



North Warwickshire
Borough Council



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

A Borough to be proud of



North Warwickshire & Hinckley & Bosworth

England's Rural Heart

LEADER PROGRAMME

Local Development Strategy (Summary)

“To foster an integrated rural economy that is stronger, more resilient, and sustainable and that recognises and responds positively to challenges and opportunities in the rural domain whilst contributing to wider local economic aspirations.”



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas



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1) Introduction

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) sets out the approach to delivering the LEADER Programme (2015 to 2020) in North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth. This document provides a summary of the LDS, and includes key information on;

- consultation and background analysis
- geographic coverage
- key strengths and challenges
- alignment with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)
- strategy – priorities, measures and outputs
- delivery structure and Accountable Body

The strategy reflects an innovative approach to grassroots rural economic development, enabling untapped cross-border synergies to be realised.

The programme will deliver the following outputs:

Jobs created	Jobs safeguarded	Number of Projects	Potential additional overnight stays	Additional Ha woodland actively managed
70	82	74	500 p.a.	150 Hectares

(Table 1)

2) Consultation and Background Analysis

In total, over 600 businesses, agencies and organisations were consulted:-

Method of Engagement	Activity	Number	Selected Key Stakeholders
Focused events	Farming and forestry event	26	Country Landowners Association Local farmers Arthur Rank Centre
	Community and voluntary sector event	43	Citizens Advice Bureau North Warwickshire CAVA Volunteer Centre
	Local business event	42	Coventry University MIRA Middleton Hall Warwickshire Rural Hub
One-to-one interviews	Key organisations	24	Federation of Small Business National Farmers Union Coventry and Warwickshire CDA Hinckley and Bosworth Tourism Association
	Local businesses	38	Local accommodation providers
Paired interviews	Youth Clubs	4	Young people
Surveys	Business postal survey	126	
	Business telephone survey	5	Packington Estate Leicester Federation of Small Business
	Business electronic survey	4	

	Stakeholder face-to-face survey	37	North Warwickshire and Hinckley College WiRE CW Chamber of Commerce CWRT
Presentations	Business networking event	40	Coleshill Post McD Recruitment
	Existing organisations /groups	76	Northern Warwickshire Tourism Association Heritage Forum
	North Warwickshire Community Partnership	40	Midland Professional Development Midlands Studio Schools
Meetings	LEP sub-groups	27	SME Access to Finance and Funding
	Borough and County Council	76	Warwickshire County Council Leicestershire County Council
LAG networking	Local LAG meetings	53	5 LAG meetings
	Regional LAG meetings	9	West Midlands LAGs
	Wider LAG engagement	21	East Durham LAG Northumberland Uplands LAG

(Table 2)

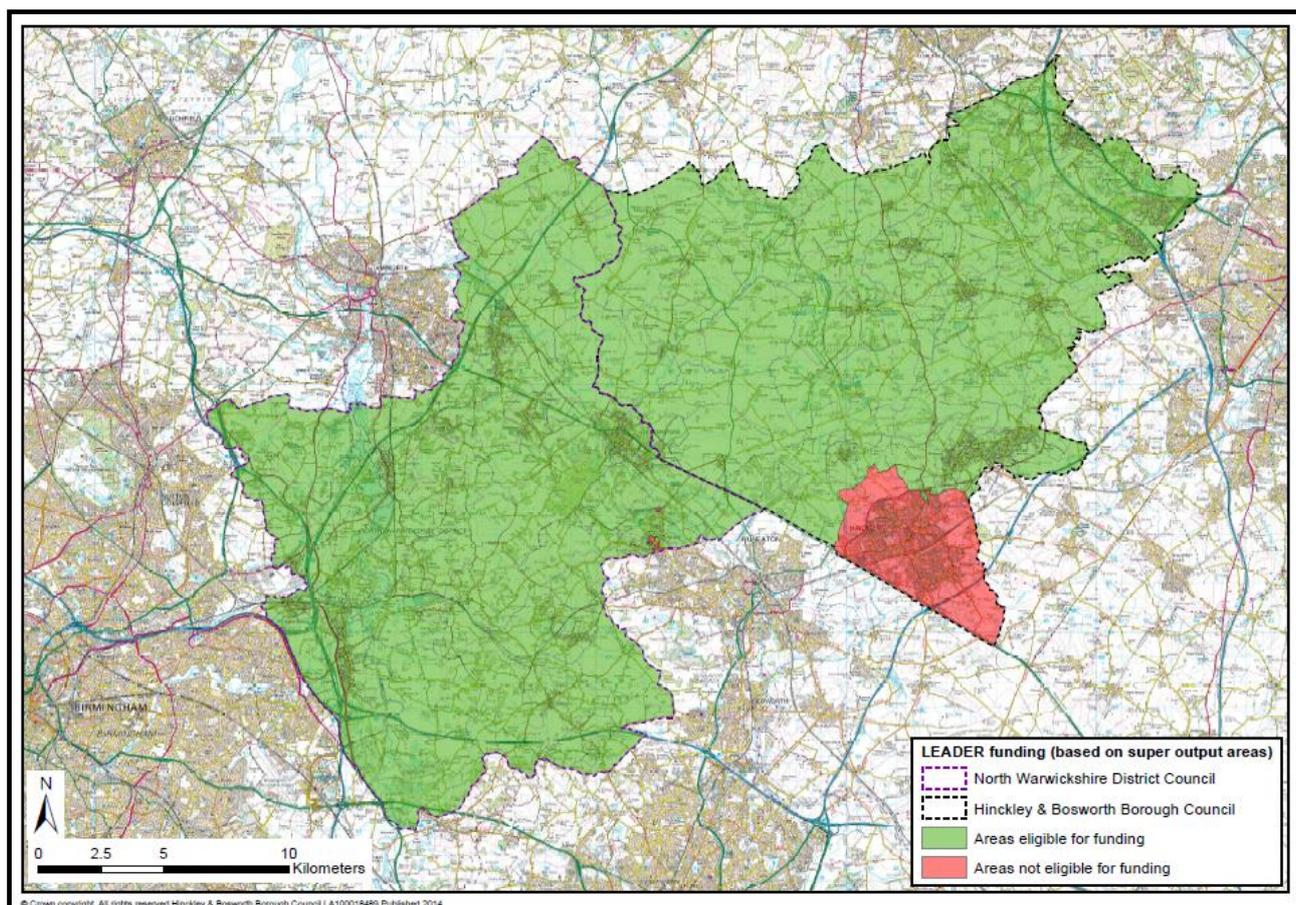
Various methods were used to communicate with stakeholders, including the distribution of a business survey. The survey was used to capture more in-depth views and information, and focused on identifying the main challenges, strengths and opportunities associated with operating a business in the area.

An analysis of relevant research has also been drawn from a number of sources including;

- LEP Strategic Economic Plans and ESIF strategies
- North Warwickshire Socio-Economic Profile
- ACRE Access to Rural Services Report for North Warwickshire
- Leicestershire Rural Economy Evidence Base (LREEB) and the ONS

3) Geographic Coverage

The LEADER area combines two local authority districts – North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth in Leicestershire; two counties straddling two regions joined at the A5 corridor.



(Figure 1)

The eligible area covers a total population of **121,470** inhabitants, which includes a **rural population of 80,274**. The area has a varied business base of some 7,250 businesses of which the overwhelming majority are micro-enterprises – over 80% of those in rural areas.

4) Key Strengths and Challenges

Key Strengths

- Distinctive rural heartland
- A diverse local economy
- A cross-border area with untapped synergies
- Good links to major motorways and regional airports
- A range of small and micro businesses with potential for growth and development
- Proximity to major developments in high value manufacturing and, in particular, the MIRA Technology Park Enterprise Zone
- Important initiatives (such as the Twycross Life Sciences Park European Excellence Centre) offering substantial potential for visitor growth and benefits to the local economy
- Forecasted growth in producer-services sectors such as information and communication
- Significant visitor potential with attractions such as the National Forest looking to attract 10 million day visitors by 2024
- A growing craft-based sector
- Potential to promote farm diversification
- Substantial expertise within key industries
- A commitment to continue to develop social enterprises as a potential source of jobs

- Commitment by local councils to improve the rural economy
- Existing funding support available
- A strong, locally-focused community and voluntary sector with a track record of delivering rural initiatives
- A successfully delivered LEADER Programme developed over the 2008 to 2013 period in part of the target area

Key Challenges

- No strong external identity
- No single means of communication to businesses
- Limited connections within the business community
- A lack of venues for home-based micro-businesses to meet and network
- Limited access to superfast broadband, particularly in remote areas
- A need to promote environmental improvement and sustainability through the use of renewable energy
- A need for support with farm productivity and capital works
- Poor public transport with implications for getting to work and for the visitor economy
- Largely undeveloped visitor base and a need for a stronger interpretation and marketing of local attractions.
- Lack of coordination in the tourism sector
- Barriers to innovation, including limitations on start-up support
- Recruiting skilled staff
- Maintaining and enhancing existing skills
- Lack of suitable workspace to allow business growth
- Lack of investment for equipment, new technologies or energy-saving actions
- Relatively high unemployment, especially amongst young people, in parts of the area
- Young people unable to access job experience opportunities
- Support and mentoring is less accessible for village and small-town based businesses
- Relatively poor take-up of rural business support in previous initiatives
- Limited focus on the rural economy in local and regional strategies
- Only modest resources available to promote the area as a business and visitor base

5) Aligning with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth LEADER area is represented by two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs): -

- Coventry and Warwickshire
- Leicester and Leicestershire

Close attention has been paid to the priorities of both LEPs through the analysis of relevant strategies, including the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Strategy. Taken together these various sources provide a profile of rural priorities:

- Rural business growth and improved productivity, with a focus on innovation and technology across agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and services.
- Growth in ICT, low carbon and environmental technologies.
- Closer links between rural businesses and the skills and resources of universities, other research organisations and rural hubs.
- Increased business-to-business collaboration.
- The commercialisation of new products and processes involving rural businesses.

LEADER will play an important role in engaging with the “hard to reach” businesses that do not normally engage in this type of activity, and will endeavour to fill gaps and coordinate activity with programmes delivered through the LEP.

LEP representatives were involved in developing the LDS and endorsed the final document.

6) Strategy – priorities, measures and outputs

Within the overall theme, seven strategic priorities have been developed;

Priority 1: Strengthening and increasing farm productivity

Objective: to strengthen and increase the potential of participant farm businesses by supporting productivity improvements and, as a consequence, enhancing the growth potential and sustainability of the agricultural sector in the LEADER area.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 15%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 40%

Outputs:

Total number of projects	10
Number of jobs created	3

Priority 2: Building and reinforcing micro and small enterprise and supporting farm diversification

Objective: to build and reinforce the growth and sustainability of rural micro and small businesses and to support initiatives that will lead to farm diversification and a more sustainable agricultural sector in the LEADER area.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 40%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 40%

Outputs:

Total number of projects	40
Number of jobs created	47

Priority 3: Enhancing the rural visitor economy

Objective: to enhance and help to grow the rural visitor economy in the LEADER area and to build and consolidate its contribution to sustainable rural economic growth, and to support the strengthening of the cultural and heritage base of the LEADER area through initiatives focused on enhancement, conservation and celebratory activities.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 20%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 40%

Outputs:

Total number of projects	9
Number of jobs created	11

Priority 4: Building rural services for a stronger local economy

Objective: to support the sustained presence and improvement of rural services – in particular, multi-use facilities with a business element, transport, IT and energy infrastructure – to nurture and sustain a strong rural economy.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 10%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 100%

Outputs:

Total number of projects	6
Number of jobs created	4.5

Priority 5: Support for cultural and heritage activity

Objective: to support the strengthening of the cultural and heritage base of the LEADER area through initiatives focused on enhancement, conservation and celebratory activities.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 10%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 100%

Outputs:

Total number of projects 5

Number of jobs created 3

Priority 6: Increasing forestry productivity

Objective: to increase the productivity of forestry activities in the LEADER area and to build a strong and vibrant forest sector that is able to contribute more fully to the local rural economy.

Percentage allocation of total grant: 5%

Indicative maximum grant rate: 40%

Outputs:

Total number of projects 4

Number of jobs created 1.5

Priority 7: Fostering cooperation through projects linking LEADER areas and challenges

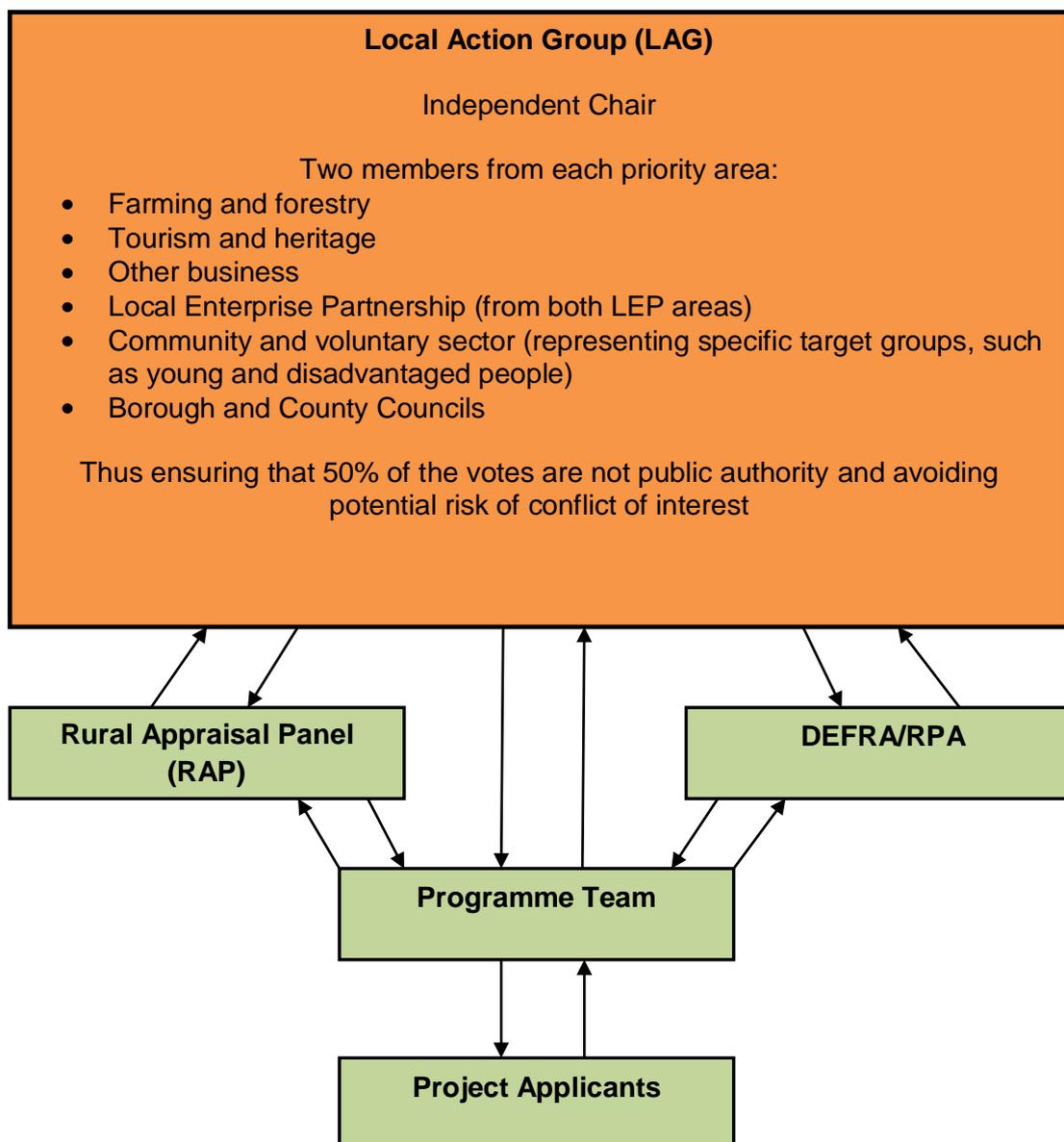
Cooperation between rural areas, and the exchange and sharing of knowledge and expertise in rural economic development is accepted as a highly valuable and stimulating device for improvement.

Initiatives would help to build economies of scope and scale for the area through collaboration, cooperation and the exchange of expertise. The outcome would be stronger, more informed sectors, enhanced growth and more job opportunities.

It is proposed that an umbrella small grants fund will also be set up to provide awards of between £600 and £5,000 (40% maximum grant). It is expected that whilst the LAG will retain full decision making powers, a simplified option for applications will be used depending on the amount of investment needed.

7) Delivery Structure and Accountable Body

The delivery structure will be as follows;



(Figure 2)

Local Action Group

The Local Action Group (LAG) consists of a range of businesses, covering all relevant sectors, the community and voluntary sector and appropriate public sector organisations.

It will review its membership and elect key positions on an annual basis, allowing new members to come forward at regular intervals. It is intended that the Chair will remain as a non-statutory sector member.

The LAG will be responsible for the operation of the programme, and will make decisions on applications, ensuring that approved projects contribute to the successful delivery of the strategy. It is recognised that the Defra/RPA representative will hold the power of veto on all approvals. Following an initial period of more frequent meetings, it will meet on a quarterly basis.

Rural Appraisal Panel

The LAG will be supported by a Rural Appraisal Panel (RAP). This will consist of a pool of people, predominantly paid staff, from stakeholder organisations who can legitimately contribute their time

to the programme. They will be responsible for using their local specialist knowledge to appraise applications, and make recommendations to the LAG accordingly.

They will be fully trained on appraisal techniques and will appraise both the outline application and the full application form using standardised scoring criteria. This will reflect a combination of technical and quality criteria.

Programme Team

The Programme Team, consisting of a Project Manager and a Development Officer, will be responsible for the overall delivery of the programme. The team will be supported by officers from both local authorities to ensure compliance with the separation of duties. Their main responsibilities will include;

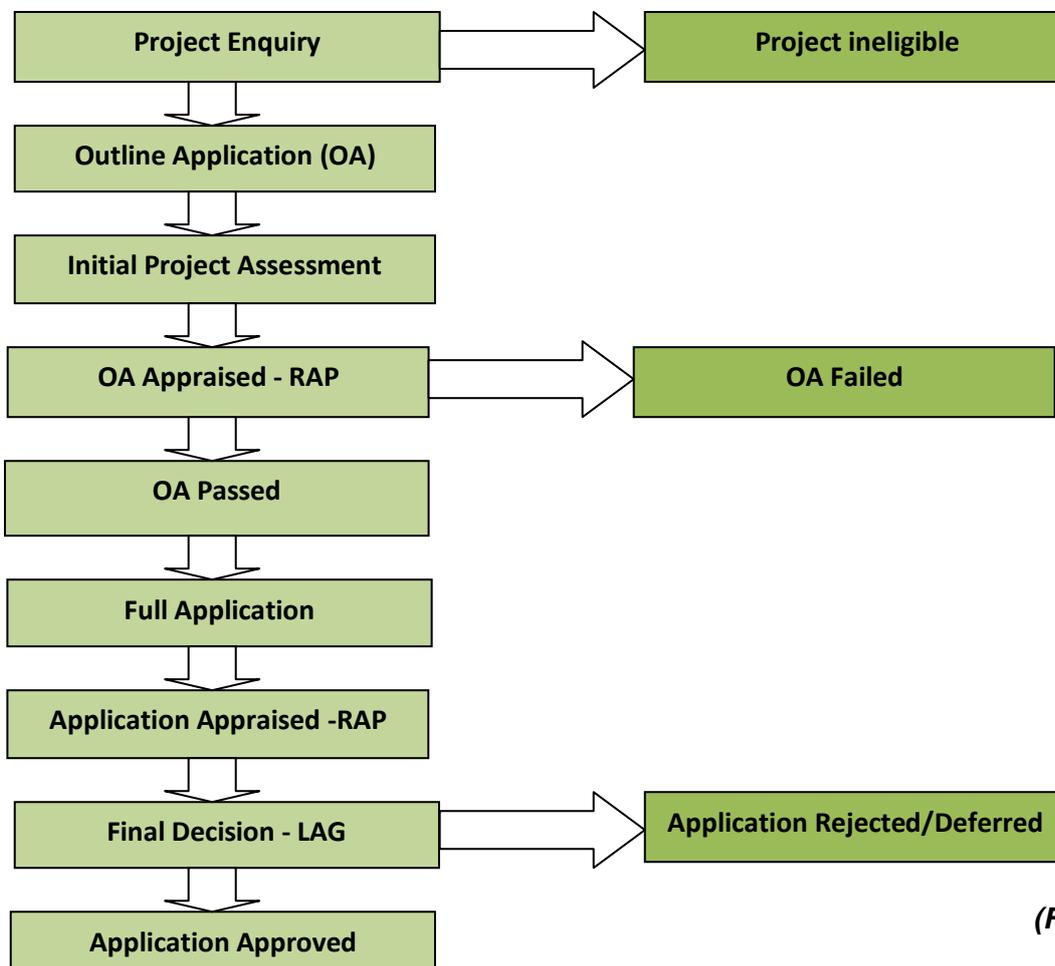
- raising the profile and awareness of LEADER
- providing a package of support to projects
- progressing projects through the process
- maintaining effective communication between the LAG and RAP
- signposting ineligible projects to alternative sources of funding
- developing a training programme to enable members to effectively undertake their role
- checking project claims
- monitoring projects to ensure compliance and to measure success

Accountable Body

North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) will serve as the Accountable Body and 18% of the allocation has been allowed for this purpose. They will be responsible for the recruitment and management of the programme team.

Receiving Applications

The flowchart below illustrates the process from initial enquiry through to application approval;



(Figure 3)

8) Conclusion

The timescale for the programme has been set as follows:

Timescale	Action
Ongoing	Recruit and train new LAG/ RAP members
November 2014 – October 2015	Recruit Project Manager and Development Officer
November 2014 – June 2015	Ensure relevant staff at the Accountable Body and the delivery partners are trained in management and administration requirements
November 2014 – June 2015	Review guidance within the National Operations Manual and develop effective and efficient processes for publicity, applications, claims, routine monitoring procedures and recording outputs
November 2014 -	Work with Defra/ RPA to establish an umbrella project for small grants of between £600 and £5,000 (40% maximum grant)
November 2014 -	Identify suitable LAGs for potential cooperation projects
June 2015 – December 2019	Programme launch and Core Programme delivery
June 2016 and annually thereafter	Programme review including LAG membership and communications and marketing
January 2017	Interim programme evaluation report
December 2019	Complete programme evaluation report

(Table 3)

As part of the strategy development, 27 project proformas were submitted and additional project outlines came through telephone and face-to-face interviews. The Project Manager and Development Officer will follow-up these project ideas and support the completion of applications on commencement of the programme. It is anticipated that the initial tranche of projects will be worked up from those listed in the table below. A cooperation project will also be developed in the initial programme period in response to an anticipated call for proposals from Defra.

Anticipated actions within each Priority

Priority	Indicative actions
Priority 1 Farm productivity 15%	Capital grants to support productivity improvements. Proposals include: the purchase of new equipment for milking parlour improvements; animal health, to improve animal comfort and welfare support; energy efficiency
Priority 2 Micro and small businesses and farm diversification 40%	<p>Business support for start-ups and existing businesses, including grants for young entrepreneurs and adoption of new technologies. Proposals include; Recycling and upcycling initiative; App development for on-line shopping; and improvements to workspace</p> <p>Farm diversification support such as the development of on-farm food processing, distribution and direct sale, and new product development. Proposals include; farm shop and butchery development; the development of a rural innovation centre in collaboration with partner organisations.</p> <p>Business networking and the encouragement of collaborations to build a more joined-up business community.</p> <p>Support for the MIRA/ Birch Coppice industrial park/ Zoo visitor transport project.</p>
Priority 3 Rural tourism 20%	<p>Website and destination marketing coordination.</p> <p>Attraction enhancements to extend the visitor season, including education centres and disabled facilities.</p>

	<p>Building capacity in existing accommodation facilities particularly focused on farming businesses through small capital grants for refurbishment or new facilities. Proposals include: Children’s Farm attractions; self-catering and disabled camping facilities; and Village Hall tearoom extension proposals.</p> <p>Feasibility study for a Roman Mancetter Museum/ Visitor Centre and linked visitor trail development.</p> <p>‘Connecting’ visitor facilities into a visitor attraction system (including villages) focused on the Bosworth Battlefield, Roman Mancetter, and the Tudor History, including Visitor Information Centre coordination support, signage and interpretation support.</p> <p>Enhancement, restoration and upgrading work involving the partial refurbishment of village buildings.</p> <p>Enabling small accommodation and restaurant providers to capitalise on business tourism opportunities.</p>
<p>Priority 4 Rural services 10%</p>	<p>The development of existing community hubs to add an additional hot desk and business facilities function as spaces for starter businesses and wider business networking and collaboration in village centres.</p> <p>A feasibility study on the potential for coordinating and enhancing sustainable transport initiatives, focused on bus links, support for cycling initiatives as well as including a car sharing scheme focused on remote locations.</p> <p>Wheels to work projects or similar to enable rural young/ those who cannot afford a car to access training or employment.</p>
<p>Priority 5 Cultural and Heritage Activity 10%</p>	<p>The establishment of a local craft network with events and distribution linked to the visitor economy.</p> <p>The development of a festivals and events programme.</p> <p>Linking and upgrading for sites of heritage for the visitor economy and possible farm diversification.</p>
<p>Priority 6 Forestry productivity 5%</p>	<p>Forestry and forest product development – processing and marketing.</p> <p>Wood fuel supply chain developments.</p> <p>Provision of woodland advisory services.</p> <p>Small grants scheme for equipment e.g. wood storage and wood chippers. Venison production.</p>

(Table 4)

A wide range of additional projects have been proposed and these will be developed over the programme period. Proposed initiatives include the following:

Farm productivity	Access enhancement. Livestock welfare. New agricultural buildings.
Micro and small businesses and farm diversification	Coordinating and enhancing local food production, local food networks and marketing.
Rural tourism	Canal related initiatives, some potentially in collaboration with other LAGs. Twycross Zoo transport consortium and development support.
Cultural and Heritage	Cultural events for local people and visitors.
Rural services	Encouragement of local bus services to serve the tourism economy as well as local people. Support for small-scale community/cooperative renewables projects.
Forestry productivity	Support for the introduction of new forest technologies.

(Table 5)

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