





Sharing Ideas, Experience and Practice in the Delivery of RDPE through the LEADER Approach

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Aim of the Talk

1. Why we got involved in LEADER
 - Push & Pull factors
 - Beliefs & Experience
2. How we set up the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group
3. How the Local Action Group fits with the public bodies
4. The wider linkages
5. What we have learnt
6. Our ambitions



Push Factors

Frustrated by LEADER+

- Not rural enough: lack of agricultural focus
- Not business focussed
- Usual suspects benefitting
- Very limited capacity legacy
- Seen as any other funding scheme

**We Challenged the Status Quo because
we couldn't go on like this**



Pull Factors

Evidence of Need

- Low wage economy / low profit businesses
- Poor access to services and training
- Young people leaving
- Locally tailored solutions

Opportunity

- Rich natural & cultural assets & renewable resources
- High level of business start-ups
- Local on-the-ground support for our analysis and proposed solution
- Start afresh: no LEADER+ hangover

**We had a clear view of the area's
needs and opportunities**



Organisational Symmetry

Our beliefs fitted with new LEADER Approach

- The economy of a national park needs to deliver the environmental aims and tourism / recreation aims
- Long-term sustainability – create capacity
- Community, economy and environmental all work together
- The Authority only needs to get involved to address market failure
- The Authority is an enabler for local businesses and communities – work **with** them **not for** them



Building Blocks – our practice

1. Experienced in Work at the local level - restructured with more staff working at local level = less centralised
2. Confident through practice in enabling others to take decisions for us
3. Knowledge of the area – intimate working intelligence plus tailored and in-depth academic studies = trusted
4. Rural business focus – sustainable development & farming advisers
5. Experience in delegating funds to communities and business groups



What Does LEADER mean to the Authority

1. Local rural people helping others develop their businesses and communities for common good
2. Quality projects & all bottom-up = no usual suspects
3. Learn from exemplars wherever in Europe
4. Make an economic difference
5. Innovation
6. 100% business and community appointments to Local Action Group – they run the show
7. **Lasting legacy of sustainable solutions and capacity deep within the rural community**



How We Are Organised

LAG – paid expenses, 100% community and business = no public sector + no organisational appointees

LAG help develop project ideas

LAG take all decisions – staff, strategy, delivery plan, final project approval

LAG network in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden....

LAG selecting new / refresh members

LAG 100% ownership or walk

PLUS

Partner Support Group – public, private and community sector experts – half-yearly steer / delivery plan support

National Park Authority – lead body, appoint key staff, free office, website and access to advice – delivery co-ordination responsibility

County Council offer contracts, manage project budget and payments – financial accountable

Regional Development Agency – technical advice, strategic support, financial allocations, performance management, learning lessons to Defra



Linkages of Local Action Group

1. **Known representatives of sectors in the area**
2. **Weak institutional links to top-down approaches**
 - Local Strategic Partnership including Thematic Groups and Area Partnerships c/o visibility and cuckoo effect and public sector dominance
 - Not part of the intelligence gathering
 - BUT – useful linkages from regional development agency
3. **Great links to rural networks – region, national and European**
4. **Embedded in national park socio-economic work and intelligence and part of National Park Forum**

Early days: need to communicate the benefits / opportunities in sub-regional partnerships & strategies



Early Learning Lessons

1. Strong & effective partnership working from main players despite over-cautious imposed processes
2. LEADER mainstreaming with RDPE provides opportunity for joined-up & multi-priority solutions = suits rural areas
3. LAG is developing and refreshes itself
4. LAG is competent and can and will grow in influence
5. LAG independence suits culture in rural areas
6. Local authorities can better understand the real* rural area
(* = the view of those who wake up in and work in the area)



Ambitions

1. LAG more than just LEADER budget / project
2. Learn from others
3. Move out the comfort zones
 - Can we, the authorities, take our hands off the steering wheel and if so at what speed do we feel comfortable!
 - Can we challenge national processes to be amongst the least bureaucratic in Europe
4. Communicate
 - upwards that this approach is effective & sustainable
 - with each other to learn
 - locally that this approach does actually work

