



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17TH SEPTEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE CAERPHILLY RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the latest developments with the Rural Development Plan in Caerphilly and update them on the proposals for the programme after 2013.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The programme originally covered the period 2007-2013 in two phases. The second phase started in March 2011 and has recently been extended and enhanced with additional funds to allow delivery to continue into 2014. This funding is enabling rural communities and businesses to benefit from a wide range of support.
- 2.2 A new programme was planned to start in line with the other European Funded Programmes in 2014. However, the details of this programme are still emerging.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Wales Rural Development Plan funded projects contribute directly to the priorities and activities set out in Caerphilly's Regeneration Framework and Action Plan and Living Environment Strategy and also contribute to the priorities set out in "Caerphilly Delivers", the Single Integrated Plan.

4. THE REPORT

Background

- 4.1 The Caerffili Cwm a Mynydd Partnership manages the Rural Development Plan in Caerphilly. Their role is to oversee delivery of the whole programme. Part of the Rural Programme concentrating on more community led projects, encouraging a bottom-up and innovative approach to rural development. This goes under the name of LEADER, which is French acronym translated as "Links between the rural economy and development actions". There is also a Local Action Group, which is responsible for promoting this approach and delivering the LEADER project.
- 4.2 Membership of both groups is drawn from public, private, community and voluntary sectors in equal numbers. The Partnership is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development, Cllr Ken James and the Local Action Group by a Private Sector representative - Gordon Edwards.

- 4.3 The Council acts as the Lead Body to manage the programme on behalf of the Partnership and Local Action Group. The Projects themselves are delivered by a variety of local organisations, including the Council.

Current programme

- 4.4 The programme brings funding of 80% from the European Commission and Welsh Government. In addition, the eligible Lead Body costs incurred by the Council can be 100% funded subject to an upper limit, which is directly related to projects achieving their forecast spend.
- 4.5 In the first phase, 12 projects were approved with a total value of over £3 million. For the second phase, a further 10 projects are being supported with a total value of nearly £3.75 million. The original programme required projects to end in 2013. However, early in 2013, the Welsh Government agreed to allow extensions and enhanced funding to the projects to allow them to go on into 2014.
- 4.6 The funding available in the programme is much less than under Convergence, and it is targeted at the eligible wards in the area. Nonetheless, it can support projects in ways that are not available through other programmes. It can make significant contributions to smaller rural communities, particularly for innovative community projects.
- 4.7 This is illustrated by the following examples of activities recently undertaken within the LEADER project:
- 4.7.1 Funding for local community projects has enabled the Phillipstown Cheap as Chips group to undertake a number of workshops with a local chef, developing a range of recipe and meal ideas for a community ready meal social enterprise. The group have made six trial ready meal ideas, learned the requirements of labelling and packaging and how to standardise their recipes to ensure they are the same, high quality product every time they are cooked. The project is now working on the next stage of trialling the products in the community.
- 4.7.2 The Maes yr Onn off grid farmhouse project, which was officially opened on 6th June, only got off the ground due to the help received by the Sustainable Energy project. The aim now is to maximise the future benefits of the project by effective promotion of the achievements and in monitoring the on going results. The project is working with Constructing Excellence Wales on drafting a monitoring strategy and behaviour change project as well as developing a social engagement programme linked specifically to the ecoschools and educational learning.
- 4.7.3 The Adding Value to Local Timber project has supplied timber to local business Craft Wales for machining a pair of signs for Parc Cwm Darran main entrance and a smaller version on the south entrance to the park. The timber came from an oak tree felled in Pentwynmawr due to works on the power lines. This has led to further orders for more signs.
- 4.7.4 The same project has started a network of local timber and craft businesses and, as a result of further work; a new co-operative has been formed, trading under the name Valleys T8. The members have learnt a variety of new skills, particularly around marketing and retailing, and held their first 'pop-up' gallery and sale at Blackwood indoor market in June. With the support of the project the group is going from strength to strength.
- 4.7.5 As a result of consultation with local hospitality businesses, the Hospitality project, with support from Capital Regional Tourism, hosted two social media workshops. These were aimed at providing an introduction to the relatively new marketing tools of Facebook and Twitter for businesses. Local businesses gained valuable knowledge on how to use social media to engage consumers and market themselves effectively.

4.7.6 Details of the projects above, along with all the other projects, are set out in Appendix 1, together with some illustrative photographs.

Future Programme 2014 - 2020

- 4.8.1 Development of the Rural programme after 2013 is running behind the other programmes, and there are still several uncertainties.
- 4.8.2 The first centres on **timing**. Implementation of the Rural Development Plan for Wales is not likely before January 2015. Extension of the current programme will not fill the gap.
- 4.8.3 **Budget** - the total amount of European funding for Wales over 2014-2020 is not yet known. It is clear is that there will be significantly less money over the coming 7 year period for Rural Wales compared to the current programming period. It is hoped that this will all be known around September/October. Furthermore, the programme in Wales is part-funded by the Welsh Government and co-financing for the next Rural Development Plan has yet to be agreed.
- 4.8.4 At this stage, the **eligible areas** are still to be defined. It is expected that there will not be much change, though some areas could be added. Following on from that, it is still to be decided whether structures will align with Local Authority boundaries or possibly be based on wider more regional areas.
- 4.8.5 **Delivery Structure** – The current structure of Partnerships and Local Action Groups can create some duplication and confusion. These distinctions will be removed, and it is expected that there will be just one Partnership/Group to cover an area. A process may be introduced shortly to select these. It is possible that that the Welsh Government will be looking for a reduction in the number of lead bodies.
- 4.8.6 **Community Led Local Development (CLLD)** – The European Commission is promoting a new approach that removes the distinctions between the different funding streams. This will impact on the Convergence and Rural funding along with the other programmes. There is still a lot of detail to be resolved before this integration is achieved, particularly for the Rural programme.
- 4.8.7 However, what seems to be emerging is that a CLLD approach could be developed, for example, in the form of Multi Fund Local Development Strategies to be developed by the Local Action Groups. This would enable the development of integrated activities and interventions across all or some of the European funding streams.
- 4.8.8 **Draft Rural Development Plan for Wales** - Work is progressing internally in the Welsh Government on the 'Vision, Outcomes and Schemes' that will form part of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Plan for Wales. Welsh Government is planning to hold a formal public written consultation on the Vision, Outcomes and Schemes in February – March 2014, with analysis of consultation responses during March/April and formal Welsh Government reaction to the consultation responses in April 2014. A major stakeholder engagement event will be held during this consultation.
- 4.8.9 A report will be brought to the Committee when more definite information on these issues emerges.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's full Equalities Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied. However, the planned investments will benefit many different groups in the community. All European funded projects are also assessed against rigorous criteria.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The opportunities arising from the Rural Development Programme need to be maximised for the benefit of the County Borough. The implications for the Council will depend on projects spending up to their approval limits. If this is not achieved, then there could be a shortfall in funding to cover the Lead body costs. Delays to implementing the new programmes could also have implications for the Council.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Current arrangements fund the Lead Body role for the Partnership and the LOCAL ACTION GROUP, as well as the delivery of projects.
- 7.2 There are no immediate direct personnel implications arising from this report, but it is likely that the structure for the management and delivery of the Rural Development Plan after 2013 will have implications for the Lead Body work of the European Unit, Finance and Countryside and Landscape Service. There will also be implications for personnel who are currently delivering projects, especially if there are delays to the next delivery round.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All comments received are included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 For members to note the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To provide information on progress with the projects coming to an end and on future projects funded by the next phase of the Rural Development Plan Wales.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000. This is a Cabinet function.

Authors: Victoria Phillips, European and Partnership Officer, phillv@caerphilly.gov.uk
Antony Bolter, Group Manager (Strategy and Funding), boltea@caerphilly.gov.uk
Dan Coles, RDP Delivery Manager, colesdj@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Cllr Ken James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development, jamesk1@caerphilly.gov.uk
Stuart Rosser, Interim Chief Executive, rossesa@caerphilly.gov.uk
Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, aspins@caerphilly.gov.uk
Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration and Planning elliop@caerphilly.gov.uk
Phil Griffiths, Manager Countryside & Landscape Services, griffpm@caerphilly.gov.uk
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer, scammn@caerphilly.gov.uk
Stephen Harris, Acting Head of Corporate Finance, harrisr@caerphilly.gov.uk
Dave Roberts, Principal Group Accountant, roberda@Caerphilly.Gov.UK
Paula Beaman, Grants manager, beamap@caerphilly.gov.uk

Not circulated to HR or legal as there are no relevant issues

Background Papers:

Caerphilly Local Rural Development Strategy 2007 – 2013

<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/cwmamynydd/en/about.html>

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Caerffili - Cwm a Mynydd Partnership Projects approved for March 2011 – 2014