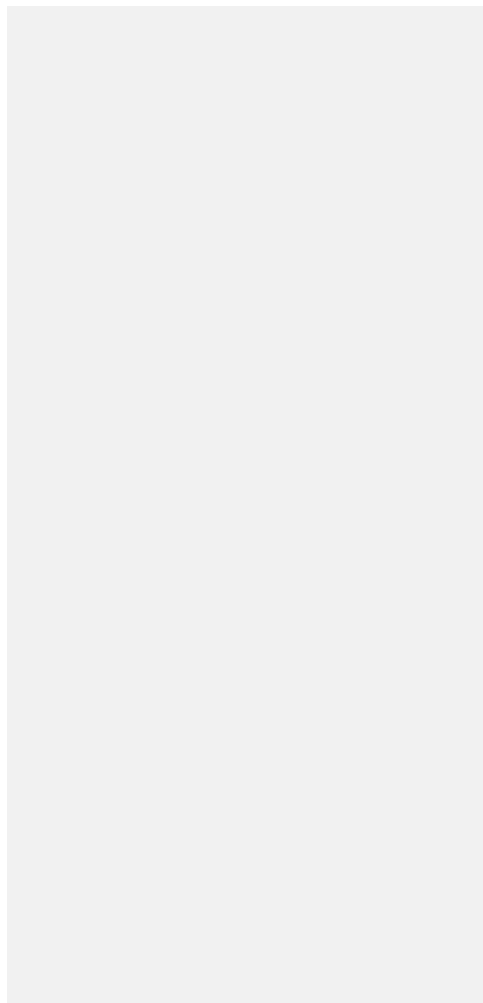
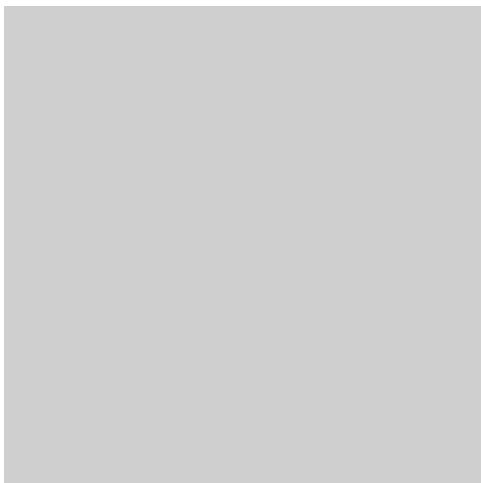


LEADER
PROGRAMME

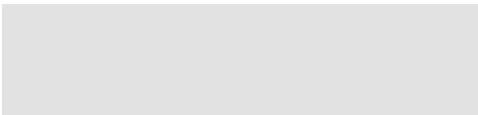
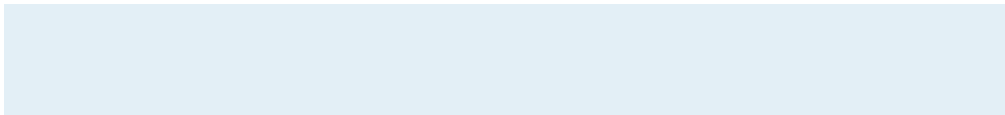
MID-TERM
EVALUATION



VALE OF GLAMORGAN
LOCAL ACTION
G·R·O·U·P

Final report
from Ash Futures

July 2019



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ASH FUTURES LTD

We are very grateful for the help of CRC staff in helping us with the arrangements for these evaluation activities and providing information and data for the evaluation. We are also very grateful for the time, comments and views of the businesses, stakeholders and LAG members who have contributed to the evaluation through surveys, interviews or focus groups.



LEADER is an approach to local development in rural areas that is based on principles of locally led, innovative and integrated activities set within a Local Development Strategy (LDS). The Vale of Glamorgan LDS for 2014-2020 is being delivered through Creative Rural Communities (CRC) team, managed by the Vale of Glamorgan Local Action Group (LAG). CRC team are all employees of Vale of Glamorgan Council, working closely with the Council but operating at an arms-length.

CRC received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities-Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), the Welsh Government and by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. CRC also deliver projects which fit with the objectives as defined in the LDS but are sometimes funded by external bodies¹.

This mid-term evaluation of progress made on the delivery of the Vale of Glamorgan LDS has found that the LAG and CRC has made considerable progress with contributing towards delivery of the objectives of the LDS on various fronts. Key achievements include:

- The programme has been well managed by the CRC team on behalf of the LAG. As with previous evaluations, the feedback received from project partners and stakeholders is that the CRC team are very well regarded and provide much of the drive and impetus for activities in the Rural Vale.
- Some good examples of activities which could be regarded as innovative have been developed and supported through the current programme. The LAG has been open to adopting some risk with the activities that have been funded.
- A large proportion of the programme's funding has been allocated, and there is high confidence that it will be fully committed and spent by programme close. The programme has been tightly managed by the CRC programme management team, monitored against expected profile.
- The programme is expected to fully meet the Programme Indicators, and exceed them by some margin, by programme closure (although we question whether these indicators are necessarily that insightful).

Overall, this LEADER programme is well managed, very effective and highly regarded.

The Vale of Glamorgan LAG and CRC now have an opportunity to capitalise on what has been achieved to date, through focusing on some key activities for the remainder of the programme period. Some of these follow-on from our findings in this mid-term evaluation.

Specifically, we feel there is a need to address some notable issues which include:

- Widening the community engagement into the LDS delivery;
- Continuing to focus on the long-term sustainability of projects. This may mean continuing to support those activities already established, rather than funding any new initiatives. This may mean continuing (non-financial) support through the CRC team until those organisations/activities are in a better position regarding long-term sustainability;
- Whilst providing continued support to projects, CRC needs to be mindful of building capacity in the community to sustain activity beyond the life of LEADER funding;

¹ For example, by the Waterloo Foundation (*Inspiring the Vale Bursary*) and Heritage Lottery (*Coastal Communities*)

- Celebrating the success of the LEADER programme (and previous programmes) more. This may mean using LAG members more to act as advocates for the programme, and better connecting the LAG to the projects that have been supported allowing them to understand the impact of the support much more.

The evaluation has focused on a number of specific evaluation questions. Key findings and recommendations to emerge from these include:

- The positive value largely provided through the piloting/feasibility approach which has been the core focus of the current programme. Whilst several stakeholders – including members of the LAG itself – felt that the current programme is constrained by the inability to provide direct financial assistance to businesses in the form of grants, we feel there are enough good examples of project activities which have been developed and not necessarily reliant on large-scale financial assistance. Small amounts of financial support through LEADER – supplemented by support by the CRC team – have allowed project concepts to develop. There is an argument that this has necessitated a more innovative approach.
- There is a counter argument that the risk to long-term sustainability is greater in the current model of support. There certainly appears to be greater emphasis on the capability and capacity of the CRC team to provide the impetus to activities (even if acting on project ideas/concepts being developed within the community), which does raise questions regarding the capacity within the community and the long-term sustainability of some of the activities. However, our objective view is that this is not necessarily the case for all projects.
- However, the limitation on the ability of the programme to provide financial assistance directly to businesses has meant that very few businesses have been able to act as the lead body within the current programme. Businesses have tended to have an ‘indirect’ rather than ‘direct’ relationship with the programme. This raises questions about the impact of LEADER on the rural economy, given that businesses principally drive the economy. The different model of support is largely resulting in a more indirect form of support.
- CRC could illustrate better how the project activities are contributing to the cross-cutting themes in the LDS and giving them greater consideration in project development;
- Management of the LDS delivery has been very well managed through the CRC team. The feedback we have received through this evaluation is that the team is integral to the delivery of the LDS and the project components. The team are highly engaged and connected within the community, are professional and innovative in their approach, and open to developing solutions to identified issues.
- It is not clear how much the LDS is used as a guiding document for activity within the programme. Whilst the CRC team has been mindful of ‘gaps in provision’ against the LDS themes, we have found that awareness of the objectives and themes within the LDS are not widely known – even within the LAG itself. We question whether the ‘local emphasis’ that the LDS was supposed to provide has been diluted as a consequence. This has been accentuated by greater centralisation of other programme support such as the Rural Communities Development Fund (RCDF) within Welsh Government.
- Activities have focused more on some LDS priorities (or Rural Development Programme Wales (RDPW) themes) than others. This appears to be as a result of some wider initiatives not developing as envisaged, or certainly more slowly. One example is the Cardiff City agenda – it has been difficult to develop activities that aim to exploit the opportunities arising from the Cardiff City Deal given that it is a 20-year investment programme which has yet to fully commence. Another example has been the Community Green Energy theme –

the change in the renewable energy incentive landscape has adversely affected progress on that theme².

- The priorities of the LDS remain valid - socio economic circumstances and policy changes do not indicate a need for fundamental change.

The evaluation found that the principles of LEADER are being delivered through the Vale of Glamorgan LAG, and the work of CRC, with potential for further development on some:

- **Achieving integrated and cross-project activity:** projects are quite multi-dimensional in that some have several participating communities (e.g. community mapping), some have several stages of development (e.g. Festival of the Sea) whilst in some cases one project has led to another (e.g. the Crafts Network and the Crafts Festival). There are already links within projects and integration between some projects. We think there is an opportunity to continue to build on this through extending the linking across projects and getting more added value for the LDS. The CRC team have been proactive in identifying opportunities where projects (from the current as well as the previous programme) can link, and we would urge this to continue, to maximise the potential for integration;
- **Co-operation:** Some progress has been made in the co-operation strand of the programme. However, opportunities for cooperation with other LEADER areas in Wales have not developed as expected – partly as a result of less impetus from the Welsh Rural Network - and there is hope that further opportunities will develop over the remainder of the programme;
- **Wider community engagement:** There is extensive evidence of community engagement within the current and previous programmes. This has been a real strength of the programme over the past decade. Communications and encouraging engagement was a key emphasis delivered as part of the ‘animation’ theme in the early stages of the programme (discussed later in the report). However, the community engagement with the programme has relied on both the CRC team’s own ability to engage with the community, and the drive and capacity of key individuals within the community. There is a question whether – despite the extensive and targeted communication undertaken – the programme has been able to fully ‘access’ those hard-to-reach individuals/communities. Despite best efforts from the CRC team, there is a question about the broader community understanding of the programme. It may be that this is an aspiration which is always going to be difficult to achieve – the programme is effectively a demand-led process;
- **Implementation through a Local Action Group:** The rural Vale of Glamorgan LAG has 22 members and is active in decision making on projects, receives regular financial and outputs progress reports at its meeting and takes decisions to aid delivery of the LDS. This evaluation has found that interest from LAG members has waned during the current programme. With this mid-term evaluation (and accompanying legacy report) there is an opportunity to now reflect and learn from experience so far, giving opportunity to better understand the impact of the funded activities as well as focusing on important issues such as capacity-building for the remainder of the programme. There may be an important role in celebrating the success of the programmes and giving members a greater advocacy role.

² For example, the number of Low Carbon installations in Vale of Glamorgan Council area fell between 2016 and 2017, after experiencing significant growth in the previous years (Low Carbon Energy Generation by Local Authority and Technology – StatsWales)

1.1 LEADER and the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy

LEADER³ is an approach to local development in rural areas. Now in its sixth iteration since it was first introduced into European Funding programmes in 1992, it is based on seven core principles:

- It takes an area-based approach, set out in a local development strategy
- It develops from the bottom up in terms strategy and delivery
- It brings together local people in a public/private/community partnership to manage its delivery – the Local Action Group
- It seeks to achieve integrated and multi-sectoral activity
- It seeks to be innovative at the local level
- It also looks to co-operate with other LEADER areas
- And it seeks to develop local networks and encourage networking

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy (LDS) setting out the LEADER strategy and approach for the rural Vale for the EU structural funding period 2014 – 2020 was prepared and submitted to Welsh Government (WG) for approval in 2014. This is not the first time that a rural development programme has been delivered in the rural Vale. The initial programme was delivered between 2004 and 2007. Revenue funding was provided by Rural Community Action across four themes. This supported small-scale community led projects. Capital funding was provided through Article 33 (the relevant article for LEADER at that time).

This was followed by programme delivery between 2007 and 2014, which was effectively split into two tranches. Between 2008 and 2011 activities were directed by Business Plan 1 of the Rural Development Programme. Between 2011 and 2014, activities were guided by the objectives/priorities contained in Business Plan 2. This is shown in the diagram overleaf.

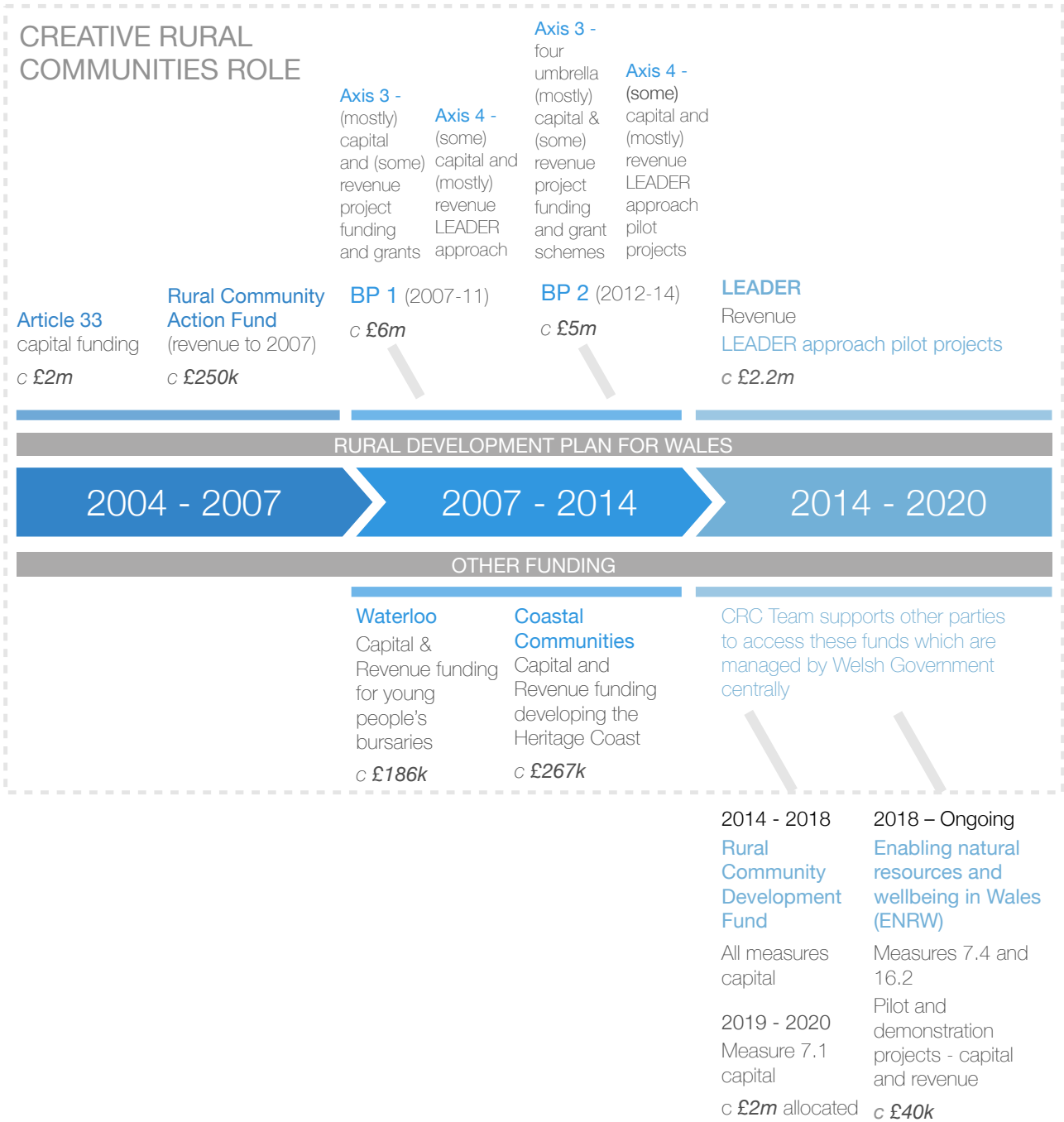
Creative Rural Communities (CRC) is the local LEADER programme route through which support is provided to project activities in the rural Vale. It is managed and facilitated by the Creative Rural Communities team, a team of 8 staff (although staffing levels have changed over time and represents a combination of full-time and part-time roles) who deliver LEADER in the rural Vale on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Action Group (LAG). Vale of Glamorgan Council is the administrative and accountable body for the LEADER programme. CRC is the Council's Rural Regeneration Initiative and it acts as employer for the CRC team. The Council have committed over £370,000 to match fund the current programme and has provided similar financial commitment over the previous programmes. Core services are made available to CRC at zero cost and important relationships exist with other key Council departments, in many cases further developing projects and activities.

1.2 The evaluation brief

This report responds to a request for a mid-term evaluation of progress with delivery of the LDS by CRC on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan LAG. The brief set out a small number of broad questions for the evaluation to address, in order to be able to address its four requirements of:

- Evaluation of how activities being undertaken by LEADER will help to achieve LDS delivery objectives

³ It is a French acronym 'Liaisons Entre Actions pour le Developpement de L'Economie Rurale' – links between actions for developing the rural economy.



- How the LAG organisation, administration and processes are managed
- How activities are/will contribute to achieving LDS strategic objectives and vision
- Recommendations to inform any refresh of the LDS

LEADER programmes in the Vale of Glamorgan

The specific evaluation questions have been explored in relation to the three common purposes of evaluation:

- **Effectiveness.** This looks at how/whether objectives of the supported activities are being, or will be, achieved. In the context of this evaluation, this is about how activities being undertaken through the LEADER approach, will help to achieve LDS delivery objectives
- **Efficiency.** This looks at outputs relative to inputs; their cost efficiency, value for money and timeliness, organisation and management. For this evaluation, this particularly relates to CRC and LAG management, the organisation and administration around the LEADER programme, and the application, appraisal, delivery, monitoring and evaluation processes
- **Impact.** This looks at the positive (and possibly negative) changes resulting from supported activities and what the consequences of these are. In the context of this evaluation, this is about how activities are, or will, contribute to achieving LDS strategic objectives and vision, and/or whether there are other factors external to the programme that may impact on its ability to achieve these.

1.3 Approach to the evaluation

Our approach to the evaluation is a logic chain based one. A key element which has guided the evaluation has been the evaluation framework which was developed at the start of the process (and is available as a separate document). This links the core questions of the evaluation to the tasks required to meet those objectives, and to explain why those tasks were undertaken and how the information collected responded to the evaluation questions.

We undertook all the tasks agreed. It is also useful to note that the primary research method involved in the evaluation has been direct interviews – either face-to-face or telephone interviews. Given the number of projects supported through the current programme – and the mixed effectiveness of techniques such as online surveys – it was felt that direct discussions with project leads/partners would be the most effective method.

In total we have undertaken 31 interviews with individuals connected to funded project activities, encapsulating both the current and previous programmes (with some of the content being drawn through to the Legacy report). We have held interviews with 13 LAG members, through a combination of one-to-one discussions and a small focus group. We have also spoken to six CRC staff, noting that many of the projects supported through the current programme have been led by the CRC team. These discussions have also covered issues around programme management, finance etc.

Therefore, we feel that the extent and range of interviews undertaken in support of this mid-term evaluation has been comprehensive. The aim in any evaluation activity is to identify consistent issues/views that have been raised. It is the case that a range of views have been expressed – some of which may differ from the broad findings highlighted in this report – but we have included those around which there was a broad consensus.

We have also reviewed programme management information and associated documents, including any project closure and evaluation reports that have been produced. Short descriptions of the projects are included in the table below.

Procured Commissioning

Glamorgan Heritage Coast Commercial Feasibility Study

Study to determine the most viable commercial opportunities, outdoor activities and events to enhance the development of business and employment in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

Dunraven Bay Pop Up Events

Following on from the Commercial Feasibility Study, a series of events were piloted, to test the viability of events at this location. This tested both the demand from visitors to attend and the willingness of event organisers to hold them in such a rural location. It led to a pop up events toolkit for future use

Community Mapping

Pilot project exploring new ways of delivering non-statutory services in rural communities through engaging communities in mapping the services and facilities that they have and identifying gaps. Three communities were involved, all areas of potential housing growth (St Athan, Rhose and Wenvoe). The toolkit developed from this pilot has since been used by at least 12 more communities in the rural Vale.

Parents and Children Together

Flowing from the Community Mapping project, this piloted a series of activities for parents and children to do together in community venues in St Athan, Wenvoe, Rhose and Ystradowen, to meet needs identified through community mapping.

Youth and School Visits

Developing resources to encourage younger visitors, family groups and school groups to visit venues and locations in the rural Vale. The project worked with activity providers and attractions within the Vale to develop a choice of itineraries with appropriate resources and marketed under the banner of 'Vale School Trips' by the tourism team in the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Digital Tourism Information Points - Income From Print

A pilot project looking at innovative ways that organisations can get payment for printed visitor products, reducing grant dependency and/or to cover the cost of printed materials. It offers visitors the opportunity to make a donation for printed products such as maps and trails, whilst also offering an option to download the file onto the user's own device. Eight organisations are testing ways in which visitors can make donations towards free printed visitor information such as walks leaflets.

Paws in the Vale

Pilot project testing the positives and negatives of a community becoming dog friendly. The project promoted dog friendly accommodation, eateries, attractions, shops, walks and other dog friendly businesses within the rural Vale of Glamorgan.

Celebrating St Illtyd

Exploring ways in which St Illtyd is celebrated, sharing best practice, developing links and partnerships, with a view to putting Llantwit Major on a wider stage of interest

Year of

Visit Wales runs thematic years (e.g. Year of the Sea, Year of Discovery) and this pilot project worked with tourism businesses to make them aware of the annual theme and how they could be exploited. It led to two local projects – Festival of the Sea and the Vale Film Festival (under the heading: Year of Legends).

Craft Network

Piloting opportunities for artists/crafters to network and co-operate, explore opportunities for innovative sales opportunities and explore developing new workspaces. This project built on crafts projects in earlier LEADER programmes and the desire to develop a common platform for working together.

Redundant Rural Buildings

Exploring opportunities to develop new workspaces from redundant and underused buildings in the rural Vale, and assessing the demand for different types of workspace

Crafts Festival

This developed from the Craft Network. It will pilot a series of crafts events during September 2019. The main festival weekend will take place on 21st-22nd September, with a series of masterclasses and open studios across the rural vale before and after. There will also be study trips, and a toolkit developed.

Food Vale Event

An event hosted by the Food Vale Partnership offer opportunities to contribute to the vision of the partnership, hear about food initiatives and network with food stakeholders from across the Vale.

Green School Challenge

A pilot project to challenge schools to consider green energy and energy saving through a two week 'switch off fortnight' – a free facilitated activity.

Green Community Energy Event

An event to showcase the range of support agencies for community renewables, and to show exemplar community projects. Attendees included community representatives and residents in the rural Vale.

Commercial Kitchen

Exploring the concept of a commercial kitchen in the rural Vale, which would be equipped as a kitchen for hire by producers needing a larger working space, on an ad hoc basis. However this project did not proceed as planned as the community partner withdrew from it.

Livestock Feasibility Study

Feasibility study to ascertain the needs of local farmers and to determine if a viable multi-purpose livestock market is needed in the area. It concluded that a new market facility could help farmers to diversify and add value to their products through provision of shared facilities such as meat cutting and access to cold storage.

Business to Business Research

Researching the current offer of B2B support within the Vale of Glamorgan, where businesses go for support and what they need from this. Opportunity to create a catalogue/ online presence for businesses displaying the B2B support that is on offer.

Vale Digital Skills

This has spun out of the business to business research which highlighted a need for upskilling. A series of training courses has been procured to cover wide range of topics for individuals and third sector bodies. They range from young people safety online courses for parents to website design and e-commerce. Some are day, half day or evening – to test which options are most useful to potential attendees.

Making the most of the archives

Exploring the best ways of providing public access to historical archives at Cowbridge, looking at a range of online options and overcoming concerns such as copyright, accessibility and cost.

Colabora

A transnational co-operation project working with seven other European partners to learn about developing co-working spaces in rural areas. The project could lead to co-design and test out of new services within co-working spaces.

Festival of the sea

A two part pilot project; initially a feasibility study into the potential for adventure activity along the heritage coastline (building on earlier studies highlighting opportunities for the commercial opportunities of the coast); followed by a showcase event held in June 2019, providing people with opportunities to try different outdoor activities e.g. coasteering, and activity providers the experience of putting these on.

Vale Film Festival

A pilot project seeking to exploit the large amount of filming that takes place in the rural Vale e.g. Doctor Who trail, as well as support the idea of developing an evening economy. The project sought to help people understand what they can do to celebrate film in their location

Cycling in the Vale

Feasibility study on the potential for developing cycling in the rural Vale. The main conclusion from the study was that there is a potential market for road cyclists but little off road offer. Subsequently work has been done to explore development of some Vale Cycle trails, packaging cycling with places to eat, stay etc

Digital Community Venues

A pilot project to trial some online booking systems for community venues to help overcome issues of booking eg because no one is available to ask, help reduce the administrative burden of managing bookings and increase use of community venues. Two community venues are involved in the pilot, in Llantwit Major and Llandow whilst discussions are also ongoing for participation by two further venues.

Vale School Catering

Exploring the feasibility of sourcing local produce for school dinners in the Vale of Glamorgan and which could be implemented by a newly created Local Authority catering trading company.

AGORA

Participation in a pan Wales food thematic group exploring ways to shorten food supply chains.

Awards

Glamorgan Smallholders

Supported a new group of smallholders to come together to share ideas, practices and experiences. This involved holding regular meetings for an initial period of six months with guest speakers and sharing marketing opportunities for promoting rural Vale products, countryside and activities.

Making sense of well-being

Piloting a range of wellbeing activities/services to support digital and employability skills. This has included holistic girls only fun fitness sessions, buggy fit, Fitbit Challenge with school students and Get Cooking Classes with parents and children, targeted at the communities of St Athan, Llanmaes and Llantwit Major

Creating Havoc with Health

Pilot project to support people with mental health issues in the rural Vale of Glamorgan who have been hard to reach. The project will work with people with mental health issues and their careers by facilitating a range of activities including art, drama, creative writing, photography and craft workshops.

Twt Beech project

A project to explore the after-life of a significant tree that was felled in Cowbridge. The project will document a series of works made from the timber and run workshops to share green woodworking and crafts skills using the wood. The project will culminate in an exhibition of works and a toolkit.

Cowbridge Food Assembly

Development of a pre-order, online service for Vale residents to purchase food from local producers, and collect during a weekly meet at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Produce is made to order so there is no waste, and consumers know what they can purchase and what they have spent ahead of collection.

The Vale Loan Scheme

A scheme offering the opportunity to loan tablets from rural libraries across the Vale.

Volunteer Led Youth Provision

This project is piloting a new approach to youth provision by working with rural communities in the Vale. The project will involve training local volunteers to develop 'open access' youth work sessions for young people aged between 11 and 18 years. It has initially worked in Colwinston and Wick.

Community Spirit

A networking project which developed from the Community Mapping project, where communities in the rural Vale learn from each other about activities / initiatives, which can help develop and promote community spirit. Four communities have each been financially supported with an award to pilot new events in the community (St Athan, Pendoylan, Peterston, St Hilary)

1.4 The report structure

The evaluation report is now set out in seven further sections, supported by various appendices. In summary:

- Section Two gives a short introduction to the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy and its delivery and management
- Section Three reviews key data describing the socio-economic context of rural Vale, together with some recent policy and strategies, to assess any changes that should be considered and their implications for the LDS moving into the latter part of the programme
- Section Four focuses on the effectiveness of the programme to date, answering the evaluation questions under this heading
- Sections Five and Six then review its efficiency, with Section Five looking specifically at progress towards targets and spend and Section Six responding to broader evaluation questions on the delivery model
- Section Seven then looks at project impacts and their contribution towards meeting LDS objectives
- Finally Section Eight draws all this together in conclusions responding to the core evaluation questions in the brief, and makes recommendations for the remainder of the LEADER period



2 The Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy

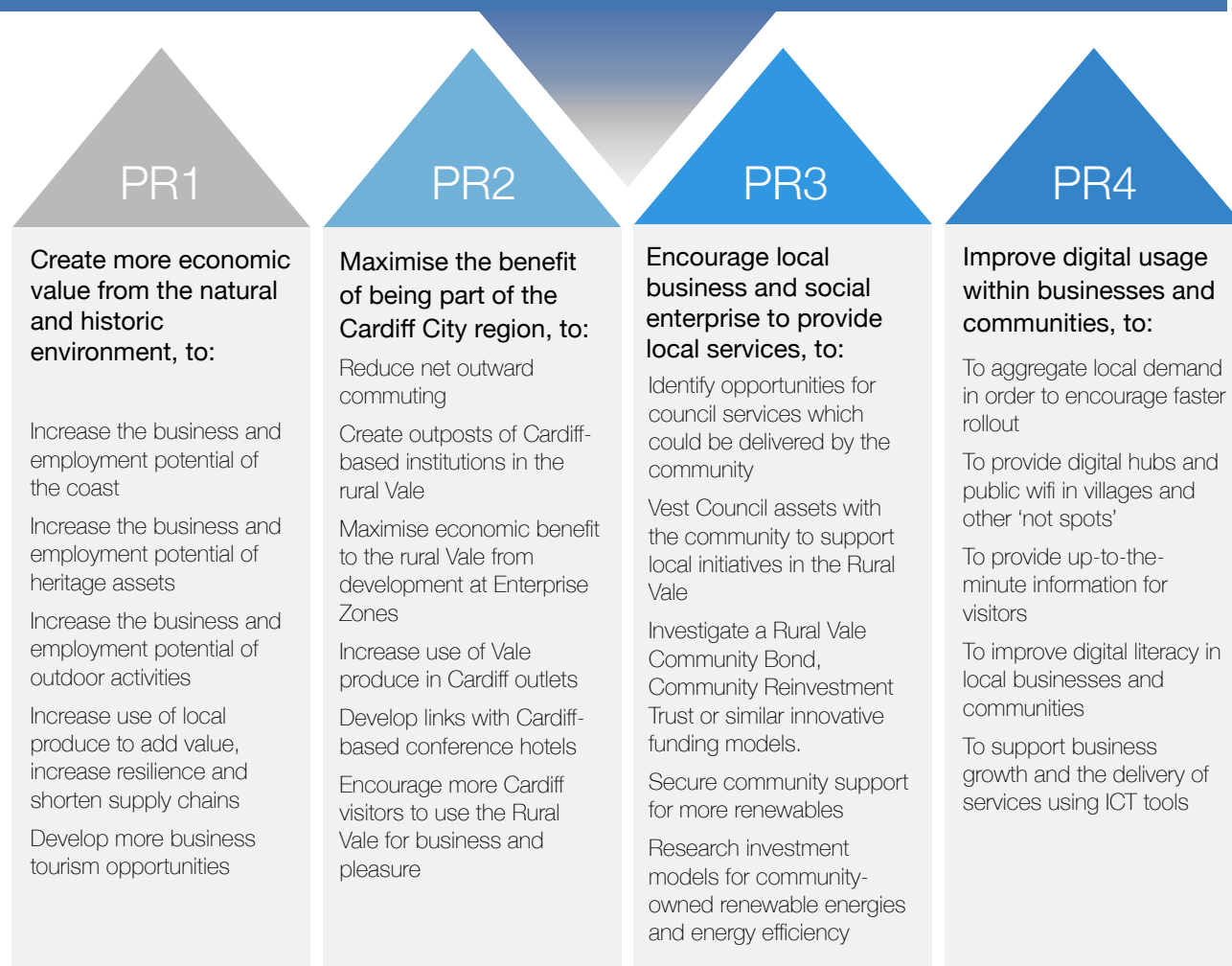
2.1 Background

This section describes the Vale of Glamorgan LDS, its core objectives and fit with the Rural Development Programme for Wales' five themes for LEADER. This is intended to set the context for our evaluation which is in the subsequent sections.

The Rural Vale of Glamorgan LDS was developed in 2014. Initially it was a free standing document, however following a Welsh Government request for LDSs to use a common template and a logic diagram, aligned with the five RDPW themes, it was then re-structured to fit. The latter document, and the updated logic diagram associated with it, is the LDS in use.

The LDS set out four strategic priorities. Each of these had an aim and several objectives as set out in the diagram below. It is important to note that the LDS is intended to act as a guiding document for all activity within the rural Vale, including activities beyond the LEADER programme. Some activities have been developed by other teams within the Council. For example, activities focusing on the Enterprise Zone at Cardiff Airport and St Athan has mainly been driven by the Council's economic development team.

PURPOSE: To grow the rural economy in the Vale of Glamorgan - not just for its own sake but to help maintain the natural environment, to support its varied communities and to create vibrant businesses.



The RDPW set out five themes for LEADER. The Rural Vale LDS has participated in all five of these which are also set out below. The heading of each of the themes has been tailored to suit the way in which it is being used in the Vale. The specific objectives for each of the themes are those in the most recent Logic Diagram. The cross-cutting themes run across all themes/priorities and their objectives.

RDPW Theme 1: Attractive Vale	RDPW Theme 2: Business Innovation Laboratory	RDPW Theme 3: Evolving Communities	RDPW Theme 4: Green Community Energy	RDPW Theme 5: Exploiting digital technology
Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	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	Exploiting digital technology
Specific objectives: To increase the business and employment potential of the coast To increase the business and employment potential of heritage assets To increase the business and employment potential of outdoor activities	Specific objectives: Maximise economic benefit to the rural Vale from being part of the Cardiff City region Explore opportunities for utilising underused and redundant spaces and supporting their redevelopment for business use Increase use of local produce to add value, shorten supply chains and develop local produce Develop more business tourism opportunities Creating links between the businesses in and around the Enterprise Zone	Specific objectives: To identify opportunities for services and assets To raise income from community assets and vest some in the community enterprises to support economic initiatives in rural Vale To raise awareness of opportunities for local community funded schemes To address issues associated with rural isolation and the provision of wellbeing services in rural Vale	Specific objectives: To secure community support for more renewables To research funding and investment models for community-owned renewable energies	Specific objectives: To aggregate local demand in order to encourage faster rollout (of superfast broadband) To provide communities with the information needed to exploit digital technology To increase sales and productivity in local businesses
Cross cutting themes – Sustainable Development, Equal opportunities, Poverty and Social inclusion, Welsh Language				

The LDS was developed through a series of steps which included views from a wide range of consultations, a SWOT analysis, socio-economic data research and policy review. This process was undertaken during 2014. The LDS therefore reflects the priorities at the time.

2.2 Fit with Rural Development Programme Wales (RDPW) five themes

The RDPW, which is the Operational Programme for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in Wales including LEADER (and other rural development activities), sets out five themes into which implementation activities need to fit. It also details guidelines for LAG administration, management and facilitation, and co-operation activities for LEADER⁴.

⁴ Measure 19 of the RDPW and associated sub-measures. The Co-operation theme relates to LAGs working together on sharing experience through joint projects.

The five themes set out in the RDPW for implementation activities (as shown in the above diagram) cover:

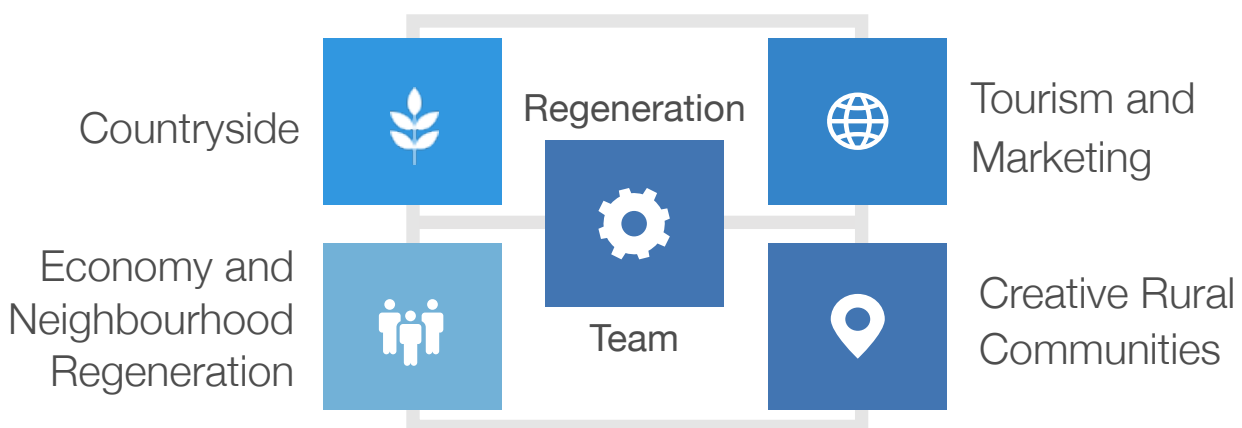
- Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non statutory local services
- Renewable energy at community level
- Exploiting digital technology

The Intervention Logic Table is an integral part of the LDS which maps strategic and delivery objectives onto the five RDPW themes and co-operation theme (together with indicative activities and output indicators and targets).

It is important to recognise that having an LDS with one set of priorities, and an operational programme requiring activity to contribute to five specific themes, adds a layer of complexity to delivering activity on the ground. If the LDS is to be fully delivered projects need to satisfy both requirements. As our diagrammatic representation of this above illustrates, none of the four LDS priorities sit wholly within any one of the five RDPW themes. However, they do broadly 'map' across. For example, the renewable energy objectives of PR3 are met under RDPW Theme 4. Delivery objectives from one strategic priority can be split between RDPW themes. In practice the Vale programme's guidance promotes the five RDPW themes, whilst also referencing that they each have several delivery objectives which are those set out in the LDS.

2.3 Delivery

The CRC team sit within the Regeneration Team in the Vale of Glamorgan Council. It is one of the four broad teams, as shown in the diagram below.



LEADER activity through the LDS is being delivered by CRC on behalf of the LAG:

- The CRC team is hosted by Vale of Glamorgan (VoG Council), with a dedicated staffing structure to help deliver the LEADER programme. The structure has changed in recent months but up until April 1st 2019 the structure involved:
 - Team Leader (managing two teams so effectively PT in terms of CRC resource)
 - 4 x Senior Rural Regeneration Officers (hours dependent on need, not on FTE basis)
 - 1 x Rural Regeneration Officer/Film Officer
 - 1 x Regeneration Assistant (PT)
 - 1 x Monitoring Officer (PT)
 - 1 x Administration Support (PT)

- From the May 2019 some changes in staffing and structure has resulted in the following changes:
 - 1 x Programme Development Officer
 - 3 x Senior Rural Regeneration Officer (1 currently vacant although resource can be pulled into projects on an ad hoc basis when required)
 - 1 x Temporary Film Officer
 - 1 x Regeneration Assistant (PT)
 - 1 x Monitoring Officer (PT although increased hours)
 - 1 x Administration Support (PT)

The current LEADER programme has four strands – each with a specific budget allocation - upon which programme delivery is based:

- Animation - refers to activities that stimulate local interest in rural development, bringing forward ideas and projects
- Implementation – refers to the delivery and support of activities that aim to meet the objectives of the LDS
- Administration – refers to the administration of the programme, covering programme management staff and other costs
- Cooperation – refers to activities which are undertaken across LEADER areas (transnational and/or national), encouraging them to take action on common issues.

2.4 The budget

The total budget for LEADER in rural Vale is some £2.2m of which c£1.8m is EU funded through the RDPW and the remainder is matched funding. Matched funding (minimum 20%) is required for Implementation and Co-operation projects, whilst animation activity is funded at a 100% intervention rate, alongside the administration costs of running the programme. The Vale of Glamorgan Council has provided the matched funding requirement of c£341,250, although some projects have also contributed matched funding (a large proportion of which is provided in-kind).

The specific budgets for the programme strands are shown in the table below.

	RDPW funding	Match funding	Total
Implementation	£1,296,748	£324,187	£1,620,935
Animation	£273,000	£0	£273,000
Administration	£182,000	£0	£182,000
Co-operation	£68,249	£17,063	£85,312
TOTAL	£1,819,997	£341,250	£2,161,247

The current programme has a different funding structure than previous programmes. In previous programmes the support staff costs were more directly associated with specific project activities. CRC staff had to timesheet their activity so that costs could be directly attributed against specific project cost. This has effectively been simplified in the current programme. The Implementation budget supports the costs for CRC staff who lead on project activities (principally the Senior Rural Regeneration Officers), without being reflected in the project cost. Specific allocations have been set aside for project spend – either through procured/commissioned activities or grant funding.

Costs which can be spent on project development activities are determined through applications to the LAG to approve. This subsequent approved funding is then available to the project lead organisation. This may be CRC itself, given that it has acted as project applicant/lead for a number of projects, or an external organisation. As shown in Annex 1, the sums involved are relatively small on a project-by-project basis. However, it is important to note that this should not be viewed as the total cost of project development. Given that considerable CRC staff time is devoted to supporting and developing activities – encapsulating both CRC-led and externally-led projects – then the total ‘resource cost’ for each project would reflect that CRC support.

The Implementation strand budget can be broken down further to illustrate the funds that have been allocated for direct project development, and the funds allocated for staff costs which indirectly support those activities. The table illustrates that just under two-thirds of the Implementation budget is dedicated to CRC staff costs.

	RDPW funding	Match	Total	% total budget
Procured commissioning by the LAG	£298,654.40	£74,664	£373,318	23%
Project Grants	£160,000	£40,000	£200,000	12.3%
CRC staff costs (project officers)	£721,310	£180,327	£901,637	56%
Project marketing	£12,800	£3,200	£16,000	1%
Overheads (flat rate 15%)	£103,984	£25,996	£129,980	8%
TOTAL	£1,296,748	£324,187	£1,620,935	100%

The way in which LEADER funding can be spent is prescribed by guidance from the Welsh Government. Essentially the budget is for revenue funding only. Unlike previous programmes, capital expenditure⁵ is not eligible in this programme. The LEADER guidance does not give a specific list of what could be eligible activities – this has emerged through a series of questions and answers between LAG groups and the Welsh Government to test what could be done by way of LEADER funded activity. Importantly, the LEADER programme now does not have any State Aid cover⁶, meaning that it cannot do anything by way of direct support to business undertakings and economic operators⁷. This is an important context for this evaluation and discussed in more detail later.

2.5 Projects

Under each of the two strands that are focused on delivery (Implementation and Cooperation) the following number of projects have been approved and either delivered, or in the process of delivery.

⁵ Defined as spend over £10,000 and with a life span of one year or more

⁶ Our understanding is that the Welsh Government chose not to apply for/use De Minimus cover, which would have allowed small grants to go to businesses and others. We understand this was as a result of evaluation recommendations emerging from the previous programming period

⁷ These are defined as any undertaking engaged in economic activity regardless of legal status and can therefore include social and community enterprises

Implementation

To date 35 projects have been approved (March 2019). This includes 27 projects that were directly procured or commissioned by the CRC team, and 8 projects which were financially supported and led by external organisations. One project – Community Spirit– can be broken down into a series of smaller projects. The table in Annex 1 summarises these.

To date, three projects were submitted to the LAG for consideration but did not progress:

- Aberthaw Railway Line feasibility study – the main LAG did not support the develop of a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of developing of a cycling route along the old Aberthaw railway line
- Seed project – this project was withdrawn for consideration by the main LAG meeting as it was not recommended for approval by the LAG sub-group
- Eglwys Brewis - feasibility study looking at the proposed restoration and other uses for a historic church



Cooperation:

To date, 1 project has been approved and progress – Colabora. This is discussed in more detail later in this report.

2.6 The Role of LAG and CRC

The Vale of Glamorgan LAG has responsibility to oversee the delivery of LEADER in the rural Vale and approve and commission new projects in line with Welsh Government requirements and the LDS. The activities of the LAG are set out in Terms of Reference. All decisions made by the LAG should be reached on a consensus basis. If that is not possible, members vote with a simple majority required. In the event of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote. The LAG meets three times a year, with papers circulated prior to the meeting.

The structure and constitution of the LAG is meant to meet Welsh Government guidance on the balance of public, private and third sector representation. The Vale of Glamorgan LAG has consisted of 22 representatives – although all do not necessarily attend each LAG meeting⁸. A review of the LAG minutes shows that on the whole the meetings are well attended. The LAG membership is split between private (5), public (7) and voluntary sector (10) representatives. In our view this split meets WG guidance. The LAG is currently chaired by a member of the voluntary sector. Cabinet members for Regeneration and Environment for Vale of Glamorgan Council are also invited to attend the LAG, enabling them to feed back to the Cabinet on activities and also represent the Council.

⁸ LAG members represent organisations from the public, private and third sectors. LAG members are not there as individuals

CRC provides the officer support and secretariat to the LAG with a staffing of 8 (a mix of part and full time posts and therefore not on an FTE basis) described earlier. All CRC staff are Vale of Glamorgan Council employees as the Council is the administrative and accountable body for LEADER and provides the financial and administrative management. CRC staff report into the Council's Regeneration department. The overall responsibility for the programme within the Council sits with the Operational Manager for Regeneration.

The key decision-making activities of the LAG focus on the projects being brought through the LEADER programme. CRC has developed a process and associated paperwork to support decision making processes, ensuring decisions are recorded. We have reviewed the project paperwork and feel that it allows the LAG to make decisions on an informed and transparent basis. The level of information required from project applicants is broadly commensurate to the level of financial support they are seeking, particularly as the CRC team help many through the application process.

In the Vale, the main LAG has established a number of sub-groups which are based around the five RDPW themes – this structure is shown in the diagram below. CRC staff provide the secretariat support for both the main LAG Board and the sub-groups.



The role of the sub-groups is to discuss and instigate potential project activities under each respective theme, and to appraise project concepts/applications. Projects are appraised against a scoring matrix. CRC team members attend the sub-groups and work with the LAG sub-group members to discuss and develop project concepts. The sub-groups then make recommendations to the main LAG Board regarding whether the project application should be approved, rejected or require further development. The sub-groups do not have specific Terms of Reference. This structure and process is discussed in more detail later in this report, given that some views have been raised about how it has impacted on the functioning of the main LAG Board.

One further and important point to note here is that in the previous LEADER Programme period (2007-2013), the CRC team was slightly larger. There was a Programme Development Officer who was responsible for 5 Senior Rural Regeneration Officers who delivered the programme on the ground. The team were responsible for developing revenue projects through the LEADER programme and (revenue and capital) projects through Axis 3. Overall, as shown in the diagram in Section 1.2, there was a much larger programme budget to manage. Due to reduced budget in this programme, the size of the team has reduced and is now primarily focused on the delivery of the LEADER programme. However, it does signpost to other programmes where appropriate and more directly supports other organisations within the Vale to develop applications to access other funding programmes – most notably the RCDF and the Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales (ENRW).

2.7 The 'procured and commissioned' approach

A core focus of the current programme has been to develop projects that essentially seek to investigate and research whether activities can be developed (helping achieve the objectives as stated in the LDS) on a feasible and sustainable basis. In many senses this has resulted in the development of pilot, proof of concept and/or feasibility activities. This has been partly driven by the restrictions in the current programme on being able to provide financial assistance directly to businesses, although it was also an important component of the previous LEADER programmes.

This has been delivered through the Implementation strand and can be split into two broad forms of project delivery:

1. **Directly commissioned and/or procured** – these activities have tended to have been driven by the CRC team on behalf of specific organisations or sectors of the wider community. The CRC team has tended to work in partnership with external project partners but provided the project management and impetus for the activity. In that sense, the CRC team has acted as the project applicant on behalf of these groups – developing the project concept, taking project proposals to the LAG group for approval and then subsequently delivering the project. To date 27 projects have been developed and approved based on this model. In many senses, the role of the CRC team has been to develop the 'seed' of an idea taken from the community and provide some impetus – to help that 'seed grow'.
2. **Financially supported** – these activities have involved providing small amounts of financial assistance to external organisations to take forward. Again, the focus has been on activities which investigate/research the feasibility of developing longer-term solutions or service provision. In these instances, the external organisation has acted as the project applicant. To date, there have been fewer projects developed using this model – 8 in total⁹.

One of the outcomes of this approach is that the CRC team has been central to the delivery of project activity within the overall programme. There has been an emphasis on them to develop project concepts – sometimes at the behest of the LAG or sub-group – which both fit with what is allowable in programme delivery and to meet the overall LDS (and RDPW) objectives.

However, this raises a question whether this has resulted in too great a reliance on the capacity and capability within the CRC team, and consequently not held within the wider community. Whilst the focus of the CRC team has been to get to a stage where – if the feasibility/proof of concept has been proven – they can begin to draw away from the project activity, this has not always worked as envisaged. We discuss issues of community capacity later in this report.

Given that the CRC team is currently largely funded by the LEADER programme, there is a dependency on this funding to keep much of the CRC capacity in place. This funding is uncertain moving forward, particularly given the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and therefore there is a risk that it will be lost over time. We feel that one of the main considerations of the LAG in the remainder of the programme is think about either how this capability could be maintained, or how the skills and expertise held within CRC can be disseminated out into the community.

2.8 Summary

- The LDS sets four strategic objectives under which 20 separate delivery objectives sit, all to support a vision of achieving self-sustaining, diverse and vibrant rural communities

⁹ Classifying Community Spirit as one project, recognising that it is constituted of smaller separate sub-projects.

- Sitting alongside this are five RDPW themes that activity needs to fit with, and a LAG Co-operation theme
- The LDS is being delivered by CRC on behalf of the LAG
- The LDS has an overall budget of £2.2m of which 84.4% was allocated/committed (end of June 19)
- It has supported 35 projects to date through its implementation strand, with a further one developed through the cooperation strand¹⁰
- The Implementation strand is where projects have directly been procured or commissioned through the CRC team – under the direction and approval of the LAG – or financially supported projects led by external organisations. The projects principally focus on supporting small scale and early stage research, feasibility or proof of concept activities
- There are some significant differences between what LEADER can support through the current programme and what could be supported through earlier LEADER programmes (e.g. in the 2007 – 2013 programme). Key amongst these is that there is no capital element to LEADER this time and it cannot support businesses (or economic operators) directly. In addition, any project which wishes to secure large-scale capital grant support now needs to apply centrally to the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) which is administered by Welsh Government. This differs from the previous programme in the sense that the LAG had much greater control for projects through its influence over Axis 3 – it was able to directly influence the allocation of funding. This is not the case with the RCDF.
- The way that the programme is funded also differs from previous programmes. CRC project staff time for development of projects is now drawn down from the Implementation strand as a whole rather than costed against separate projects. One of the consequences of this is that it is not now possible to estimate what the specific delivery costs for each project are.
- There is a slight difference in the size of the CRC team between the previous programme period (2007-2013), reflecting a reduced budget and a greater focus on LEADER in terms of direct facilitation/delivery.
- There is a need to consider how the expertise of the CRC team can be maintained in future.

¹⁰ Not including any project proposals going to the July 19 LAG Board

3 The changing socio-economic context

3.1 Review of LDS and other potentially relevant indicators

We have reviewed the key data used in the LDS to identify key issues taken forward into LDS objectives.

The LDS was produced relatively recently (2014) and as a consequence it is unlikely that socioeconomic conditions in rural Vale will have changed markedly in the subsequent period. Equally, if conditions have changed then this may not yet have been reflected in updated data from that used in the LDS (acting as a baseline for any subsequent socioeconomic analysis).

Much of the data contained in the LDS was based on 2011 Census. As such, no updates are available. However, there have been some data updates which are important to highlight given their relevance to the LDS themes.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the Welsh Government's official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It is designed to identify those areas where there are the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation. As such, WIMD is a measure of multiple deprivation that is both an area-based measure and a measure of relative deprivation. WIMD is currently made up of eight separate domains (or types) of deprivation. Each domain is compiled from a range of different indicators. The last version of the WIMD relates to 2014 data (although released after the formulation of the LDS in 2014), with the next release scheduled for later in 2019.

The WIMD is calculated for all Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales (areas that have an average population of about 1,600). There are 31 LSOAs in Rural Vale (out of a total of 79 in Vale of Glamorgan as a whole), within the 10 wards within the LEADER programme area.

In terms of the overall (WIMD) index of deprivation¹¹, the Value of Glamorgan has 4 LSOAs in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales and 12 in the 20% most deprived areas. This represents 15.2% of all the areas within the Vale of Glamorgan, but only 0.6% of those in Wales. No areas of the rural Vale are within the 20% most deprived areas in Wales, with the most deprived areas principally concentrated in Barry. Small parts of Llantwit Major, St Athan and Dinas Powys represent the most deprived areas of the rural Vale.



¹¹ The WIMD is constructed from a weighted sum of the deprivation score for each of the 8 domains. The weights reflect the importance of the domain as an aspect of deprivation, and the quality of the indicators available for that domain. Together, the 'income' and 'employment' domains represent 47% of the overall weighting.

- Therefore, the broad conclusion is that Rural Vale remains a relatively affluent and wealthy area, with lower levels of deprivation as experienced in Barry and Penarth.
- However, there are small pockets of deprivation which continue to exist.

Some of the underlying data of the WIMD is updated on an annual basis, where possible. The most recent updated data were published between December 2017 and January 2018. It is important to note that the updates are the underlying data and not updated rankings, the focus of the more comprehensive WIMD.

- The annual WIMD health indicators do highlight some differences in rural Vale to elsewhere. It has significantly lower death rate (standardised on an age-sex basis to take into account any demographic differences) than 'urban Vale'. It also has much lower incidence of long-term limiting illness. However, it has marginally higher rates of cancer incidence.
- In terms of annual measurements relating to income deprivation, the differences between rural Vale and 'urban Vale' are stark. For example, whilst it is estimated that 7.5% of the population in the rural Vale suffer from income deprivation, this compares to 16.7% (over twice the rate of incidence) in urban areas and 16% in the whole of Wales.
- Similarly, rural Vale performs well in terms of employment deprivation. It is estimated that 5.1% of the working age population receive employment-related benefits, compared to 10.4 in urban Vale and 10% in Wales.
- In terms of education performance measurements, again the differences between rural and urban areas of the Vale are noticeable. Whilst attainment at Key Stage 2 are not that marked, the gap widens at Key Stage 4 - with rural Vale pupils tending to achieve better. It also has lower levels of repeat absenteeism.

Other information that has been recently updated also highlight some relevant findings:

- According to the National Survey for Wales data,¹² 56% of Vale of Glamorgan residents agreed with the statement that they felt they belonged to the area (community cohesion) , that people from different backgrounds get on well together, and that people treat each other with respect.
- In terms of broadband connectivity, the latest data released by Ofcom¹³ shows that shows that 95.4% of premises in the whole of the Vale had potential access to superfast broadband connections (in excess of 30 Mbps) in 2018.

The broad conclusion from the analysis of available updated socioeconomic data is that communities within the rural Vale are generally less deprived than the urban areas.

In terms of understanding whether some of the socioeconomic issues identified in the LDS have changed as a consequence of any activity, it is simply too early to say. It is our expectation that, given that scale and nature of the projects supported thus far, that it is unlikely any macro-level changes in socioeconomic conditions would yet have occurred.

3.2 The changing policy context

We have not undertaken a major policy review as part of this mid-term evaluation. However, in updating the policy context, we set out some changes which are relevant as they potentially create opportunities for developing some further LEADER supported pilot activities.

¹² Not specific to rural Vale but data at a local authority level

¹³ Connected Nations 2018 - Ofcom

City Regions - Cardiff Capital Region

The Vale of Glamorgan is part of the Cardiff Capital Region. Its City Deal, signed in March 2017, is worth £1.2bn, to deliver 25,000 new jobs and lever in £4bn of private sector investment. It has four themes: Connectivity, Skills, Innovation and Regeneration & Infrastructure. Investing in the digital network is one current strand of activity which could have benefits for the Vale of Glamorgan, potentially exploiting any 'ripple effects' from Cardiff's successful bid into the Local Full Fibre Wave 2 Challenge Fund (noting that the Vale of Glamorgan was not part of the winning bid).

The CCR Strategic Business Plan (SBP) Wider Investment Fund document (2017) sets out a range of investment activities including one for strategic employment sites and transport initiatives. Whilst Cardiff and the M4 corridor is a focus for this, the SBP also goes on to say it will expand this into '*a mix of opportunity in the Heads of the Valleys corridor, the coastal belt, towns and rural areas*'. Smaller workspace may be part of that mix. The rural development programmes in the Vale have already supported rural workshop development through the Rural Workshops project and it may be appropriate to develop this further to position the Vale as being able to link into Investment Fund opportunities.

Cardiff Airport and St Athan Enterprise Zone is part of the Capital Region and within the rural Vale of Glamorgan. The Enterprise Zone (EZ) was thought to represent an opportunity that may be exploited through LEADER funded initiatives. In our consultations, the perception held was that the EZ has not developed as quickly as envisaged and that associated opportunities have been difficult to identify for the LEADER programme. It has been a challenge for the programme to develop links with key players or events at the EZ. As noted earlier, the development of the Enterprise Zone has been taken forward by the economic development team within the VofG Council so, in a sense, that represents one of the major initiatives linked to the Cardiff City agenda.

Overall, it is our view that links with the Cardiff Capital region concept – identified as an LDS priority – have not developed comprehensively. Whilst some of the supported activities have some indirect links, few have directly been addressed by funded activities. This might provide a focus for the remainder of the programme. For example, the CCR SBP refers to developing a '*South East Wales Destination Investment Plan*' for the region's tourism offer which could include a strong outdoor adventure offer. This might be something which the LEADER programme could look to exploit, although recognising that our broad recommendation in this mid-term report is for the LAG to consider supporting existing initiatives rather than investing in new activities at this stage.

Wellbeing and the Environment

Three interlinked Welsh Government Acts, focusing on improving the long-term wellbeing of Welsh residents, have been placed in Statute since the preparation of the VoG LDS.

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015: This sets out seven wellbeing goals¹⁴ with the intention of getting public bodies to work together more, take a long-term view and promote a more joined up approach to service delivery (it sets out five ways of working to do this). The emphasis in the Act is on greater collaboration, integration, and involvement of the community. These principles are very similar to LEADER principles.

¹⁴ A prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, a globally responsible Wales



- Environment Act Wales 2016: In a similar vein, the focus of this Act is on promoting better integration and a joined-up approach to better manage resources 'in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up manner and to establish the legislative framework necessary to tackle climate change'.
- Planning (Wales) Act 2015: The most relevant aspect of this is its focus on sustainable development in the field of planning and a requirement to carry out sustainable development. It also has a clear focus on community engagement. The community mapping project which has been supported through the LEADER programme is a notable example of how this is being taken forward in the Vale.

Partly as a consequence of the above, the Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales (ENRaW) grant fund launched in 2018. This aims to take forward activities relevant to the first two Acts, with a focus on co-operative action and activities that provide environmental enhancement and resilience. It is our understanding that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had submitted a bid to this fund in 2018 in relation to developing horse and cycling trails that also provide wildlife corridors. Again, this type of grant scheme might offer opportunities to progress LEADER pilot projects beyond their initial stages e.g. linking some of the work such as Parent and Child together with outdoor activities, wellbeing and environmental enhancements.

More broadly the Council's Draft Wellbeing Plan 2018 -2023 sets out objectives very much in line with some of the LEADER pilot activities (and CRC is noted as a contributor under the economy and environment heading). For example, the social and health benefits of outdoor adventure is being explored through the Festival of Sea project.

Renewable energy

Contract for Difference (CfD)¹⁵ was introduced in UK in October 2014 aiming to replace Renewable Obligations system in the UK. The CfD scheme was designed to support deployment of large scale renewable projects of more than 5MW. The CfD is based on a difference between the market price and an agreed "strike price". CfD contracts are awarded for period of 15 years.

Generators that want to participate in the CfD scheme must participate in allocation rounds. Technologies eligible to participate in the CfD scheme are: onshore and offshore wind, solar PV, geothermal parts, hydropower, ocean power (tidal and wave), landfill gas, sewage gas, anaerobic digestion, biogas, biomass and CHP plants.

At the smaller scale, the government announced that feed in tariffs (FITs), which had been the mainstay of support for community and domestic scale renewables, would be replaced in April

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contracts-for-difference/contract-for-difference>

2019. Taking their place would be a 'smart export guarantee' (SEG) system¹⁶ by which energy suppliers will be required to offer a payment for small scale renewable generators that export to the grid.

The government is trying to find ways to support renewables generation without public subsidy. It also announced in 2017, that there would be no new subsidies until 2025¹⁷. These new support mechanisms are needed, both to ensure that new capacity is installed and thus help with the urgent task of reducing carbon emissions, and also to aid the shift to a smarter, more decentralised electricity system.

Although the commercial price of wind and solar is dropping fast, there is still a need for some public subsidy for newer technologies and in more marginal areas to help meet the climate change commitments.

One of the biggest issues has been the constantly changing support policies - which has made it very hard for small businesses, households and communities to make sense of the landscape and decide to invest in renewables.

Climate change

Following the publication of the latest IRCC report in 2018, it has become clear that the risks associated with climate change are greater than previously thought. The report stated that we have less than 12 years to keep global average temperature rises to 1.5oC or less. This is thought by many scientist to be an underestimate and more recent data points to a speeding up of global heating trends. This has galvanised a significant shift in public attitudes, with Extinction Rebellion protests being a visible sign of that change.

Wales Government declared a climate emergency in April 2019¹⁸. Several councils around Wales have also declared their intention to become zero carbon by 2030; and a petition¹⁹ was raised to urge the Vale of Glamorgan Council to declare a climate emergency. This has just been achieved, with a decision made at a Council meeting on 29th July 2019.

We know that CRC is adept at making links between activities and initiatives. We flag these policy changes up here to indicate some key changes that could be opportunities for linking with LEADER supported pilot projects. Examples of links made/facilitated by the CRC team include:

- The emerging School Catering Trading Company attended a Vale Food Engagement event – linked to the wellbeing agenda and Futures Generations Act – which opened up an opportunity to engage with local providers. The event had strong links with the Vale and Cardiff Public Health Team.
- Several potential venues for school trips were brought together by CRC to explore how they can mutually work together to provide a cohesive 'branded' school trips offer within the Vale.
- CRC hosted a series of network meetings to bring together crafters in the area to understand whether they had an appetite for joint working.

¹⁶ <https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/about-us/news/solar-installation-payback-possible-smart-export-guarantee>

¹⁷ <http://www.energylivenews.com/2017/11/23/budget-2017-no-subsidies-for-green-energy-until-2025/>

¹⁸ <https://seneddresearch.blog/2019/05/09/wales-declares-a-climate-emergency/>

¹⁹ <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/climate-emergency-time-for-action>

3.3 Qualitative perspectives on changes relevant to LDS priorities

Interviews have explored views on whether the priorities set out in the LDS remain relevant or should change. The broad consensus was that nobody felt these priorities were no longer important issues for the future. Responses indicated these remain important issues to address (albeit with a few caveats).

A small number of comments have been made around the use and presentation of the LDS rather than its content. These included:

- An observation that the LDS does not necessarily always act as a guiding/reference document when potential supported activities are discussed
- Instead, greater emphasis/reference is made to the five RDPW priorities. The question this raises is whether the local emphasis that the LDS is supposed to provide is diluted or lost. From a wider perspective, whether this also questions the principles underpinning of the LEADER programme. However, as previously stated, the LDS objectives are split between the RDPW themes, and are taken forward in that respect. The point we raise here is more about emphasis, rather than coverage
- There was recognition that the focus on green/renewable energy has not developed as envisaged and it has been difficult to generate significant interest/demand to take forward activities
- In a similar vein, some stakeholders were unclear about the mechanism how the rural Vale could become 'engaged' in the whole Cardiff City Region agenda. Whilst discussions would have taken place – outside of the LEADER programme – at a strategic level, it was difficult to see how community-led 'bottom-up' activity could influence that agenda. There was a perception that the Cardiff City Region agenda was all about large infrastructure projects and this was not wholly relevant to the LEADER approach.

These comments are less to do with whether the LDS is still setting out the right priorities and more to do with understanding and promoting what could be done. The key issue that has arisen out of the evaluation is how much the LDS now acts as the guiding document for local decisions. The Intervention Logic Table that is presented and discussed at the LAG meetings has more of a focus on the five RDPW themes. Whilst the LDS objectives are also included, they have less emphasis.

3.4 Links between LEADER funded projects and a wider policy context

In reviewing projects for this evaluation we have looked at project application forms and noted project applicants are asked to reference against other projects or strategies (Section 6). Our view is that the level of detail provided in this section of the application form is mixed. The strongest applications are where a positive link has been made to particular themes or priorities, alongside an explanation of how the activity may deliver against those strategic priorities (rather than just a list of linked strategies).

In our view, it would have been beneficial for projects to better demonstrate the enabling aspect of their proposed activities against existing and emerging strategies – the 'logic chain'.

From our interviews with stakeholders and project leads, it is clear that there was an understanding that their respective projects were contributing to wider policy developments e.g. the Wellbeing Act, but this was not necessarily demonstrated comprehensively or consistently in the project proposals.

3.5 Implications for the LDS and its delivery

In conclusion, our review of evidence and policy has identified one factor which might imply a shift in direction for the remainder of the programme - and that is climate change. If the rural Vale is to play its part in mitigating and adapting to climate change, it might need to consider how it responds locally. As the Vale of Glamorgan Council have now declared a Climate Emergency, it would be appropriate for the LAG to consider how it will respond to this.

The review of data/evidence serves to reinforce the ongoing issues that rural Vale faces, although accepting that some of the socioeconomic problems are not as marked (in overall terms) as other LEADER areas. This is reinforced by qualitative feedback from our interviews where the priorities in the LDS are still considered relevant and don't need for change.

The policy review opens up the prospect of further opportunities arising from new policy foci (e.g. Cardiff City Deal and the Wellbeing Act) but we also feel that the LAG and CRC team are fully aware of these opportunities. The shift in the policy environment does emphasise the need for integrating across policy areas. On this latter point we feel there is potential for this to happen further through the programme.

4. Delivering the Local Development Strategy - effectiveness

This section is structured around the questions as defined in the evaluation brief and subsequently further expanded in the evaluation framework.

4.1 The effectiveness of LEADER activity in contributing to the objectives of the Local Development Strategy:

The feedback received through the evaluation has indicated that the project activity is playing a useful role in contributing against LDS objectives. However, there is a question about the role of the LDS objectives in the decision-making made by the LAG. The project proposal and approval process is more oriented towards the five RDPW themes, than the LDS objectives themselves. For example, the LAG sub-groups are structured against the RDPW themes. Whilst it is clear that LDS objectives are being delivered through the mapping/linking with the RDPW themes– they do not necessarily *exactly* map. There are two observations:

- Whether the specific local perspective has been somewhat diluted. The overall principle of the LEADER programme is that it aims to deliver locally-defined objectives – as defined through the LDS. Whilst the overall priorities/themes of the wider RDPW programme are important, there is a question whether the objectives within the LDS should have acted as a more central reference to determine activity – recognising that the Intervention Logic Table does provide the link between the LDS and RDPW themes. The project proposal forms do ask project applicants to demonstrate how their proposed activity will deliver against LDS themes, and this does have the greatest weighting in the project appraisal process. Therefore there is a process/structure to guide project activities, and ensure they broadly fit with LDS objectives, but we still question the ‘relationship’ between RDPW themes and specific LDS objectives.

The introduction of the economic development team in the Council (which has an urban focus) has meant that it has focused on some initiatives/activities within the LDS relevant to its objectives. For example the Enterprise Zone at St Athan. These have subsequently become less of a priority for the LAG/CRC. Whilst those elements of the LDS (PR2) are still being delivered against, it is not primarily via the LAG/CRC team, reducing its scope of impact.



4.2 The appropriateness of the delivery model for the Rural Vale of Glamorgan

The Rural Vale LEADER programme is effectively delivered by the LAG – acting as the strategic oversight body – and the CRC team. CRC act as an ‘arm’s length’ organisation to Vale of Glamorgan Council (in delivery terms), although all CRC staff are Council employees and are managed by the Regeneration Team within the Council. Through this evaluation it has been clear that CRC work closely with Council colleagues to develop and take forward activities where appropriate. However, they operate with a relatively high degree of autonomy and are seen by many as close to the community. Several of the external organisations we spoke to felt there was a delineation between the Council and CRC and that this was important.

We feel it has been important to the delivery of the programme that it has been driven by CRC, as a slightly autonomous organisation. The strategic oversight provided by the LAG has been complementary to CRC activity. However, we also feel it is advantageous that the CRC team clearly has a close relationship with the Council. This provides benefits in terms of several issues including strategic fit of proposed activities, discussions around future sustainability/mainstreaming, and alignment with other Council support mechanisms.

4.3 Assessment of innovation in funded projects

Our view is that one of the consequences of the tighter restrictions within the current programme has been that it has led to innovative solutions being sought to address the issues identified in the LDS. Much of this innovation has been driven by the CRC team. There are several examples of project activities which could be classified as innovative and novel. The LAG has been open to investigating – through the piloting and feasibility activities – different approaches to addressing long-established issues. For example the School Trip project which, by bringing organisations together in a coordinated manner and providing the supporting resources, has developed a potential solution which could be viewed as more novel in comparison to supporting each organisation individually. This may provide longer-term benefit in terms of the sustainability of the offer, rather than it being a more fragmented approach.

Innovation has also been driven by emerging opportunities. The Schools Catering Supply Chain project is such an example. With school catering being delivered via a Local Authority Trading Company (rather directly delivered through the Council) it falls outside the EU procurement rules. This provides the scope to place greater emphasis on local food and drink suppliers within catering contracts. The CRC team – working with the Catering Manager – saw this as an opportunity to strengthen the local food and drink sector within the rural Vale. A feasibility study funded through the programme reviewed whether the objective of establishing long-term sustainable relationships with local suppliers was feasible. As one of the first Local Authority Trading Companies to be established, there is an opportunity for the Vale to be truly innovative in how it facilitates a greater proportion of schools catering through local suppliers. The new trading status will allow the Trading Company to trade up to 20% of total revenue as a for-profit activity, such as catering services to other local events. The relationships that are already beginning to form with local suppliers (e.g. Ty Tanglwyst Dairy) could provide important commercial opportunities for those suppliers.

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We feel the Rural Vale has shown itself to be a place where innovative and novel solutions are considered. The LAG has shown a good attitude to risk in that sense, understanding that not all activities will lead to successful conclusions. By needing to fund feasibility/pilot activities (due to restrictions in the current programme) and also being done on a smaller basis (due to a lower overall budget) the structure of the current programme has allowed them to take these risks.

4.4 The suitability of activity funded under the Local Development Strategy for mainstreaming

It is our understanding that as part of the initial discussions regarding whether a project concept could/should be developed, the potential for the activity to be 'mainstreamed' is considered. One possible outcome to sustainability could be to mainstream the activity within the VoG Council's delivery. Section 11 of the project proposal form asks applicants to outline how the funded activity will be sustainable in the longer-term.

There are examples from projects supported through the current and previous programmes where initiatives have been integrated into the Council's delivery focus – most notably in tourism-related activities under the 'Visit Vale' brand e.g. School Trips, Heritage Coast and Paws in the Vale. Discussions are being held regarding some projects supported in the current programme – such as community mapping – to understand whether they can also be 'mainstreamed'.

It is important to note that given that much of the focus in the current programme has been on piloting and feasibility work, it has not always been possible (or appropriate) for project proposals to consider whether activities could be mainstreamed over the longer-term. It is not possible to really consider the long term potential of activity until the outcome of piloting and feasibility work is known.

However, for the remaining programme, supporting projects to consider their thinking/positioning on both sustainability and mainstreaming would be beneficial. This could be in the form of an organisational toolkit to be used across all projects (although recognising that toolkits are not necessarily valued by all the stakeholders we spoke to).

This is particularly relevant given that stakeholders and partners felt that there were fewer 'routes of progression' for projects beyond the feasibility stage in the current programme structure. The loss of locally influenced Axis 3 capital programme (replaced by centrally managed RCDF) has limited options for projects to move into a next stage of development. Whilst this isn't necessarily relevant for all projects – given that many require revenue and not capital funding to develop – it may be an issue for some activities.

4.5 The extent to which projects are integrating the Cross-Cutting Themes into their delivery of activities

Again, as part of the project proposal form, project applicants are asked how the proposed activity will fit with the cross-cutting themes of promoting equal opportunities including the Welsh language, sustainable development and addressing poverty and social inclusion. This is considered as part of the appraisal undertaken by the relevant LAG sub-group. Most project material is required to be produced bilingually. Our observation here is that cross-cutting themes is not seen as a specific criterion in its own right through the appraisal process, it is part of wider consideration whether the project deliver against LDS objectives. A further observation is that the cross-cutting theme section of the project proposals is completed in varying detail by project applicants.

Our view is that many of the project activities funded through the current programme have an emphasis on improving social inclusion within the rural communities. Projects such as 'parent and child activities, the 'craft network', and 'growing community spirit' all provide benefits of networking sectors of the community which require support.

4.6 Whether and to what extent the Local Development Strategy is still relevant to the socio-economic circumstances of the area

As part of this evaluation we have undertaken a brief re-analysis of the socioeconomic characteristics of the rural Vale, recognising that socioeconomic conditions will not have altered considerably since the LDS was formulated in 2014 and also recognising that the rural Vale is a relatively affluent area. This is briefly discussed in Section Three. It is our view that nothing of significance has changed to question the validity of the priorities identified in the LDS.

4.7 Conclusions

Our conclusions are represented using a 'traffic light' approach.

Contribution to LDS objectives	Project activity is usefully contributing to delivery of LDS objectives. However the decision making process does not seem to explicitly consider these – rather it is based on the RDPW five themes. Some of the LDS priorities are being developed outside of the LEADER programme, most notably some of the activities around the Cardiff City region agenda such as the Enterprise Zone at St Athan. It may be useful to capture this activity to fully understand delivery against the LDS priorities.
Appropriateness of the LEADER delivery model	Innovative solutions to rural development needs are being developed, with the CRC team largely driving this
Innovation in funded projects	In terms of output targets, it is clear the programme has already significantly overachieved against almost all programme indicators. There is good level of confidence that all PI targets will be achieved by programme closure. However, we feel it is relevant to question how insightful the programme indicators are in terms of understanding the impact of the programme. Whilst recognising that there are other means to understand the impact – such as individual project level evaluations and this programme level exercise – it may have been useful to have captured additional information over and above the PIs.
Suitability for mainstreaming	Assuring longer term sustainability of projects is a consideration but can be too early to judge given that these are pilot projects. However now that a number of projects have/are being delivered, a stronger focus on supporting sustainability/mainstreaming would be beneficial. It is likely that some of the projects funded through the programme will not lead to a sustainable outcome. However, that should not necessarily be seen as a bad outcome, given that is the objective of piloting/feasibility activity'
Integration of cross cutting themes	Cross cutting themes are being integrated into project activities (although not every project delivers all of them).
Ongoing relevance of LDS	The LDS priorities remain valid as socio economic circumstances have not changed significantly. The policy environment has had some changes since the LDS was developed in 2014 - most notably an increased focus on wellbeing within Welsh Government policy. However, it is our view that the LDS objectives have a reasonable fit with this.

Excellent – Very high confidence that programme objectives will be met

Satisfactory – Good level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

Poor – Low level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

5. Progress towards LDS Expenditure and Output Targets - efficiency

This section reviews progress to date against the LDS budget and output indicators, making use of CRC monitoring information and other information from review of documents.

5.1 Progress with Spend

Latest financial monitoring information provided from CRC (to quarter ending June 2019) indicates that about 68.0% of the overall budget has been spent so far. The breakdown for each strand is shown below:

	RDPW funding	Total budget	Committed funding	Spent to date (June 19)	% Budget committed	% Budget spent
Implementation	£1,296,748	£1,620,935	£1,311,082	£986,417	80.9%	60.9%
Animation	£273,000	£273,000	£273,000	£183,338	100%	67.2%
Administration	£182,000	£182,000	£182,000	£117,096	100%	64.3%
Co-operation	£68,249	£85,312	£36,135	£8,129	42.4%	9.5%
TOTAL **	£1,819,997	£2,616,247	£1,802,217	£1,294,891	83.4%	60%

At a more detailed level this can be split down in a different way as shown in the below table:

	Budget	RDP Grant Element	Committed	Spent	Unallocated
LAG Finance & Admin	£182,000	£182,000	£182,000	£117,095	£0
LAG Animation	£273,000	£273,000	£273,000	£183,338	£0
LAG Implementation					
Staff Costs (includes HR & Maternity which doesn't attract the 15% overhead rate)	£901,637	£721,310	£746,637	£605,304	£155,000
LAG Grants	£200,000	£160,000	£138,399	£42,884	£61,600
LAG project marketing	£16,000	£12,800	£14,526	£14,526	£1,474
LAG Commissioning Budget	£373,318	£298,654	£304,789	£235,086	£68,529
Flat Rate (15% overheads)	£129,980	£103,984	£106,730	£88,617	£23,250
LAG Cooperation Budget	£85,312	£68,249	£36,135	£8,129	£49,177
TOTAL **	£2,161,247	£1,819,997	£1,802,216	£1,294,979	£359,030

** Totals may not exactly match due to rounding

There are several points of interest to draw out of the allocation/expenditure profile:

- The level of spend in grant projects against committed/allocated funds is quite low. To date, only 30.9% of allocated funding has been spent. Taking into account both directly commissioned and grant funded projects increases this to 62.7%. Our understanding is that

this aspect of the programme finances presents one of the most challenging aspects. On occasion there is a lack of clarity over project spend and, whilst expenditure is expected to quicken over the remainder of the programme, there is also the possibility that some of the spend will be returned to the pot. Indeed, this is already happening. The consequence of this is that the unallocated funding has been somewhat of a changeable figure. The CRC team have worked diligently to understand the level of confidence regarding project spend – working closely with the project applicant – but there remains a possibility that further unspent funding will be ‘recirculated’ back into the programme budget for allocation elsewhere. This will continue to be an ongoing consideration for the LAG.

- It is also relevant to note spend against co-operation activities. We are aware that VoG LAG, through CRC, has been involved in the CoLabora project – focusing on creating co-working space. The project spend against the Cooperation strand has solely been in relation to this project and is low (see below comment on ongoing plans to extend activity).
- As previously stated, given the model of delivery within the current programme – across all LEADER programme areas in Wales – there is an emphasis on delivery and support from the CRC team. This has been the approach/model designed by the Welsh Government and adopted locally. As indicated elsewhere, this works well. One outcome of this model of delivery is that a smaller proportion of the overall budget flows out directly to project activities i.e. external organisations. For example, using the above table as reference, only 24.6% of total budget has been allocated to projects (either commissioned or financially supported). This increases to 26.6% if cooperation projects are also considered. Staff costs relating to the Implementation strand constitute 41.4% of total committed budget. It is important to note that many of the projects have required significant support by the CRC team, the initial pilot phases have not necessarily been long enough to develop the required capacity in the organisations/networks and it has demanded more CRC staff time. The Crafts Network could be highlighted as an example of where this has occurred.
- The allocated staff budget to *direct* project allocation (financially supported and commissioned) is approximately 1.4:1 when considered only based on the Implementation and Cooperation strands.

It is important to reiterate that the implementation budget includes not only the direct project costs (either procured or commissioned) but also the costs of CRC staff leading projects directly or working with project steering groups and others. Direct CRC staff costs amounts to some circa 67% of the implementation spend to date²⁰. This is quite a significant level of input. However, CRC are often the actual project applicant, and undertaking all the contract management of the studies, working with their steering groups and other partners.

From our discussions at CRC, it is clear that working with the LAG and local groups to develop project ideas, and then subsequent delivery can be quite labour intensive. Indeed, the difficulty in some project activities to ‘step away’ may mean that more staff resources are effectively devoted to a project than originally envisaged. One of the major issues highlighted in this evaluation is whether this difficulty of stepping back from projects – for them to be taken forward independently from CRC – will limit the build-up of expertise or spread of capacity more broadly.

Financial information provided by CRC indicates there is currently an unallocated budget of £309,853 in the Implementation budget (this is equivalent to circa £247,882 of RDPW funding) and £49,177 in the Cooperation budget (this is equivalent to circa £39,341 of RDPW funding).

²⁰ Note that this cost is inclusive of all staff employment on-costs (NI etc but excluding the 15% overhead rate).

However, this does not include any project proposals that were submitted to July 2019 LAG meeting, one of which relates to an extension of the CoLobora cooperation project which has the potential to take up some of the unallocated budget.

To date, activity in the cooperation strand of the programme has principally focused on the CoLobora project. This is a transnational project exploring the economic benefits of creating co-working spaces in rural areas and to gain a greater understanding of best practice in terms of both setting up and running co-working spaces. The VoG LEADER programme is one of 7 partners signed up to the project. Just under 50% of the cooperation budget has been allocated to this project, although spend has been slower/lower than expected.

We understand that a project proposal is being presented to the LAG in July for approval to expand the project to pilot a co-working space in the Vale. This would potentially use a large proportion of the remaining budget. A further smaller project - focused on disseminating and receiving feedback from the shared commercial kitchen concept – is expected to also draw down a small amount of the cooperation project – again, dependent on LAG approval. This is a cooperation project across other LEADER programme areas in South and East Wales.

The review of allocation of funding to date shows that the programme is largely on track to meet its expenditure profile. The fact that 77.3% of funding available for project support has been committed/allocated (or 96.6% when set against the RDPW funding), with £103,129 remaining, provides good confidence that the programme of support will be delivered fully. In our experience, the VoG programme has been successful in allocating a large proportion of its budget and credit is due to the CRC team for both managing the expenditure profile, as well as driving a lot of the activity which has led to the allocation of funding in the early stages of the programme. The experience that they held from previous programmes, as well as the fact that the structure was largely in place as the programme commenced, has helped with this positive outcome.

Expenditure occurring near the end of the programme period is expected – projects take time to build capacity and momentum and project spend often comes at the end of activities.

It is clear that the programme expenditure profile has been tightly managed, through the activities of the Monitoring Officer, working with the CRC team and team leader.

5.2 Progress with Output Indicators

All LAGs are required to report on output indicators, agreed as part of approval of the LDS. The LDS output indicators are set out by RDPW theme in LDS's the intervention logic table and are summarised in the below table. All projects are expected to make a contribution to these indicators²¹.

The following table sets out the indicators that are targets for the VoG LDS and the reported progress²² against these to date (end of March 19). The CRC team present a cumulative record of targets, commitments and achievements to the LAG at its meetings. This informs the LAG on the progress and achievement against the programme indicators.

²¹ The indicators are requirements of the RDPW and indicator definitions and code numbers are set out by Welsh Government

²² We have taken the information as reported by CRC. Testing the evidence for this has not been a specific part of the evaluation as we are not undertaking an audit as such. However the CRC PI recording sheet does list the output evidence held for these.

Indicator	Target	Achieved to date	% target
Number of feasibility studies	13	9	69.2%
Number of networks established	6	7	116.7%
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	25	45	180.0%
Number of community hubs	1	1	100%
Number of information dissemination actions/promotions and/or marketing activities to raise awareness of the LDS and projects	38	296	779.0%
Number of stakeholders engaged (stakeholders engaged through networking, animation or consultation)	91	330	362.6%
Number of participants supported (people attending information dissemination events and awareness sessions)	450	1,250	277.8%

The table shows that the programme has significantly over-achieved against some of its programme indicators (PIs), reflecting the focus of its activity. It only has one indicator to achieve – number of feasibility studies – to increase before all indicators have met original targets. This can be viewed as a success. The programme has clearly been successful in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and project participants and has driven a lot of activity through its pilot project activity. The volume of activity – and its reach – has been successful in the context of those original targets.

However, it may be useful to reflect on how insightful the indicators are. Our view is that the PI's are a measurement of project activity (which may have been their objective), rather than necessarily being reflective of the outcome/impact of that activity. They need to be interpreted in that context.

Having reviewed several project proposals/applications as part of this evaluation, it is not always clear that the proposed project outcomes/outputs are clearly described. Some set these out, others have not done so in any great detail. To that end, for the remainder of the programme, it may be useful for all new project proposals to more clearly set out the proposed outcomes/output targets and the assumptions on which they are based. Given the scale of the supported projects this need not be extensive, but a small number of measurable outcomes may be useful.



5.3 Conclusions

Our conclusions in the following table are based on the current approach to the delivery of the LDS in rural Vale. We have represented our assessment of progress using a 'traffic light' approach.

Programme allocation	The programme has clearly been successful in allocating large proportion of the available budget. This should be seen a good achievement. With one year for effective programme delivery remaining there is a high level of confidence that the budget will be fully allocated and spent – particularly regarding allocation to project spend. However, there is a risk that the unallocated budget continues to 'flex' as projects underspend is circulated back into the programme budget. We feel it remains important to continue to monitor the relationship between CRC staff implementation costs in relation to project costs in order to check progress on overall spend and commitment. Whilst we recognise that the model of delivery was accepted and agreed at the outset of the project, we also feel this would be important for external perception.
Programme expenditure	There remains a risk that project spend does not meet allocated funds. This has occurred through the programme. It will remain important for CRC to fully understand the confidence that projects have in spending against allocation – this has taken up a lot of time and effort from the CRC team in understanding the status/likelihood.
Programme Indicators	In terms of output targets, it is clear the programme has already significantly overachieved against almost all programme indicators. There is good level of confidence that all PI targets will be achieved by programme closure. However, we feel it is relevant to question how insightful the programme indicators are in terms of understanding the impact of the programme. Whilst recognising that there are other means to understand the impact – such as individual project level evaluations and this programme level exercise – it may have been useful to have captured additional information over and above the PIs.

Excellent – Very high confidence that programme objectives will be met

Satisfactory – Good level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

Poor – Low level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

6. Delivery model/structure - efficiency

As in Section four, this section is structured around the questions as defined in the evaluation brief and subsequently further expanded in the evaluation framework.

6.1 The quality and effectiveness of the Administrative Body's implementation and management of LEADER, including the delivery of cooperation activity

As previously stated, the administrative and accountable body for the delivery of the LEADER programme is the Vale of Glamorgan Council. However, the Council has effectively 'delegated' (although maintaining close management and oversight) of the programme to the CRC team. As employees of the Council, the CRC's overall performance and delivery of the programme is managed through the Operational Manager for Regeneration. The Cabinet portfolio holder for Education and Regeneration also maintains an interest in the management and delivery of the programme. The LAG members provide further oversight and direction.

The CRC team act as the secretariat to the LAG and sub-groups. It provides an update on project progress at the LAG meetings (through a Project Progress report and verbal update), as well as an update on the financial position of the programme.

It is our view that the programme has been effectively managed and delivered. The analysis of project expenditure and activity against the programme profile, as well as achievement against the Programme Indicators, shows that it is on target to achieve its operational objectives. In our consultations with stakeholders and project leads, the professionalism, energy and expertise of the CRC team has been regularly cited. It is a very well-regarded team and considered as an asset to the Rural Vale. As a team and as individuals they have delivered the programme to high professional standards, encapsulating all roles including the community-facing Rural Regeneration Officers as well as the programme support functions.

It is also our view – corroborated by the view of the majority of stakeholders we have spoken to – that the programme has benefited from the CRC team being at slightly arms-length to the Council's core activities. By effectively having a community development function more closely embedded in the community it supports has, in our view, contributed to the success of the programme. The team are considered more accessible. Equally, however, the programme has clearly benefited from considerable support and commitment from Vale of Glamorgan Council, both in terms of financial commitment as well as political and officer support. In many senses, the delivery model brings the 'best of both worlds'. The perception that CRC acts with a reasonable level of autonomy has benefited in terms of community engagement, whilst the links and support with the Council provides importance support and, importantly, linkages. The CRC team is able to engage with Council colleagues at an early stage around issues such as future mainstreaming or links with other initiatives.

In our view having a LAG Chair from the voluntary sector provides benefits. In some other LEADER areas the LAG is chaired by representatives from the Local Authority and it has been more difficult to engage with the local community as a consequence.

It is perhaps useful to note though, that there were also views expressed to us that this relationship is changing over time. Some of those we consulted felt that the CRC team was becoming more closely associated with the Council over time, and that they were losing their perceived 'impartiality' as a result. This may be a necessary result of the Council's need to manage and direct the programme, or reflective of its own resource constraints. We feel it is important to highlight as important for external perception moving forward.



There is also an additional observation to make. Through the consultations held with LAG members for this evaluation, some frustration has been expressed with aspects of how the LAG has been able to influence the programme and in particular the community the members represent. Many members of the LAG felt that it is not as effective a group/forum as it was in previous programmes. The reasons for this are five-fold:

1. Many LAG members have been clearly frustrated with the restrictions placed on the current programme in terms of the programme's ability to directly support businesses and organisations. Many have felt that the impact of the programme has been negatively constrained. Several LAG members held the perception that the current programme was very good at undertaking pilot/feasibility activities, but it was not always clear what subsequently happened as a consequence of that activity (see below comment about feedback).
2. There appeared to be a lack of clarity in some LAG members about how the objectives of the VoG LEADER programme and how it is delivered. Some felt that the programme had not been clearly explained. In some respects, this is a surprising view expressed – given that many have been involved for a number of years. Nevertheless, it was expressed by several LAG members and reflected here.
3. A structure has been established which places a great deal of emphasis on the various sub-groups to direct activity against the relevant theme, appraise and then recommend for approval projects which come through. Whilst we feel this structure has proven effective, some LAG members have questioned the role of the main LAG Board. Some LAG members have felt there has been limited opportunity to comment on projects presented for approval by the sub-groups. Conversely, there were examples of where the sub-group had spent some time considering a project before making a recommendation for approval, and this was subsequently debated at length in the main LAG meeting. Overall, there appears to be a lack of clarity and tension between the main LAG and the roles/responsibilities of the sub-group. In fact, the roles/responsibilities of the main LAG and its sub-groups have changed at the request of Welsh Government. In the 2011-2013 programme 'grant panels' were set up and consisted of Partnership/LAG members according to interest and expertise. Grant panel decisions were final and there was no opportunity for further discussion at Partnership/LAG meetings. In the current programme, Welsh Government was clear that it wanted the LAG to have the final decision – with sub-groups providing recommendations. All LAG members

are sent the full project proposal prior to the LAG meetings and invited to discuss at the meeting. The LAG can agree with sub-group recommendations or, in some cases, override the recommendations. It is not fully clear why some LAG members have felt they have been unable to comment or influence decisions through the current programme structure.

After observing a LAG meeting our view is that some 'tension' remains. The sub-group may have taken significant time to develop and consider project proposals and to make recommendations, only for the merits of the project to be debated again at the LAG meeting. In our view, this partially (although not wholly) questions the role of the sub-groups and whether it is a time-efficient process for LAG members. It may be appropriate for the sub-groups to continue to have a role in developing project ideas, and even to make recommendations, but for the time taken to assess and recommend to be limited – given the project will still go through scrutiny at the main LAG meeting.

On a related matter, some expressed the view that two-way dialogue – between the LAG and CRC team – has been suppressed on occasions. They have felt some frustration that their views have not been fully considered – although recognising that this is not always possible when LAG membership constitutes 22 individuals with various representative views.

4. There was a perception from some LAG members that the LAG Board is dominated by public sector representatives, despite the fact that the Board has a broad third split between voluntary/public/business. Our independent view is that the LAG Board is well-structured with a good spread of representation from different sectors. Again, we highlight the perception held.
5. There is a question about how effective the LAG receives feedback on the outcomes of the various projects that the LEADER programme has supported. Whilst they are given feedback at the end of the project activity e.g. when a pilot project, toolkit or feasibility study has been completed, they do not necessarily then subsequently understand whether/how those resources have been used. As an example, there was a general lack of awareness that the toolkit developed as part of the Schools Trips project was actively being used by several organisations in the area, and that they have hosted school visits from some less advantaged areas. Overall, there was limited knowledge of the longer-term outcomes associated with funded activities. Whilst written feedback is useful and helpful, as the programme nears completion it may be useful for the LAG Board to receive verbal updates/presentations from supported projects to explain 'what happened next'. Ideally this should come from an externally supported organisation, rather than the CRC team itself. It may also be beneficial to focus more on collecting impact evidence from projects over the remainder of the programme period.

The consequence of these factors is that overall (although not necessarily uniformly or consistently) the interest of LAG members has waned over the current programme. Attendance at LAG meetings is voluntary, and LAG members wish to 'make a difference' in the rural Vale, but they feel they are unable to influence matters as they wish. It is our understanding that is also occurring in other LEADER areas.

We feel this is an important finding of this mid-term evaluation and should be an important consideration for Welsh Government. The LAGs (and wider rural partnerships) have acted as important representative groups within rural Wales, helping to deliver the LEADER programme over several iterations and importantly to develop local solutions to local issues.

A by-product of the restrictions on the current programme – recognising that it is only one of the above factors highlighted - appears to be that the LAG themselves (individually and collectively) feel they are becoming less effective and able to influence their local communities.

6.2 The sufficiency of current data collection for a robust final evaluation

Some completed projects have completed a project-level evaluation or project closure report, which we have reviewed and been useful for this mid-term evaluation. We recognise that any post-support evaluation activity needs to be commensurate to the scale of support received. It would not be appropriate for all projects to undertake similar exercises, but all should complete a project closure report which details key findings/outcomes.

In addition, the CRC team also collect evidence against the Programme Indicators. As indicated elsewhere in this report, the programme is expected to achieve all of its targets by programme close. However, we do feel that these PIs are of minimal value when considering the impact of the programme – they are not that insightful. We recognise that they have been determined by Welsh Government, and that they form the basis of the quarterly reports submitted. They have not necessarily acted as insightful resource for this mid-term evaluation, and nor do we expect them to be for the final evaluation. As a consequence, it may have been useful for the programme to have developed a limited number of additional metrics (over and above the Welsh Government defined PIs) to provide further insight into the outcomes and impacts that the projects may have delivered.

We recognise that it may now too late for these to be developed and integrated into the remainder of the programme, given that most of the project budget has been allocated. However, this may be a consideration if further iterations (or extension) of the LEADER programme occur. For example include some additional measures in the form of ‘pilot testing’; .or, if further projects are funded in the remainder of the programme, include a limited set of additional measures be integrated to see whether more informative evidence can be produced by projects.



6.3 Communications: the awareness of LEADER among LAG members, activity deliverers, local people and communities

There is a small marketing and publicity budget available for CRC team to publicise programme and project activities. We have seen evidence of marketing materials produced for the programme and they are of a high quality. The CRC team also communicate regularly via email and also administer Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/CreativeRuralCommunities?fref=ts>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ruralvale>) accounts. These are used to publicise events that have been funded by the programme. It is useful to note that the broad trend (over the programme

period) has been a shift from traditional printed marketing material to a much greater use of social media. The CRC programme's adoption of social media has mirrored these broader trends. Social media also represents a more cost-effective form of mass marketing. Approximately 1,800 people follow the Facebook page and 1,400 follow the Twitter feed. This indicates that there is a reasonable level of visibility. In addition, CRC news/events etc. are linked to Facebook pages across rural Vale, with many of the individual communities having their own accounts.

In terms of awareness of the LEADER programme we have two important observations to make:

- In our consultations with project leads in external organisations – for both the current and previous programmes – it has become clear that many people associate the support they have received much more to CRC than the LEADER programme per se. Whilst we recognise in the previous programme periods funding support may have been provided by other RDP funding e.g. Axis 3, there was a general lack of awareness/understanding where the funding support was coming from. Whilst this may reflect the fact that the CRC team has become the effective 'face' of the programme in the wider community, it does raise some questions about the visibility of the LEADER programme itself. This is important for perception reasons i.e. a lack of widespread understanding of how European programmes have supported the community²³.
- As noted previously, we have found that not all LAG members have complete clarity over the aims and objectives of the LEADER programme itself. In particular, exactly what is allowable under the current programme and what has been achieved. This is a somewhat surprising outcome from our consultations. In terms of the latter, we feel that the importance of insightful feedback should not be overlooked and could become a focus for the remainder of the programme. This will be important, enabling the LAG members to 'celebrate the success' of the programme in their respective communities.

6.4 Collaboration: the extent to which local communities and people have been engaged by the LAG

As demonstrated by the Programme Indicators it appears that the programme continues to be successful in promoting activity that engages with the wider community. There have been some supported activities which have been particularly useful in this context – for example, the community mapping.

In addition, the CRC team held an extensive engagement programme at the start of the programme, highlighting the support available and the 'open calls'. This formed a central part of the Animation activity. The CRC team linked into approximately 30 events that were being held across the area to promote the programme. There was significant effort and activity to increase engagement within the community. Other promotional and outreach activities that were developed by the CRC included the development of a promotional video, encouraging community groups to come forward with their ideas²⁴.

However, there is also a perception held by several of the stakeholders we spoke to that the current programme may have been more limited in the extent of its engagement than in previous programme periods, although not through lack of effort/activity. The main limitation cited has been with the business community – again, connected to what has been allowable under the guidance. The absence of 'direct' financial tools has meant there has been a lack of incentive for businesses to engage in the programme

²³ It is important to note that all materials have carried the LEADER and EU logos – meeting funding requirements

²⁴ <https://youtu.be/dExiomKGQrA>

There were mixed views from the stakeholders we spoke to – including LAG members – regarding whether the programme has been fully effective in engaging with disadvantaged communities and individuals. It is important to reiterate that rural Vale is a relatively wealthy area, and that it doesn't necessarily have discernible disadvantaged communities at a scale where activity can be focused. In some respect reaching out to specific communities is more difficult as a result. The community mapping project was a clear attempt to identify the strengths and weaknesses within certain communities, and the support needed to help address some of their issues. This was a good first step and has been well received by those we spoke to. Whether the LEADER programme has sufficient capacity/resource to address the identified needs is another question.

There remains a question whether the programme does – and always has – been directly accessed (acting as project leads) by a relatively small section of community members, who tend to have characteristics of being proactive, middle class and knowledgeable about funding programme work. Whilst significant efforts have been made by the LAG/CRC to reach out to more disadvantaged members of the community, it has proved difficult to fully engage. The programme is set up to be responsive to demand from the community. While there have been considerable efforts on outreach and promotional activity, if some individuals/communities have not engaged, it may be worth considering alternative and additional methods.

6.5 Conclusions

Our conclusions are again in table form and presented using a 'traffic light' approach.

Administrative Body implementation and management of LEADER	The Council acts as the Administrative Body through the CRC team. This is a very well regarded team and the programme has been managed and delivered to a high professional standard. It has also benefitted from being at some arms length to the Council and therefore perceived as closer to the community. A LAG voluntary sector chair has helped in this. However we note some views that the arms length operation is gradually being lost and CRC is losing a perceived impartiality as a result. There is also concern/frustration amongst LAG members about a perceived inability to influence the programme/lack of full understanding of delivery. These concerns need to be addressed.
Sufficiency of data collection	Data is being collected for LEADER programme PIs and this is robust. However the PIs are not useful indicators of impact. Fuller insights into outcomes and impacts would be valuable and should be included if there are future iterations of LEADER. Consideration should also be given to developing measures as 'pilot testing' for any new projects in the current programme.
Communications	The CRC team has undertaken regular and high quality publicity and marketing. However people generally perceive support as being from CRC rather than the LEADER programme per se. More is needed to heighten this awareness. More is also needed to develop the LAG's own knowledge of the programme and what it has achieved.
Collaboration	Best efforts have been made by LAG/CRC to reach all parts of the community including its more disadvantaged parts. It is recognised that this is quite difficult and CRC has engaged quite broadly. The main part of the community missing from the current programme is the business community – and this is not the fault of CRC but reflects the way in which the current LEADER programme is set up by Welsh Government. Our amber rating is a reflection of this fact.

Excellent – Very high confidence that programme objectives will be met

Satisfactory – Good level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

Poor – Low level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

7. Meeting the project objectives - impact

As in Sections four and six, this section is structured around the questions as defined in the evaluation brief and subsequently further expanded in the evaluation framework.

7.1 Networking of different groups and sectors

It is clear from our consultations that there is a significant level of networking between different groups in the rural Vale, and that CRC is absolutely fundamental to establishing these linkages. We have spoken to several projects where CRC have suggested and set-up relationships between different groups where the links have provided positive benefits. Some of these relationships and networks have been highlighted in 3.2.

The contact network that the CRC hold – both individually and collectively as a team – represents one of their key assets. The CRC team appear to hold a real strength in signposting and making introductions. They are very well-connected in the community, and effectively act as a ‘hub’ through which connections are made. The team are also keen to establish networks, recognising that by linking activities it has the potential to create a greater combined positive impact. This is important in the context of a reduced and relatively limited programme budget. By creating links and synergies between projects, the CRC team play an important role in 'sweating the funding' more.

7.2 The extent to which the LEADER approach has been delivered and the added value this has provided

As demonstrated demonstrated in this report and in the Legacy Report that accompanies this mid-term evaluation, there is evidence that the LEADER programme has benefited the rural Vale. There are many examples of where even small amounts of LEADER support has acted as the catalyst for wider and sustainable impact. The approach in the rural Vale has been based on the seven principle of the LEADER programme, with the LAG and the supporting CRC resource helping to drive a community-led bottom-up approach.

It is our view that the principles were easier to deliver through the previous programmes, given that they allowed more demand-led activity. Businesses and organisations from within the community could conceive their own ideas and project concepts and apply to the programme for support. This was complemented by the activity driven by the LAG and CRC themselves.



In the current programme there has been a shift in that relationship. As explained previously, there is a much greater emphasis on the CRC team to drive activity, acting on ideas and concepts from the community and then providing the resource and impetus to make things happen.. Whilst the CRC team are still viewed as being close to the community, it could be argued that the 'impetus' is not now coming directly from the community itself. As explained earlier, the analogy adopted has been CRC acting on the 'seed' of an idea from the community and 'germinating' that initial concept through its own time and experience. The perception held by most stakeholders (including LAG members) is that 'bottom-up' approach has been subtly diluted due to a lack of *direct* involvement by businesses. This argument has been well-rehearsed in previous sections.

Overall though, there is no reason to doubt that the LEADER model – as characterised by the seven principles – has been delivered in the rural Vale. As a programme that has been in place for over a decade, it has certainly added value to 'mainstream' community development activity (such as delivered through the Council or other funding streams). Whilst we argue that the bottom-up approach may have been subtly diluted in the current programme, it still represents the most marked programme of community-led development in rural Vale.

7.3 Achieving outcomes and impacts from activities more broadly

In many senses, it is too early to tell what the impact of the activities funded under the current programme will be. Many of the projects are still being delivered and are continuing to be developed. In the consultations we had with project leads, in some instances there was a good level of confidence that the project will deliver a positive impact, whilst in others it was more uncertain. There are certainly some examples where the activity may not extend beyond the piloting, feasibility stage. This should not be considered a failure – it is a positive outcome in its own right - given that it might have saved a lot of wasted time and effort pursuing an activity which was not viable. The pilot/feasibility activities have also provided important lessons, on occasions what has been learnt has been pulled through to other related activities – benefiting other projects. The experience and consistency of the CRC team has been important in these instances – they have held the organisational knowledge.

There are other examples – such as the school catering supply chain project, Vale Film Festival, Craft network etc. where the impact could be significant. However, this is expected to build slowly over time. The evidence that we have collated as part of the legacy report certainly suggests that 'impact' tends to be developed in an iterative way. Rarely are supported activities transformative overnight. LEADER support is not delivered at that scale.

7.4 Extent to which LAG activities are integrated with other programmes

The level of integration with other funding programmes has changed in recent years. In the previous programme, the LEADER programme (as delivered through Axis 4 of the RDPW programme) had a much closer relationship with Axis 3 of the RDPW programme. In that programme project concepts, pilot activities and some early-stage delivery was supported through LEADER. If the project then needed more substantial capital funding support, Axis 3 offered this potential route.

As a local decision-making body, the LAG had an important role in making those links and using both funding streams to support the developing initiative. In that sense, there was a high level of integration and, crucially, the LAG was central to both funding streams. Funding decisions could be made locally and closely adhered to the bottom-up model as previously discussed.

Delivery of the current RDPW has not operated in the same way. The funding that was available through Axis 3 is now delivered through different measures in the RDPW 2014-2020, mainly administered directly by Welsh Government. The Rural Communities Development Fund is the delivery mechanism for one measure (M07) and is centrally administered. Organisations that wish to apply to the RCDF must do so direct to Welsh Government. Whilst LAGs are supposed to have an advisory role on RCDF applications have been made in their area, and to endorse those proposal, the LAG members we spoke to felt this was simply a 'rubber stamping' exercise and they had no real influence. There has been a a perceived overall loss of control and influence within the area. As discussed previously, one of the outcomes has been the waning interest of LAG members.

However we are also aware that RCDF has supported the progression of some pilot activities initiated through LEADER, for example it funded play equipment in St Athan, following the establishment of the St Athan 'The Saints' group initially through community mapping and who were also involved in the Community Spirit pilot projects

The RCDF is also perceived as a more bureaucratic and slow process than the previous Axis 3 approach, and as such has not always been an attractive route for organisations to apply into. The consequence of this is that, many stakeholders felt that an important 'route for progression' has been lost.

It was not clear to some where projects that have been funded through the current programme now necessarily go for further funding support if required. This raises a question over the long-term sustainability of some of the funded piloting, feasibility activities. There is no immediately obvious route for these project concepts to be developed through RDPW funding apart from RCDF which has very specific criteria. Some organisations are undertaking not-for-profit activities (delivering social good) and therefore not necessarily relevant for private funding (although some forms of peer to peer lending, crowdfunding or social investment banks might be opportunities). As elsewhere, the Vale Council is resource constrained and whilst it does offer some funding programmes, these are relatively limited in scale and scope. There are some sources of other public funding available (e.g. noted in the policy section of the socio economic change section) but given public funding constraints generally, these may be limited.

Overall, the current LEADER programme appears less integrated with other funding programmes and may suffer as a result in terms of its longer-term impact. We think it important to plan for legacy in the remainder of the current LEADER period and have made suggestions on this in Section 8.



However, as demonstrated in Section 3.2, the programme has developed some close alignment with the Wellbeing of Futures Generation (Wales) Act. Many of the activities supported through the programme have a good fit with the principles of that important piece of Welsh legislation.

7.5 Conclusions

Our conclusions are again in table form and presented using a 'traffic light' approach.

<p>Networking</p>	<p>There appears to be a significant level of networking being achieved and CRC is critical in making this happen. Their network of contacts is a key asset for the rural Vale and the LAG.</p>
<p>Achieving the LEADER approach and adding value</p>	<p>The Leader principles are being achieved through the LEADER programme. However, because CRC is now providing a lot of the impetus for programme's activity we do have some concern that the programme has become more dependent on the skills and capacity of the CRC team. Whilst the ideas and concepts still largely come from the community itself, the current programme is not quite so explicitly community 'driven'. The CRC team work hard at encouraging ideas to come forward. This is as much a question of community capacity as anything. The desire to improve conditions in rural Vale remains in place. Nevertheless, our view is that it remains a valuable locally-based programme. It is viewed as more accessible than some of the alternative funding programmes which are managed centrally.</p>
<p>Achieving outcomes and impacts</p>	<p>There is good evidence that a number of projects will deliver a positive impact. Some projects may not develop beyond the piloting stage. However, as our legacy work demonstrates, positive impacts can take a long time to development and can do this in a very iterative way. As noted in Section 5, there is an opportunity for more effort to go into identifying outcomes and impacts of projects and putting in places ways to identify and measure these</p>
<p>Integration with other programmes</p>	<p>LEADER/LAG has less locally administered links into other parts of the RDPW funding as it used to have. RCDF is the main opportunity now but in practice the LAG has very little influence over this. The CRC team has supported integration and progression into other programmes where this is possible. Overall though, our perception is that LEADER is less integrated with other programmes now – and there is also reducing funding in other programmes as well. Our rating is not a reflection on delivery as such but more a reflection of the wider policy landscape in which the programme is operating. However, and as discussed in Section 5, it does strengthen the need to give good consideration to longer term sustainability for pilot projects.</p>

Excellent – Very high confidence that programme objectives will be met

Satisfactory – Good level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

Poor – Low level of confidence that programme objectives will be met

8. Recommendations

This final section draws together our recommendations in relation to the key evaluation questions in the Brief, having answered the more specific questions throughout the main body of the evaluation.

8.1 Evaluation of progress in implementing the LDS

Our overall conclusion is that the LAG and CRC has made considerable progress towards contributing to delivery of the objectives of the LDS.

Our recommendations for developing the delivery of the LDS for the remainder of the Programme period on the current basis are set out in the following table.

Recommendation	
Effectiveness	
1	For the LAG/CRC team to map funded LEADER projects (and their financial allocations) and wider delivery against LDS objectives to understand the full extent of activities contributing to LDS activities. Whilst we recognise that this has largely been done through the Intervention Logic Table, it may be useful to extend this to include financial allocations and non-LEADER activity.
2	To consider how existing funded activities could be further enhanced/developed so that they could contribute to the Cardiff City agenda, or at least being clear how the agenda is being taken forward elsewhere (following on from recommendation 1).
3	Consider developing a small-number of additional consistent project-level metrics (on a 'pilot basis') to better capture project impact. Whilst the project closure reports have sometimes included benefit measurements, they have tended to be specific to the project and not easily aggregated. It may be useful for CRC to assess whether a small number of consistent metrics could be applied to all projects, which could then be aggregated and supplement the existing PIs. We do not advocate this exercise should take too much time, but a quick assessment of feasibility may be useful.
4	To maintain and strengthen focus on supporting sustainability/mainstreaming in existing funded projects where appropriate.
Efficiency	
1	To revisit the relationship, and respective roles and responsibilities, between the main LAG and its sub-groups. The main aim is to improve the efficiency between the two groups and may require a slight adjustment to the emphasis of sub-group discussions.
2	To implement a better 'feedback mechanism' into LAG Board meetings to help members better understand the real on-the-ground impact of projects. Ideally, this should not be delivered by the CRC team, but based on external organisations coming to meetings and detailing impact.
3	For a greater emphasis on celebrating the success of the programme. For LAG members to take on a more advocacy role. This may help with widening engagement in the 'hard-to-reach' parts of the Rural Vale community.
Impact	
1	For the LAG to strengthen its focus much more on building capacity and capability within the wider community. For it to consider - alongside the Council - how it can improve organisations to 'self-help' and reduce dependency on the CRC team

Annex 1

Procured Commissioning	Allocated by LAG (£)	Spent (£)	Status
Coastal Communities Feasibility Study	19,357.50	19,357.50	Complete
Community Mapping	9,806.50	9,828.08	Complete
Event Pop Up	24,967.40	24,967.40	Complete
Youth and School Visits	15,600.00	12,738.89	Ongoing
Income From Print	25,000.00	12,756.14	Ongoing
Dog Friendly	34,940.61	34,940.61	Complete
Celebrating St Illtyd	1,228.25	1,228.25	Complete
Year of.....	801.67	801.67	Complete
Craft Network	2,000.00	467.92	Ongoing
Community Spirit	851.53	851.53	Complete
Parent and Child	7,006.57	7,006.58	Complete
Redundant Rural Buildings	13,125.00	9,902.50	Complete
FoodVale Event	1,230.00	1,230.00	Complete
Green School Challenge	2,188.00	2,188.00	Complete
Commercial Kitchen	10,000.00	642.55	Ongoing
Green Community Energy Event	2,720.96	2,720.96	Complete
Livestock Feasibility Study	30,000.00	30,000.00	Complete
Business to Business Research	798.16	798.16	Complete
Cowbridge History society - Making the most of the archives	1,000.00	0	Complete *
Agora	2,000.00	0	Ongoing
Festival of the sea	31,700.00	16,609.00	Ongoing
Vale Film Festival	15,000.00	0	Ongoing
Cycling in the Vale	1,000.00	0	Ongoing
Digital Community Venues	21,450.00	2,071.00	Ongoing
Crafts Festival	15,178.00	1,500.00	Ongoing
Vale School Catering	15,000.00	10,600.00	Ongoing
Vale Digital Skills	15,970.56	578.50	Ongoing

Grant	RDP Grant (£)	Spent (£)	Status
Glamorgan Smallholders	764.00	764.00	Complete
Making sense of well-being	6,018.61	6,018.61	Complete
Creating Havoc with Health	13,673.20	13,673.20	Complete
Twt Beech project	10,550.00	10,550.00	Ongoing
Cowbridge Food Assembly	5,274.00	5,274.00	Ongoing
The Vale Loan Scheme	5,828.96	5,828.96	Ongoing
Boys and Girls Club	27,900.00	27,900.00	Ongoing
Community Spirit	4,757.81	4,757.81	Ongoing

* No spend, but project completed by volunteers