

North York Moors National Park Authority

17 December 2012

North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on delivery of the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme.
- 1.2 To outline benefits of LEADER to the National Park to date and;
- 1.3 To seek Members approval to begin preparation for the next round of LEADER.

2. Background

- 2.1 LEADER forms part of the wider national Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Along with some of the other elements of the RDPE it was delivered by the Regional Development Agencies until their abolition in 2012. It is now managed directly by Defra.
- 2.2 The NPA is the Lead partner for the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme with North Yorkshire County Council acting as the accountable body. The programme received an original approval of funding amounting to £3.16 million at the end of 2008. It runs from 2008 to March 2014 and set out to invest more than £2.6million in community based projects over its lifetime based around the following main themes:
 - Basic Services
 - Village Renewal & Development
 - Encouragement of Tourism
 - Conservation & Heritage
- 2.3 The Programme is guided by the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) which is a requirement of all LEADER programmes. The LAG is a group of individuals who broadly represent the interests of the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER area and its communities. The Group helps to set policy and provide strategic steer to the LEADER programme. It is the LAG that appoints the LAG Executive and delegates decision making powers to them. This includes decisions on all LEADER Programme funding applications. They also have the responsibility of setting project criteria and other programme policies.
- 2.4 The Programme Manager (Mike Horrocks) and Programme Officer (Amy Thomas) were appointed during the first quarter of 2009 and have led the partnership based approach to delivery of the programme to date. They are based within the Conservation Department and work closely with the NPA and local community / voluntary organisations.

3. Progress on delivery of the LEADER programme

- 3.1 A report on progress with the programme up to March 2012 was considered by the NPA Conservation Committee in April 2012.
- 3.2 The Programme has now allocated its entire budget of just over £2.6m to 240 projects through the main programme and Small Scale Enhancement Schemes. Many of these projects have been completed whilst others are currently underway.
- 3.3 The Main LEADER Programme (grants over £5,000) has to date supported 65 projects resulting in £5.35million of overall project expenditure. Grants have ranged in size from just over £5,000 to just under £130,000 with the majority being under £30,000 (38). Projects range from local community initiatives right through to strategic LEADER area wide projects such as the LEADER Local Distinctiveness Project – Your North York Moors. The 5 LEADER Small Scale Enhancement Schemes have to date supported more than 175 projects across the programme area, of which 104 are in the National Park. The range of projects include the North York Moors Honeybee Conservation project, River Esk Monitoring Initiative and restoration of village features such as maypoles, war memorials, traditional name plates and trods, and arts based conservation and heritage projects.
- 3.4 We have tried hard to make sure that as many people as possible benefit from our programme and can count practical activity supported by LEADER in 148 of the 199 villages in the LEADER area.

4. Programme Budget

- 4.1 In 2011 the programme received a cut of £227,000 to its budget as part of the wider round of RDPE cuts resulting from a government spending review. This meant that the Programme had to be closed to new applications but did not adversely affect any existing projects.
- 4.2 In April 2012 Defra confirmed that the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme was the top performing programme in the country and that it would receive additional funds as a result of its high standard of performance to date. An additional £280,000 was awarded to the programme – the highest national allocation.
- 4.3 The programme was subsequently re-opened for applications and at meetings in August and October the remaining additional budget was awarded to a further 12 projects, mainly consisting of support for community building improvements but also including the NPA tourism project ‘Your North York Moors’.

5. Benefits to the National Park

- 5.1 To date the LEADER Programme has funded 5 projects directly operated by the NPA (Small Scale Enhancements Scheme, Community Access Project, Handale Abbey Walled Garden restoration, Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery project and Your North York Moors). These have a combined value at £719,191 with a total LEADER investment of £523,119.
- 5.2 An additional 9 projects not directly operated by the NPA but closely associated with its priorities have also been supported, with a combined value of £686,874 and investment from LEADER of £247,774.
- 5.3 The total number of LEADER funded projects that bring benefit to the National Park is in excess of 151. These have a combined total value of just under £3.7million with

investment from LEADER of just over £1.8million. A breakdown of LEADER expenditure by Local Government area is as follows:

- Ryedale £955,341
- Scarborough £1,892,595
- East Cleveland £776,885
- Hambleton £599,893

5.4 68% of the total LEADER programme budget has been allocated to projects that benefit the National Park and its communities.

6. **Future of LEADER**

6.1 Defra have indicated that there will be a future LEADER programme as part of the RDPE between 2014 and 2020. It is also likely that there will continue to be a minimum spend of 5% of the RDPE budget via the LEADER approach. There is currently a fairly high level of uncertainty within Defra about the size, geographical make-up and requirements of a future Local Development Strategy for LEADER areas but initial discussions and consultations have started. The programme manager and Executive Group have engaged thoroughly in consultation processes and discussions with Ministers in order to represent the views of the LAG.

6.2 Running concurrently with development of the next RDPE is a consultation process being run by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The BIS consultation is focussed on potential and scope for delivery of wider European Structural Funds via Community Led Local Development – an approach similar to LEADER. There is potential for a future Local Development Strategy for this area to incorporate plans and priorities which stretch beyond the current RDPE and utilise other European monies. There is still however a significant amount of work to be done at European and UK Government level in terms of establishing how this can be delivered in practical terms before thorough consideration can be given to this option at a local level.

6.3 At a local level Defra is encouraging the LAG and wider partners including the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Farming and Rural Networks and Local Nature Partnerships to start developing proposals as to how the new LEADER programme may best be implemented. Early discussions with these partners have started to explore this issue and indications are that the current model is seen to be working well. It is considered important that these discussions are progressed to help ensure that the area benefits from the next round of LEADER.

7. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

7.1 Delivery of the LEADER Programme is externally funded with in kind contributions of management and office space coming from the National Park Authority. The project applications approved to date will result in an investment of more than £2.6m from LEADER and a total programme value of just over £5.9m into the area.

7.2 Staff time will be needed to start the planning process for the next LEADER round.

8. **Sustainability Appraisal**

8.1 A Sustainability Assessment is not required because the report is a:

- Report for information.

9. **Legal Implications**

9.1 Legal implications relating to the employment of project officers

10. **Recommendation**

10.1 That the report is noted.

10.2 Members support the recommendation to begin preparation for the next round of LEADER with a view to securing a future LEADER programme from 2014 – 2020.

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