

# An update on the North East RDPE Evaluation

11th June 2010



# Presentation Structure

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1. RDPE background and context
2. Evaluation methodology
3. Progress to date
4. Emerging findings
5. Opportunities to enhance the programme
6. Concluding comments

# European and National context

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- ❑ Seven year £3.9 billion programme (2007-2013)
- ❑ Funded from pillar 2 of CAP as part of CAP reform - move away from direct support for agricultural production
- ❑ 4 priority Axis:
  - Creating a competitive and sustainable land-based sector (Axis 1)
  - Improving the environment and the countryside (Axis 2)
  - Improving the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of the rural economy (Axis 3)
  - The new Leader approach - community led, bottom-up and spatially targeted approach to rural development (Axis 4)
- ❑ England programme delivered by eight RDAs on behalf of DEFRA

# North East RDPE – regional context

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- ❑ Natural England and Forestry Commission responsible for Axis 2
- ❑ ONE NorthEast responsible for £7.5m per annum to deliver Axis 1, 3 and 4
- ❑ North East Implementation Plan developed in consultation with regional partners sets 6 strategic priorities:
  - Micro Enterprise Development
  - Bioenergy
  - Sustainable Farming and Forestry
  - Natural and Cultural Assets (led through Axis 2)
  - Sustainable Communities
  - Tourism and Recreation
- ❑ ONE NorthEast has developed 6 funding strands of activity

# Fund 1: Farming & Remote Rural Micro-Business

- ❑ Small-scale farm diversification, micro-enterprise development and increased use of renewable energy on farms
- ❑ Up to £10k, new minimum of £4k (total project cost)
- ❑ All farms are eligible, micro-enterprises are restricted to new remote rural postcodes
- ❑ Delivery by Business Link through North East Investment Centre (NEIC)



# Fund 2: Landskills North East

- ❑ Sector-specific training and skills development for land-based sector (vocational and technical/higher-level)
- ❑ Average 70% of training costs available
- ❑ Programme managed by LANTRA
- ❑ Training and skills programmes delivered by a range of providers



# Fund 3: BioeNErgy Supply Chain Development

- ❑ Funding support for the forestry sector
- ❑ Focus on supply chain development and increasing capacity to meet rising demand for bioenergy products
- ❑ First point of contact Business Link
- ❑ Programme delivered by Rural Development Initiatives



# Fund 4: LEADER Delivery approach

- ❑ Bottom-up, community-led approach to rural development based on local needs
- ❑ 5 leader partnerships
  - ❑ North Pennine Dales
  - ❑ East Durham
  - ❑ Northumberland Uplands
  - ❑ Northumberland Coast and Lowlands
  - ❑ North Yorkshire Moor Coast and Hills (cross-border, delivery managed by Yorkshire Forward)
- ❑ Each partnership has developed a Local Development Strategy and Delivery Plan aligned to NEIP
- ❑ Investment decisions made by Local Action Groups (LAGs)



# Fund 5: Collaborative Processing and Marketing Fund

- ❑ Support for large-scale processing and marketing for land-based activities
- ❑ Funding upwards of £100k
- ❑ No geographic restrictions
- ❑ Delivered by One NorthEast



# Fund 6: Business and Community Assets Fund

- ❑ Mid to large scale farm diversification, micro-enterprise development, strategic investment in market town destinations (Northumberland, Tees Valley) and support for basic services (Durham)
- ❑ Funding support generally between £10k-£100k
- ❑ First point of contact Business Link
- ❑ Delivered by local authorities



# Evaluation Context

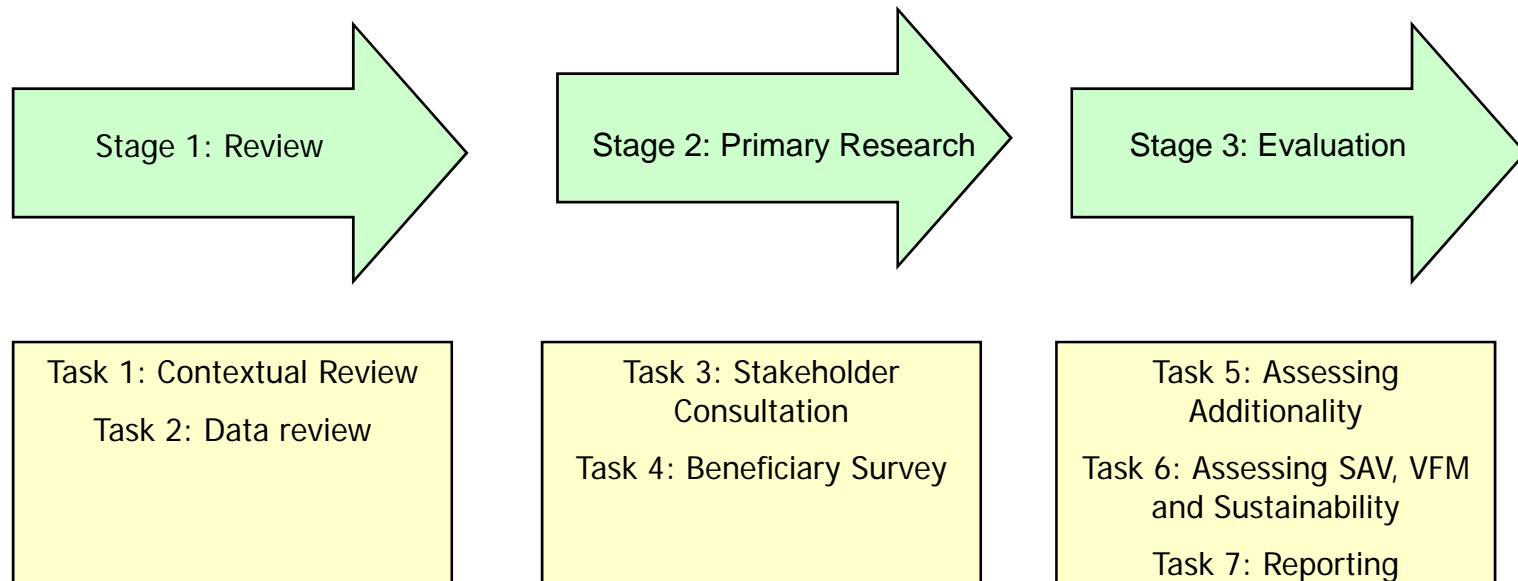
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3 stage evaluation process

- Performance Framework
- Mid-Term Evaluation
- Annual Updates

# Mid-Term Evaluation - Methodology

- ❑ The RDA's Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF)
- ❑ Logic chain approach



# Current Progress

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## Primary Research

- ❑ 25 stakeholder consultations completed

## Beneficiary surveys

- ❑ Fund 1: Web-based survey
- ❑ Fund 3: Postal survey
- ❑ Fund 5: Email/postal survey
- ❑ Fund 6: postal survey
- ❑ Funds 2 and 4: Case Study examples

# Stakeholder Comments

'RDPE is a complicated programme with axis, measures, themes and funds. The region has been successful in keeping beneficiaries away from these intricacies'

'There is good balance in the RDPE programme, with very popular small grants that have been important in terms of a step change to larger grants that provide significant strategic value'

'I only get to hear about things if they are not working and I have to say the phone doesn't ring very often which is very refreshing'

'RDPE funds are being spent well, restructuring where needed, creating collaboration and ensuring businesses now think differently'

'RDPE is beginning to be a catalyst for change, building confidence within the land-based sector'

'RDPE must be seen as a development programme - it is about 'raising the game' of the land-based sector in order to make it more commercially viable and competitive'

'The regional approach to RDPE delivery has proven successful, providing the drive to get on with the programme after a slow start, creating linkages through the funding programmes that achieve wider strategic aims and step-by-step creating a positive change'

'A key success of RDPE investment has been in rural mainstreaming. Rural and land-based businesses are now engaged through one point of access to RDPE and other business solutions support'

# Fund 1: Farming & Remote Rural Micro-Business

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- ❑ Successful take-up of grant
- ❑ Excess of 10% increased gross employment against target
- ❑ Positive feedback on role of rural business advisors
- ❑ Rural mainstreaming
- ❑ Tightening of criteria

# Fund 2: Landskills North East

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- ❑ Started with limited infrastructure/training capacity
- ❑ Catalyst for training/skills infrastructure and capacity
- ❑ Required established routes into farming networks
- ❑ Major step forward - recognition and provision of value in training/ skills development in land-based sector
- ❑ Growing connections with other funds

# Fund 3: BioNEergy Supply Chain Development

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- ❑ Key growth sector for the region
- ❑ Strategic investments to prepare for rising demand
- ❑ Good reputation RDI/Northwoods with beneficiaries
- ❑ Steady flow of projects/development of hubs
- ❑ Strong connection with other funds and Axis 2 measures

# Fund 4: LEADER Delivery approach

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- ❑ Varied approach across the region
- ❑ Demand and appetite within LAG areas
- ❑ Over 100 people across the Leader network
- ❑ Some examples of innovation and economic impact
- ❑ Mainly support for community based 'basic services' projects

# Fund 5: Collaborative Processing and Marketing Fund

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- ❑ Big infrastructure, 'transformational' projects
- ❑ Long-term strategic investments
- ❑ Adding value to agricultural products, supply chain developments
- ❑ Quick responding e.g. Dairy Farmers of Britain closure
- ❑ Significant impact in terms of employment, levered resources, innovation

# Fund 6: Business and Community Assets Fund

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- ❑ Different approach across sub-regions
- ❑ Initially delivered within changing local authority structure
- ❑ Resource and capacity issues - initially impacted on delivery in Durham
- ❑ Raised awareness of rural issues at sub-regional level
- ❑ Demand out-stripping available resources

# Strategic Added Value

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- ❑ 'Can do', 'want to do', 'openness to dialogue' attitude
- ❑ Commitment and flexibility within ONE RDPE Team
- ❑ Endorsement for regional delivery
- ❑ Successful transition for land based support to Business Link
- ❑ Valuable role of Rural Business Advisors
- ❑ Improved connections and networks
- ❑ Balanced programme - 'economic' focus and community

# Beneficiary Survey - Preliminary Findings

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- ❑ Majority of businesses identify 'very significant' impact on sustaining/growing their business
- ❑ Majority identify 'likely' to access other business support solutions
- ❑ Majority identify benefits 'unlikely' without support
- ❑ Majority 'would not have gone ahead with project' without support
- ❑ Concerns raised over bureaucracy and slow delivery
- ❑ Fund 1 - £3.6m RDPE, £10.3m other business support solutions, £8.3m private sector leverage
- ❑ Fund 5 - £2.5m RDPE (5 projects), £7.6m private sector investment

# Opportunities to enhance the Programme

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- ❑ Increased consideration of strategic issues
- ❑ Consideration of areas of potential duplication of funding and delivery
- ❑ Clearer project eligibility criteria
- ❑ Opportunity to be more proactive

# Concluding Comments

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- ❑ Positive stakeholder findings
- ❑ Further analysis of beneficiary surveys required
- ❑ Positive response to regional delivery and process
- ❑ Identifying future programme improvements
- ❑ Completion end of July/early August