

North York Moors National Park Authority

30 September 2019

2015 – 2020 North York Moors, Coast and Hills (NYMCH) LEADER Programme – Final Report

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To share with Members a final summary of the 2015-2020 North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme.

2. Background/Context

- 2.1 Following the successful conclusion of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 2008-13 North York Moors, Coast and Hills (NYMCH) LEADER Programme, the partnership agreed to pursue a subsequent LEADER Programme for the area. Funding was secured from Defra for a Transition period between Programmes in order to collate up to date research, undertake consultation with partners and stakeholders, and produce a new Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the area which would effectively act as a funding bid document. This was completed by early autumn 2014 and submitted to Defra for consideration. The application was successful and the Programme was allocated the third largest allocation of funds nationally – €2,919,999 (offers were made in Euros but at this time equated to approx. £2,335,999). The majority of funding was allocated to 'project spend', with a smaller amount (up to 18%, later increased to 20%) eligible to be used to cover Running Costs and Administration (RC&A) (e.g.: salaries, on-costs, events, training etc).
- 2.2 It should be noted that there are fundamental differences between the 2015 – 2020 LEADER Programme and the previous programme, the most significant of these being the shift away from its traditional role as a socio-economic programme, to one principally focused on the creation of jobs and growth. It was this principle which formed the core of the LDS.

3. Programme Delivery

- 3.1 The agreed LDS provided the structure for the NYMCH LEADER Programme, and proposed locally-appropriate activity was focused around 6 nationally determined priority areas:
1. Farm Productivity;
 2. Micro / Small Business & Farm Diversification;
 3. Rural Tourism
 4. Rural Services
 5. Culture & Heritage, and
 6. Forestry Productivity.
- 3.2 It quickly became clear that due to restrictions around eligibility, several of the strategic projects and some of the smaller, locally specific areas of activity proposed would not be acceptable to the RPA. The Programme adapted to this new operating context and the first Calls for Projects under all priority areas, with the exception of Rural Services and Culture & Heritage, were issued utilising national eligibility criteria.

Some restrictions were added locally, for example accommodation projects were not accepted, as it was strongly felt that this could occupy a significant amount of the resource available and there was already a significant level of accommodation available in the area.

- 3.3. Officially due to start in January 2015, the Programme was substantially delayed until November 2015 due to the national processes, paperwork and procedures being developed and implemented by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) not being in place.
- 3.4. Delivery structures implemented during the 2008-13 LEADER Programme were considered to have worked well and so were continued into the current Programming period. North Yorkshire County Council continued to operate as the Accountable Body alongside the North York Moors National Park who continued in the role of Lead Partner, with workloads and responsibilities allocated through a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place for the duration of the Programme.
- 3.5. As a partnership based Programme, huge support has been given throughout by both public and voluntary sector partner organisations, as well as volunteers representing community groups who gave their time, effort and energy to be a part of the Programme, in particular the decision making Executive Group.
- 3.6. As a result of the delayed start, Programme staff at both the NYMNP and NYCC were well prepared to ensure the Programme was operational and fully functioning as quickly as possible. This, combined with an ability to be flexible to change, a significant local appetite for funding opportunities, a programme of communications and strong support from partners and the Executive Group, meant interest in the Programme was high from the outset.
- 3.7. Delivery of the Programme between 2016 and early 2019 when the final round of projects were approved, was punctuated by several periods of inactivity. The first of these came in May 2016 when the purdah period initiated for the EU Referendum was extended until November 2016 due to the uncertainty that emerged as a result. The 6 month hiatus ultimately meant momentum was lost and the Programme effectively had to re-launch and re-issue the Calls for Projects. The second break, although not as substantial as the first, occurred throughout April and May 2017 as a result of the purdah periods associated with Local Elections followed by the snap General Election.
- 3.8. The decision to leave the EU and the subsequent date set of 31 March 2019 resulted in an amendment of the timescales for delivery of the Programme from practical and financial completion by March 2021, to full financial commitment (not spend) by March 2019. This substantially shortened the Programme and meant all activity was accelerated in order to meet this new deadline.
- 3.9. In order to achieve full allocation by March 2019, September 2017 saw the issuing of the final two Calls for Projects under the Rural Services and Culture & Heritage priorities, and it was agreed between Programme staff at NYCC and the NYMNP that realistically this meant the programme would, with the exception of a small number of final project claims, be concluded a year early, by March 2020. The implications of this decision were that Programme staff contracts were reduced in length by 1 year, but the additional funds this released from the budget would mean more funds than originally anticipated would be available for commitment to projects, businesses and communities in the LEADER area.
- 3.10. The final project applications were submitted to and considered by the Executive Group in May 2019. Sufficient funding was available to fund all but one of the projects in full. Additional funding was made available by the RPA through funds surrendered from other LEADER Programmes who felt they were unable to meet full levels of

commitment. A request was submitted to the RPA for additional funds to make up the shortfall and allow the final project to be approved in totality; however demand was high and exceeded the amount available. All requests were approved but at a reduced rate of 34.5% of the requested figure. Happily, with some adjustments to the project, the final applicant was able to accept the revised grant offer.

4. Programme Achievements

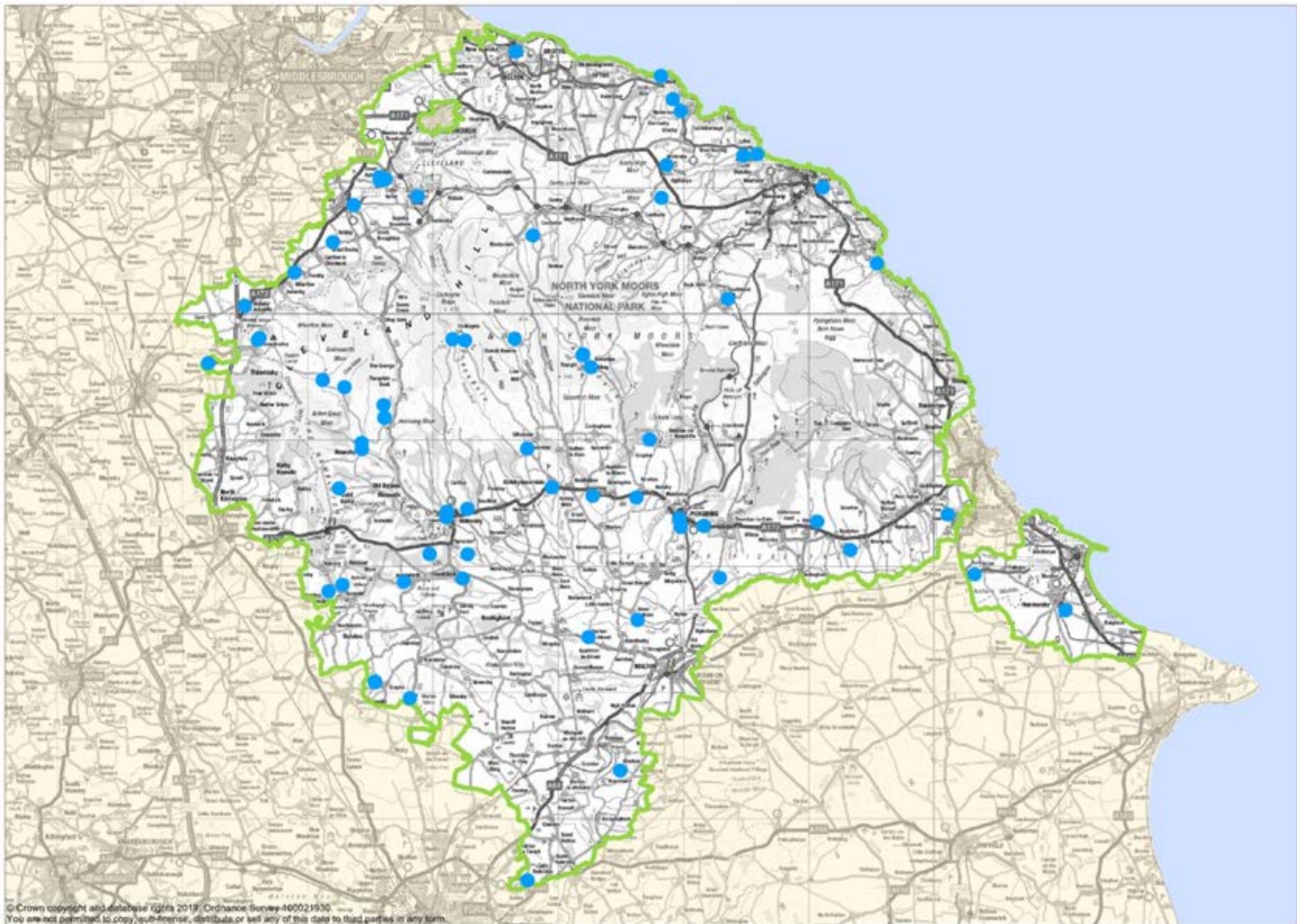
4.1 The 2015-2020 LEADER Programme was primarily concerned with achieving economic outputs, in particular jobs and growth. The table below summarises the outputs achieved in relation to each priority area:

	Farm Productivity	Micro/Small Business	Rural Tourism	Rural Services	Culture & Heritage	Forestry Productivity
No. of Projects Supported	30	22	7	5	1	3
Amount of Funding Allocated	£395,084	£1,158,138	£457,334	£6180,556	£6,198	£25,778
No. of Jobs Created (FTE)	4	41.8	7.7			0.2
No. of Businesses Benefitting	30	22	10	3	1	3
New Techniques Used	43	2				2
Additional Overnight Visitors			7,992			
Additional Day Visitors			64,770			
Rural Population Benefitting			2,000	4,640		

4.2 The total amount of LEADER grant awarded during the 2015 – 2020 programming period between the 68 contracted projects is £2,223,088. When public and private match funding is included, the total investment in the area during the lifetime of the Programme is £5,063,015.

4.3 It is worth noting that in addition to the above, a further 4 projects were approved and offered a contract but for various reasons these were either not accepted or the applicant withdrew before the project commenced.

4.4 With regards to the RC&A element of the Programme budget, a maximum of 20% of total programme expenditure was eligible to be spent. The NYMCH LEADER Programme is operating at 14.6%. This is well below national expectations and the majority of other LEADER Programmes in the country. Whilst achieving this has meant additional resource being available for 'project spend', the intensive nature of the delivery mechanisms required and the contracted programme delivery timescales has put pressure on staff.



5. Successful Projects

5.1 A huge range of projects across all six priorities have been supported by the 2015 – 2020 North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme. A selection of projects have been included below to illustrate the diversity of the Programme.

5.2 Farm Productivity projects ranged in grant size between £2,500 and £79,884 with many being for mobile sheep or cattle handling systems, turnover crates and robotic milking systems. The two farm businesses shown below are Woodhouse Farm near Westow (below left), and Borough Green Farm, Low Easby (below right).



5.3 The largest proportion of funds were used to support both existing and new start-up businesses to grow, increase their turnover, access new markets, produce new products, and create additional employment opportunities in the area. There was no restriction on the type of business we were able to support.

5.4 Horse and Hound Services (below left) a start-up equine physiotherapy business in Rosedale successfully applied for two separate grants totalling £37,687; whilst Joiners Coffee Shop in Ingleby Cross (which will sit within the beneficiaries business alongside their existing coffee shop and roastery), received a grant of £10,432. Together these businesses have created 5 new FTE jobs.



5.5 A total of £457,198 of LEADER funding was allocated to Rural Tourism projects across the area, with the largest grant (£136,261) being provided to the footpath and access improvements works along the Cleveland Way at Boggle Hole.



- 5.6 Fewer projects with smaller grants were provided to projects under the Rural Services, Culture & Heritage and Forestry Productivity priorities. The images below show a firewood processing machine at Mulgrave Estate Sawmill, Captain Cooks Memorial Garden in Great Ayton, and a new community facility at St Mary's Church, Sandsend.



6. Programme Closedown

- 6.1 We are now in the closing few months of the Programme and work is focused on ensuring the majority of projects are practically and financially completed by March 2020, and that the Programme meets all compliance standards and an appropriate audit trail is in place. Post March 2020 a small number of project claims will still need to be made between March and December 2020 (the final date for the payment of any claims), but these will be dealt with by NYCC staff.

7. The Future (& Legacy)

- 7.1 The 2015-2020 NYMCH LEADER Programme has been one of highs, lows and everything in between! It has been able to support some fantastic projects, business, individuals and communities and in doing so will leave a lasting impact across the North York Moors and beyond. When considered in tandem with its predecessor, the 2008-2013 NYMCH LEADER Programme, in the last 10 years £4.8 million of LEADER funding has been allocated to projects which has in turn allowed for additional private and public sector match funding to be secured. The total investment in the NYMCH LEADER area has been around £10.4million.
- 7.2 Rural development programmes can have enormous value and impact beyond that of the basic financial investment they can provide. The ability for communities and individuals to work together, develop skills, build capacity, promote volunteering, encourage entrepreneurialism, take a chance on something new and ultimately develop a solution which is appropriate for that particular situation is invaluable.
- 7.3 An evaluation / summary report will be prepared by Programme staff and made available to all partners and stakeholders. The intention is that this will also be valuable in forming the basis of any future work the National Park Authority or any other partners may wish to do regarding rural development in the future.
- 7.4 There are a number of opportunities including the Local industrial Strategy and the Shared Prosperity Fund which are anticipated over the next year or so and could offer valuable opportunities to the NPA. Alongside influencing emerging local and national activity and working with the National Park family to continue to develop our collective ask / offer, understanding our own strengths and opportunities to develop our policy position and unique set of ambitions will allow us to proactively support the implementation of future rural development in the North York Moors for the benefit of our communities and businesses.

8. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 8.1 All costs incurred by the NYMNP in relation to the delivery of LEADER are reclaimed at 100% and will continue to be so until March 2020. At which point no further costs will be incurred.
- 8.2 No staffing implications as fixed term contracts are in place and will end in March 2020.

9. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

- 9.1 The only direct reference to LEADER in the NYMNP Management Plan as a 'means to achieve' is policy **C4** – Local communities will be supported to maintain and celebrate local heritage, customs, traditions and skills and record their social, cultural and economic history.
- 9.2 It is considered that through some of the projects the NYMCH LEADER Programme has supported, a contribution has also been made to the following Management Plan policies:
- B1** – Visitor spend will be increased;
 - B4** – The quality and variety of tourism and recreation facilities and accommodation will be improved;
 - B6** – The production and profitability of agriculture will be increased through improved use of appropriate technology and transfer of knowledge without harming the Park's special qualities;

- B8** – Proposals for the diversification of agricultural enterprises will be supported where there is no harm to the National Park’s special qualities;
- B20** – Economic development will be supported where it is related to the special qualities of the National park and the amount of allocated employment land will be increased;
- B24** – Opportunities for the production and sale of good quality local food and products will be increased; and
- C3** – Communities will be involved in plan-making and in delivering services, facilities and projects where appropriate.

10. **Legal Implications**

- 10.1 There are no expected legal implications as a result of the NYMCH LEADER Programme or the contents of this report.

11. **Recommendation**

- 11.1 That:

- a) Members note the report; and
- b) Consider how to ensure rural development is embedded into the work of the National Park in the future.

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