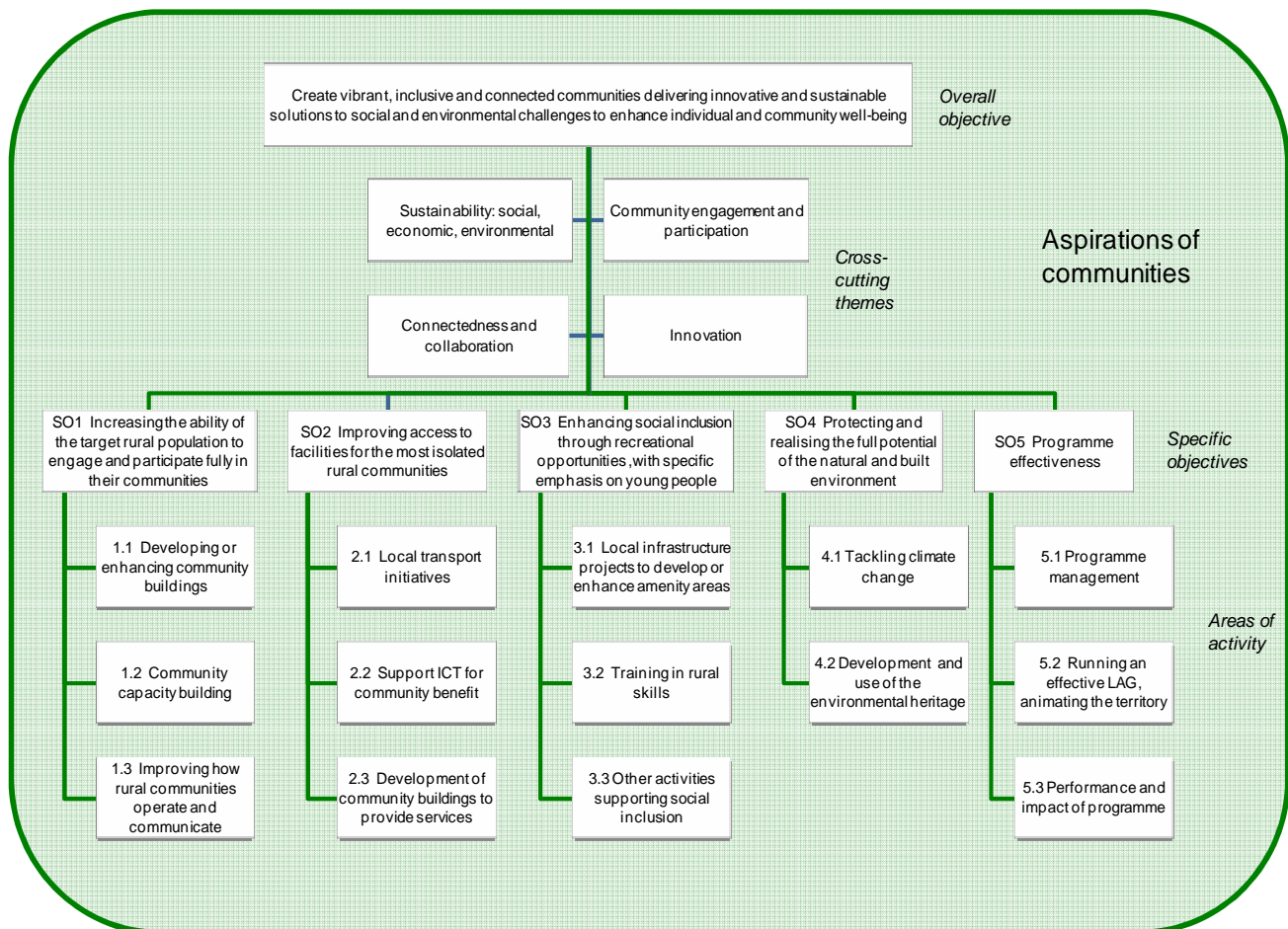
Several respondents noted that they could all be considered priorities although services emerged as the clear priority theme for respondents. Additional comments reinforced the importance of village halls as they are often perceived as the focal point of a rural community.

4 THE STRATEGY

4.1 The Overall Objective for Worcestershire LEADER

The Worcestershire Local Action Group has agreed the following Overall Objective to achieve the stated LEADER vision in target rural areas:

By 2013 create vibrant, inclusive and connected local communities delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to social and environmental challenges that enhance individual and community well being.



4.1.1 Cross cutting themes

Theme 1 Social, economic and environmental sustainability

Sustainability is an over-arching issue for the regional LEADER programme. Projects will be assessed for their:

- Contribution to environmental sustainability ie carbon reduction, mitigating global warming.
- The financial viability of the proposed activity and how it will be sustained beyond the LEADER funding term.
- The impact of the activity on social interaction and community capacity in the longer term.

Theme 2 Community engagement and participation

The LAG are determined to ensure that the LEADER programme adopts a 'bottom up approach' - activities are determined by rural communities themselves and offer practical, workable solutions to the challenges and issues they face thus delivering real and lasting benefits. This commitment is reflected in the broad membership of the LAG and the extensive and open consultation undertaken to inform the development of this strategy. Project applicants will be expected to demonstrate wide community participation in developing project ideas and local, collective ownership of any activity.

Theme 3 Connectedness and collaboration

The isolation of rural communities has emerged as a common theme throughout the consultation process. The connectedness and collaboration cross cutting theme demonstrates WLAG's commitment to enabling and facilitating communication, information sharing and mentoring support at a national, regional and local level between and amongst individual projects and communities. Workshops, training and information events will support local collaboration.

The LAG is aware of the wide range of initiatives already in place to support some of the priorities that have been identified and is actively working with partners at a county, district and local level to ensure that activities complement rather than duplicate each other and that initiatives are sharing learning and best practice in the development of sustainable rural communities.

The LAG will also participate in the West Midlands LEADER network via the Chair or Programme Co-ordinator and commits to sharing information about LEADER across the West Midlands amongst LAG members and key partners in order to increase learning about what works and apply where appropriate to the Worcestershire LEADER programme.

Theme 4 Innovation

Stimulating innovation is a key objective for West Midlands LEADER under the regulations for 2008-2013 and is incorporated as a cross cutting theme in the Worcestershire LDS.

Worcestershire's 'bottom up approach', engaging local communities in setting their own aspirations for their locality, defining their own challenges and developing local, community-based solutions that deliver real and lasting benefits, underpins our approach to innovation. The emphasis on community ownership and engagement in project delivery will drive innovative approaches.

4.1.2 Programme objectives

The LAG has established the following programme objectives that together will achieve its Overall Objective for the programme. Programme objectives are shown aligned to RDPE Measures in the Business Plan.

- Objective 1: Increasing the ability of the target rural population to fully engage in their communities**
- Objective 2: Improving access to facilities for the most isolated rural communities**
- Objective 3: Enhancing social inclusion through recreational opportunities with a specific emphasis on children and young people**

- Objective 4: Protecting and realising the full potential of the natural and built environment**
- Objective 5: Programme effectiveness**

4.2 Conclusions from the analysis and consultations

The strategy is underpinned by the statistical analysis and extensive consultation with rural communities and stakeholders detailed in Sections 2 and 3. These can be summarised as:

- An aged and ageing population. 25% (30,025) of the resident population are retired people. This creates opportunities for harnessing the skills and energy of the active ageing population. It also has significant impacts for access to health and care facilities and social and recreational activities for older people with poor health and mobility.
- Low skills levels of a significant proportion of the population of some of the targeted wards.
- Rural deprivation defined as rural isolation and poor access to services for both individuals and communities.
- Rural poverty - disparities between, and polarisation of, incomes between rural and urban areas of the county.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Limited opportunities to access formal training for young people particularly in rural skills and for lifelong learning for older people.
- Lack of community facilities and communication networks.
- Decline of traditional businesses in the agricultural sector.
- Limited access to recreational facilities and opportunities for young people.
- Poor condition of some village halls and community buildings.
- Lack of retail facilities and other services such as a post office, a surgery or a café to sustain communities.
- Lack of community engagement and loss of sense of community – ‘neighbourliness’.
- Decline in voluntary activity to support community and village life
- Poor transport in rural areas.
- Necessity to conserve and enhance distinctive local character/environment.