LEADER 2014-2020

TORFAEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2014

VERSION: 1
DATE: July 2015

NAME OF LAG AND CONTACT DETAILS

Name of Local Action Group	Torfaen Local Action Group - Create

Administrative Body Primary Contact

Name	Rob Wellington
Tel	01495 742143
E-mail	Rob.wellington@torfaen.gov.uk
Address	Torfaen County Borough Council Civic Centre Pontypool Torfaen NP4 6YB

Administrative Body Secondary Contact

Name	Nikki Williams
Tel	01495 742147
E-mail	Nicola.davies@torfaen.gov.uk
Address	c/o Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre Torfaen County Borough Council Civic Centre Pontypool Torfaen NP4 6YB

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALES

Proposed Start Date	1st January 2015
End Date	31st December 2021

Description	Explain how the Local Development Strategy (LDS) fits with EU strategies, policies and programmes and the extent to which it aligns with the Focus Areas of the Wales Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) and the five LEADER themes as appropriate to the context of the LDS.
Linked to	Sections 3.1 and 3.5 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

1.1 Definition of the area and population covered by the strategy

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- ❖ Overview of the proposed geographical area of the LAG and its population. Population figures to be broken down by rural, service and host wards.
- ❖ Intentions to work across boundaries.

Local Action Group Area

The Local Action Group Area (LAG) in Torfaen covers 9 wards. At approximately 42 % of the Borough. This section illustrates the physical, economic and social characteristics of the LAG area.

The rural wards in Torfaen comprise a varied hilly landscape, including open upland moorland and through grazing, mixed agriculture, woodland and post-industrial land. The LANDMAP17 survey of the Borough was first published in 2002 this analysed the landscape under headings of Geological, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic and Cultural. The landscape of the County has been summarised in a recent report18 as follows: "The physical and cultural landscape of the area reflects the industrial legacy associated with iron and coal production, together with their associated extractive industries. The resultant manmade landscapes are interspersed with the surrounding countryside. Over the past twenty years there have been a number of reclamation schemes that have removed much of the dereliction that existed, however affected areas still remain.

The County Borough contains a range of distinctive landscape types ranging from the open, exposed uplands to the north of Blaenavon to the rolling, agricultural landscapes to the south and west of Cwmbran where the landscape runs over into the lower Usk Valley. There are areas of both coniferous and broad leaved woodland throughout the area. The north and eastern boundaries of Torfaen abut the Brecon Beacons National Park and this indicates the underlying qualities of this northern section of the County Borough. This is complemented by the designation of the historic industrial landscapes around Blaenavon as a world heritage site as well as on the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales produced by Countryside Council for Wales, Cadw, and the International Council on Monuments and Sites."

Torfaen the eligible wards, the area covered and their full population figures are as follows:

| Name of Ward	All Usual Residents	Area (in hectares)	Density (number of persons per hectare)
Rural Ward			
Llanyrafon South	2708	444.16	6.1
Blaenavon	6055	1782.98	3.4
Two Locks and Henllys	6212	1251.64	4.96
Service Centre			
Abersychan	7064	2476.25	2.85
Wainfelin	2434	765.68	3.18
Cwmynyscoy	1438	668.03	2.15
Llantarnam	5526	775.03	7.13
Upper Cwmbran	5228	474.44	11.02
Host Ward			
Pontnewydd	1492	236.17	26.7
Totals	38,157	9,318.54	67.49

Map of Torfaen Rural Wards
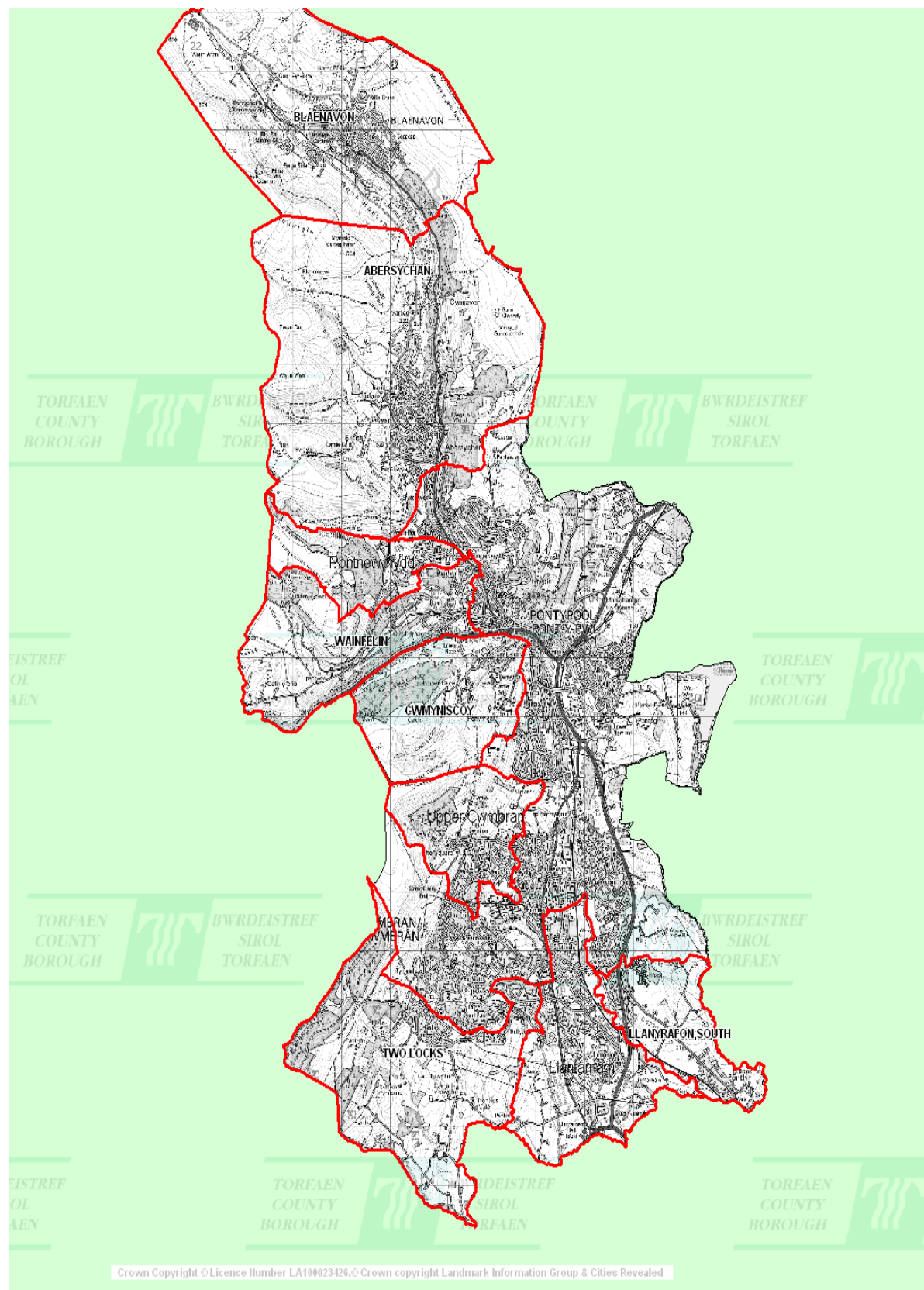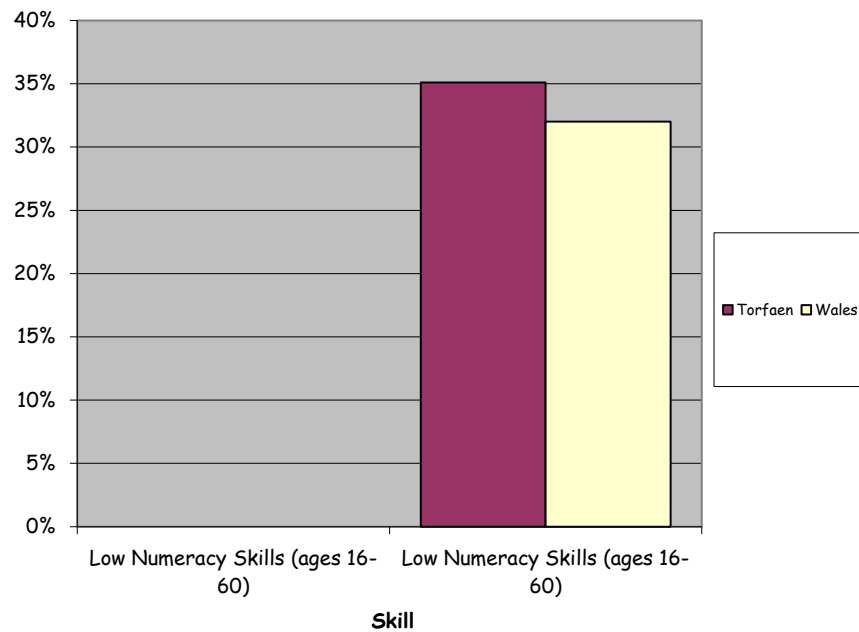
<u>Description of areas</u>
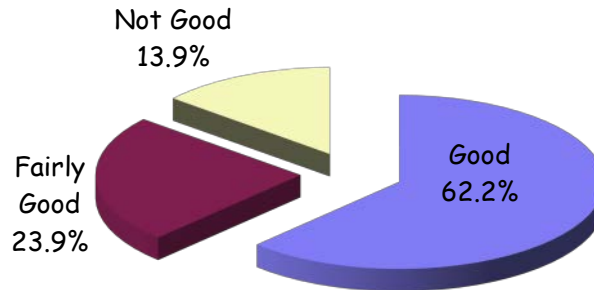
<u>Key Torfaen Facts</u>

<u>Breakdown of Occupations in Torfaen</u>
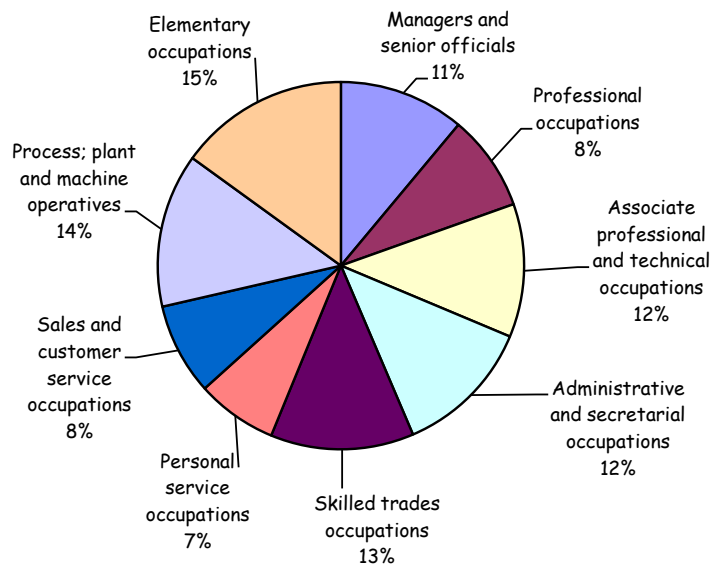
<u>Percentage of Population with Low Basic Skills Levels</u>

How people in Torfaen Perceive their Health

Not Good
13.9%

Fairly Good
23.9%

Good
62.2%

Economic activity (% of all aged 16-74)		
Economically active	62.7	55.3
Economically inactive	37.3	44.7

In WIMD 2014, the following Torfaen LSOAs are in the most deprived 10 per cent in Wales: Torfaen LSOA (Wales Ranking, 1-191)

- Upper Cwmbran 1
- Pontnewydd 1

Llanyrafon South

Llanyrafon South is the most south-easterly ward of Torfaen. It adjoins Newport City Council to the South. The Western boundary is formed by the Afon Llwyd river, the eastern boundary is formed by the Candwr Brook and the ward is bisected by both the B4236 Caerleon Road and the Railway. Much of the Ward is rural and includes farmland.

Particular features include:
- The age distribution is skewed towards the 65+ group and away from the 20-44 age band compared with Wales' averages.
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 who have retired is 50% higher than the Torfaen and Wales averages.
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications is 33% less than the Torfaen and Wales averages.
- There is more than double the Torfaen average percentage of people with a qualification at level 4 or 5 (i.e. higher education).
- The ward contains Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre, a former country manor house with features going back to Elizabethan times and a Grade II listed building. Bringing this building back into beneficial use has been one of the flagship projects of the LDS. http://www.llanyrafonmanor.org/

Blaenavon

Blaenavon is a *World Heritage Site* lying at the source of the Afon Llwyd north of Pontypool. The Site covers 33sq km and is home to a range of visitor attractions that tell the story of the industrial heritage of the area, including Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenavon Ironworks and Blaenavon Heritage Railway. The town of Blaenavon lies high on a hillside and has a population of 6,055. The Blaenavon World Heritage Centre provides an overview of how the stories of Blaenavon Industrial Landscape are of global importance. The centre is the starting point for several walks around the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape; the onsite Tourist Information Centre has a wide selection of walks leaflets to choose from.

The centre also offers specialised education provision for schools, a research facility and state of the art conference facilities.

http://www.visitblaenavon.co.uk/en/PlanYourVisit/PlanYourVisit/ThingsToDo/BlaenavonWorldHeritageCentre.aspx

Two Locks & Henllys

Two Locks ward is located in to the south and west of Cwmbran town and comprises along its northern fringe the housing settlements of Henllys, Hollybush and Two Locks. Two Locks ward perimeter borders the Newport ward of Bettws to the south significantly with a green belt space of agricultural land that separates the ward from urban Newport. To the west it is border by the upland neighbouring wards within Caerphilly.

There are primary nature conservation resources found in Henllys Vale – comprising Henllys Bog (SSSI) and a local nature reserve - Henllys Open Space. Henllys Vale is important as it comprises an area of predominately improved grassland with key field boundaries in the form of hedgerows patches of broad leaved woodland and semi-improved grassland which dominate this lowland area. Its main asset is Henllys Bog SSSI an area of wet neutral grassland and fen surrounded by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) carr. It is the only site in Gwent for marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*).

Particular features include:
- The age distribution is skewed towards under 5 group and away from the 65+ age band compared with Wales' averages.
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 who are economically active full-time is 20% higher than the Wales average.
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications is 33% less than the Torfaen and Wales averages.
- Of the handful of valley mires left in Gwent, Henllys Bog SSI is the best one for wildlife. Henllys Bog is actually fed by springs, and the brook that runs along the edge of the reserve does not supply it with water.
http://www.gwentwildlife.org/reserves/henllys-bog-sssi

Abersychan

The Abersychan ward is situated towards the top of the Eastern valley in North Torfaen, South Wales. The ward comprises six different villages all within a rural landscape that still suffers from the social and economic impact of the closure of the local coalfields. The land mass is typical of the South Wales valleys with rugged terrain, large expanses of green spaces, wooded valleys and grazing pasture. There are reminders of the areas industrial past still in evidence, particularly shown in the large open area of mountainside that was once 'The British' coalfields The six settlements cover a relatively small amount of the land use area (approximately 15% of the land area) with the remaining 85% accounted for by agriculture, woodland or formerly industrial landscape now returning to rural landscape.

The eastern valley north of Abersychan is particularly important for its medieval field system, (many fields being unimproved), and ancient semi natural woodland. The area has considerable diversity in terms of its flora and fauna. Upland grassland and moor land form the most extensive semi-natural habitats within the County Borough with the occurrence of certain areas of dwarf shrub heath which is of particular biodiversity value.

Dramatic and extensive views are available in all directions, giving a clear appreciation of the valley form of Torfaen, and its relationship to the neighbouring rural Monmouthshire wards and landscape to the east.

In terms of ambience, Abersychan, Garndiffaith and Talywain each have a village feel – with small shopping areas located within each and local rugby pitches etc.

Particular features include:
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications is 21% more than the Wales average.
- The percentage of people with a qualification at level 4 or 5 is 50% lower than the Wales average.

Llantarnam

The ward of Llantarnam encompasses the town centre of Cwmbran and the settlements of Southville, Ty Coch, Oakfield, Llantarnam and the village of Croes Ym Mwyalch in the southern most part of the ward. Approximately a third of the land use area is agricultural.

The southern third of the ward area is dominated by an attractive lowland landscape of rolling landforms, patchwork field patterns and hedgerows.
The landscape is characterised by a medieval/post-medieval agricultural landscape with a dispersed settlement of scattered farmsteads and small ecclesiastical/manorial centres. Contained within this southern area of the ward are examples of early post-medieval vernacular buildings together with post-medieval and modern buildings. In addition, Llantarnam Abbey and Grange can be found here, a post-medieval house with gardens, park and estate and contained within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area.

Much of the semi-natural vegetation of lowland Torfaen has been agriculturally improved. These habitats lack the diversity of unimproved or semi-improved grasslands that they replaced. Improved grassland is the dominant element within the lowland areas of Llantarnam and many aspect areas including small patches of other habitats such as woodland, hedgerows, individual trees and arable farmland

Particular features include:
- The age distribution is skewed towards the 65+ group and away from the 20-44 age band compared with Wales' averages.
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 who have retired is 50% higher than the Torfaen and Wales averages.
- Llantarnam Abbey stands on the site of a medieval Cistercian monastery. Founded in 1179, a "daughter house" of Strata Florida, it was one of the few Cistercian monasteries in Wales.
  http://www.tycroesocentre.co.uk/index.php?section=12

Wainfelin

The Wainfelin ward is the neighbouring area to the west of Pontypool Town centre. It comprises the settlements of Wainfelin village and Tranch village. These settlements comprise of approximately 10% of the land use area with the remaining land (approximately 90%) a mix of agricultural land, woodland and former industrial land now returning to its former rural form.

The area comprises valley side farmland mosaic, including beech woodland, regenerating colliery spoil, bracken slopes and dwarf shrub heath. Tirpentwys (former landfill site) is being considered as a local nature reserve
Particular features include:
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 who are economically active full-time is 20% higher than the Wales average.
- There is more than double the Torfaen average percentage of people with a qualification at level 4 or 5 (i.e. higher education).

Cwmynyscoy

The community and village of Cwmynyscoy lies to the south west of Pontypool town centre and is significantly separated from the town centre by the physical barrier of the Pontymoile bypass. Crucially, there is a change in topography and on travelling from Pontypool towards Cwmynyscoy the land starts to rise steeply with the village settlement lying above the urban town centre of Pontypool. At least 80% of the land use is agricultural, woodland or former industrialised areas now returning to rural landscape.

The ward has a long history of rural activities which then accommodated the culture and traditions which emerged in the 19th and early 20th Centuries from industrial activities also taking place in the upland areas of the ward. The ward runs from top to bottom of a picturesque valley in mid-Torfaen, with much of the agricultural activities taking place on hill farms adjacent to the local common and overlooking the residential areas at the lower end. There is a strong sense of community identity and

most residents feel that the area operates independently of its immediate links to the nearest town of Pontypool.

Particular features include:
- The percentage of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications is 33% more than the Wales average.
- There percentage of people with a qualification at level 4 or 5 is 50% less than the Welsh average.

The Ward contains the surface remains of the Glyn Pits Colliery, including a rare beam engine still in its original position. The restoration of this site to make it safe for visitors with comprehensive interpretation information is a flagship project of the LDS.
http://www.welshcoalmines.co.uk/Gwent/GlynPits.htm

The Ward also contains a landscape feature known as 'The Scouring', which is the remains of the early system for surface mining in which a torrent of water was used to scour the hillside to expose the iron ore. This will be one of the features of the industrial heritage trail which is proposed in the LDS.

Upper Cwmbran

Upper Cwmbran is in the South of Torfaen. It is north-west side of Cwmbran town centre. The ward is characterised by residential estates built as part of the New Town, but contrasting with this is the wild open mountain of the Mynydd Maen. The ward slopes steeply up the mountain to the west, and adjoins Caerphilly County Borough along the ridge. The ward boundary to the east is formed along a substantial length by the Monmouth and Brecon Canal. The northern boundary runs immediately south of Sebastopol, the western boundary is formed by the maintain ridge and the south the boundary snakes around housing estates and the Springvale Industrial Estate.

The Blaen Bran project will now pay a vital role in the regeneration of this rural ward.
http://www.blaenbran.org.uk/index.php/a-little-history-by-roy-dixon/

Intentions to work across boundaries

Whilst clearly focusing on the themes and objectives stated in the Local Development Strategy for Torfaen, we understand the need and importance for cross boundary working and have used the current programming period 2007-2013 to develop working links with other rural areas. One example of this is through the Community Foodie project, (A collaboration project with Bridgend & Vale of Glamorgan LAGs). This project has not only created working relationships with officers but linked community groups across the region together, which for us was a key output and one of the main success stories from the project itself.

Torfaen's priorities with in the Local Development Strategy reflect the importance of working cross boundary. Our two top priorities and subsequent themes focus on land

management and development and food tourism, creating further opportunities for cross boundary working. These priorities also provide opportunities for joint working and through discussions with other RDP LAGs we understand that the challenges Torfaen face are similar in many ways to those of our peers across the SE Wales region. We envisage many networking opportunities will continue to exist at the beginning of the new programme, to complement the existing cross boundary networks that have evolved during this period. These networks will provide many possibilities to develop co-operation projects. For example the LAG has established a producer network to develop capacity and share resources for local artisans and producers, this will be enhanced by offering rural businesses the opportunity to create links with similar minded people and create further joined up supply chains across Local Authority boundary's. Part of this approach will be developed through the Destination Management Plans, developing a co-ordinated approach.

We envisage the work carried out in the previous programming period to be further developed and bolstered by linking our objectives together creating a strategic approach to sharing experiences and resources. We believe this approach will help us as a LAG to support our rural communities further to diversify and create jobs and economic growth.

1.2   Description of the Integration

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
  ❖ Explain how LEADER will complement other structures and initiatives and not duplicate
  ❖ Provide an explanation of the coherence and consistency between local strategies and existing national, regional or sub-regional strategies
  ❖ The LDS should show how integration is proposed in respect of:
    ✓ Welsh Government policies and programme areas.
    ✓ The range of RDP schemes and activities to which LEADER can make a contribution
    ✓ Other initiatives and schemes within your area
    ✓ The projects and activities of other LAGs
    ✓ Other European programmes and funding streams

All activities set out in this Local Development Strategy (LDS) have been developed to link with a wide variety of other programmes, strategies and policies. In keeping with the LEADER approach, the LDS seeks to create new opportunities and initiatives developing ways to integrate ideas and projects with other programming areas. The initiatives developed will not duplicate other strategies but compliment and add value to them, through creating a grass routes approach to planning priorities and actions

The tables below illustrate how the RDP and this LDS is coherent and consistent with a wide range of local, Welsh Government and other EU Programmes and Strategies. The LDS will ensure through each project and activity implemented that the following will be achieved:

- Links will be developed with local TCBC Teams and key partners agencies delivering against local and other strategies to create horizontal linkages between sectors;
- Rural and Urban areas and neighbourhoods will be connected through economic growth.
- All local support measures are connected through partnership working and linking together key strategic objectives.

Integration with Welsh Government Policies and Programme Areas

Our integration with Welsh Government and local policies and programmes is set out in the following table. This identifies the contribution our LDS priorities could make to strategic intentions and where our activities could link into other programmes.

Integration with Welsh Government Programmes

Integration with Welsh Government Strategies		
Programme / Strategy	**Priorities and Activities**	**Potential Integration**
Partnership for Growth: The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020	Strategy Framework covers: 1. Promotion 2. Product development 3. People 4. Profitable Performance 5. Place building	• Training the trainer courses – to upskill local producers to enable them to train wider community. • Link to Tourism Associations • Tourism Hubs – develop networks to encourage cross boundary working to enable similar producers the opportunity to share experience and resources.
WG Environment Bill White Paper	1. Integrated Natural Resource Management for social, economic & environmental well-being	• Delivery of the forthcoming Eastern Valleys Uplands natural Resource Management Plan

Well Being of Future Generations Bill	The Bill will set ambitious, long-term goals for a prosperous; resilient; healthier; more equal wales It will promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing and enhance people's quality of life in Wales.	• Every aspect of the RDP delivery will be covered by this legislation. The key will be to ensure that there is a balanced approach in terms of economic, social and environmental opportunities and constraints.
Natural Resources Wales Corporate Policy	NRW's remit is to ensure that the environment & natural resources of 1. Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced & sustainably used, now and in the future. It will do this by supporting integrated natural resource management for people, business & the	Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and land owners to tackle the following key needs: • Bracken control through bruising and the localised use of herbicides – in areas where there is a surviving understory of heath • Mechanical cutting of heath to create structural mosaics • Controlled burning of heath to create structural mosaics • Cutting fire breaks to protect important habitat areas form accidental or deliberate fires
WG vibrant & Viable Places	• improved levels of economic activity and more jobs; • strong and diverse local economies with private, public and third sectors working together; • well-connected communities supported by transport and broadband connections; • sustainable use of the natural environment for local energy and food production; • a thriving private sector and social enterprise;	The policy framework refers to the role of RDP in delivering integrated regeneration solutions which focus on natural resources

Business Wales	Information, guidance and direct support to the private, public and third sector, supporting: - starting up a business - Running a business - Growing a business - Finance funding and support - Inward investment - Specific sectors including tourism, food and farming, creative industries, energy and environmental businesses	Develop training and mentoring schemes for the development of Upland Areas that will; • Train commoners to deliver training sessions for in service environmental professionals and local community • Contact disengaged commoners to raise awareness and encourage them to exercise their rights • Ensure our habitat connectivity projects benefit upland graziers who are a vital component of future upland management • Manage access in both a sustainable and beneficial manner to ensure local people and visitors can enjoy the uplands • Encourage local people to use the landscape for quiet recreation so benefiting their health and wellbeing
Wales Tackling Poverty Programme for Government – Action Plan Update 2014	Includes: Promoting a living wage Support for third sector advice providers to assist people who have debt problems or need help to manage their finances Delivering on a Child Poverty Strategy	• Implement a programme of training for rural businesses • Develop a referral mechanism with other training providers in the area. E.g. Welsh Government, Working Skills for Adults. • Create a series of toolkits for rural business innovation. Including how to sell, how to market, how to produce, cost effective savings etc…. • Engage the wider community in community growing pilots • Increase access to local healthy food
Communities First Programme	Current programme has projects and activities under the headings of: • Healthy Living, includes healthy eating and becoming	Produce detailed action plan based on gaps and opportunities for development • where and how to manage natural resources for the services they offer – carbon

	more active • Employment support, workshops and training • Family support in schools • School transition support for Years 6 and 7 • Clubs and Activities; includes Bike Club and Food Co-op	capture, holding water in the uplands for longer and improving water quality, etc. • Commercially viable harvesting opportunities, e.g. bracken for composting, bedding, fuel, etc. • opportunities for ecological connectivity and habitat management (especially dwarf shrub heath) • opportunities for changes in land management / use to enhance ecosystem services • areas suitable / unsuitable for developing heritage tourism and recreation for local people • Co-operative working
Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014-2020	• Adding value to the individual products and brands from Welsh food and drink producers. • Reflecting and enhancing the positive values of Welsh provenance. • Being appropriate in the context of the competitive environment and approaches used elsewhere. • Meeting the needs of trade promotions.	• Training the trainer courses – to upskill local producers to enable them to train wider community. • Food Tourism Networks – develop networks to encourage cross boundary working enabling similar producers the opportunity to share experience and resources. • Develop a series of local festivals and events to market produce
A Living Language – A Language for Living. Welsh Language Strategy 2012 – 2017	Six strategic aims: 1. The family 2. Children and young people 3. The community 4. The workplace 5. Welsh-language services: 6. Infrastructure	• Ensure all material is available in Welsh • Encourage the use of welsh Language
Energy Wales – A Low Carbon Transition Delivery Plan, March 2014	Strategy areas for action: 1. Around leadership, to build capacity, shared priorities and take action	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify actions • Create working links between key stakeholders and

(Main Strategy, 2012)	2. Maximising the benefits that energy can deliver 3. Acting now for a long term energy	community group • Support and advice on new initiatives
Towards Zero Waste 2010	Strategy areas include • Resilience in the face of climate change • Green jobs • Increase skills and education • Reduce waste • Save energy • Recycling nation	As above
Climate Change Strategy for Wales 2012	Reduction on CO_2 • Change to products • Alternative energy sources • Economic benefits • Protecting and mitigating against biodiversity loss • Jobs and skills	As above
Green Growth Wales 2014 prospectus	Sustainable use of natural resources • Low carbon energy production • Employment in natural resource management • Inward investment	Expand on Land Based Production study developed in previous programme to develop a local action plan to develop and pilot new activities
Woodlands for Wales 2010-2015	• Responding to climate change. • Woodlands for people. • A competitive and integrated forest sector • Environmental quality	Produce detailed action plan based on gaps and opportunities for development • where and how to manage natural resources for the services they offer – carbon capture, holding water in the uplands for longer and improving water quality, etc. • Commercially viable harvesting opportunities, e.g. bracken for composting, bedding, fuel, etc. • Development of timber construction opportunities

Environment Strategy for Wales (2006)	The Strategy has five main environmental themes: • addressing climate change • sustainable resource use • distinctive biodiversity, landscapes and seascapes • our local environment • environmental hazards.	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify actions • Create working links between key stakeholders and community group • Support and advice on new initiatives • Pilot activity for development of co-operatives
Nature Recovery Plan for Wales 2015	• Reversing the decline in Biodiversity • Building Resilience • Effective Natural Resource Management	• Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society. • Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use. • To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genenetic diversity. • Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services. • Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.
The Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales	• Wales has joined up policy, governance and a sound evidence base for action for pollinators.	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify actions • Create working links between key stakeholders and community groups • Support and advice on new initiatives and pilot projects

Programme / Strategy		
	• Wales provides diverse and connected flower rich habitats to support our pollinators.	
Sustaining a Living Wales	• Improve the resilience and diversity of our environment and its supporting biodiversity; • Provide simpler and more cost-effective regulation; • Offer greater certainty for decision-makers.	• provisioning sevices such as food, water and wood; regulating services which help us control climate, floods, waste disposal, air and water quality; and cultural services which include recreational, educational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits we recive from the environment
South East Wales City Region Tourism Action Framework 2014-2020	• Prioritises and delivers Welsh National Tourism Strategies, particularly the P4G Strategy, and local agendas such as LA DMPs.	• Training the trainer courses – to upskill local producers to enable them to train wider community. • Food Tourism Networks – develop networks to encourage cross boundary working to enable similar producers the opportunity to share experience and resources. • Develop a series of local festivals and events to market produce

Integration with Wales Rural Development Programme

Programme / Strategy	Priorities and Activities	Potential Integration/Linkages
Wales Rural	1. Human and social capital	• Developing pilot schemes

Development Programme 2014 – 2020: Final Proposals Consultation Document February 2014	measures
	- Knowledge transfer and innovation; including study visits/exchanges
	- Advisory services
	- Co-operation; for short supply chain development
	- European innovation partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability
	2. Investment measures
	  - Investments in physical assets (grants/loans etc)
	  - Farm and business investments; young entrants support successor scheme
	  - Quality Schemes
	  - Restoration of forestry potential;
	3. Area based measures
	  - Agri-environment climate
	  - Forestry
	  - Organic Farm conversion
	  - Natura 2000/Water Framework Directive
	4. Leader and local development
		based on the LEADER approach to research and identify economically viable initiatives
		• Invest in training and mentoring schemes to upskill farmers and producers
		• Invest in food and drink pilot schemes to add value to existing produce and create opportunities for new developments.
		• Develop support networks to improve local and regional supply chains, including the development of local co-operatives.
		• Create complimentary signposting methods to Farming Connect, Business Advisory Services and DFES Training Programme
		• Develop Community Growing Food initiatives to increase availability of local produce and improve rural landscape.
		• Develop initiatives/projects to access the CLLD

Local initiatives and schemes in Torfaen

Integration with Local Strategies		
Programme / Strategy	**Priorities and Activities**	**Potential Integration RDP**
A Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Torfaen 2013 – 2023	To implement the requirements of the 'Biodiversity Duty' and to providing supporting guidance to the land use planning process	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify • Create working links between key stakeholders and community group • Support and advice on new

		initiatives
		• Pilot activity for development of co-operatives
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	Reverse declines in biodiversity ● Section 40 places a statutory on all public bodies to consider biodiversity in all its functions. ● Section 42 lists habitats and species of importance in Wales	To create a sustainable infrastructure for land-based food production in Torfaen, well-linked to sub-regional networks and markets, that improves supply chains and strengthens customer base
Economy & Enterprise Strategy 2013-2010	Position Torfaen is a digitally connected green business gateway to Wales and to become a place shaped by its heritage that inspires opportunity, innovation and free thinking.	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. • Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment. • Development of local networks to share resources
Destination Torfaen – Destination Management Plan 2013-2020	The DMP sets out a visitor-focussed way forward for tourism development in the area. Its main out put is a Destination Action Plan which sets out practical steps that if taken forward by all stakeholders can make a positive difference to tourism in Torfaen.	• To support the development of accommodation ventures to draw in visitors by linking in with Food Tourism Initiatives. • Undertake physical improvements to identified areas to enhance the appearance of the landscape and encourage visitors. • Develop a series of local festivals and events to celebrate Rural Torfaen and educate local communities. • Further exploit cross boundary links to develop regional tourism activities
Blaenavon World Heritage Site Management Plan (2011-16)	The Plan aims to ensure that the objectives and proposals identified apply the principles of sustainability to all aspects of the inscribed Site.	• Exploit the connections between the rural areas of Torfaen and industrial and social heritage. • Link work project with Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre to create Community Hubs.

Blaenavon Town Centre – Action Plan (2014-17)	• To provide a comprehensive framework for delivering a holistic and co-ordinated approach to project delivery between partners, towards shared objectives • To deliver initiatives that contribute to an enhanced and positive profile of Blaenavon Heritage Town as a place to visit, live and do business	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify • Create working links between key stakeholders and community group • Support and advice on new initiatives Pilot activity for development of co-operatives
Torfaen Landscape Action plan 2009	Identifies and prioritises a wide range of landscape improvement schemes	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. • Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment.
Torfaen Local Development Plan	To ensure the provision of an appropriate quantity and range of employment sites and retail opportunities to support high and stable levels of employment in Torfaen.	• Identify underused and unwanted areas of land to increase rural development activity. e.g. community food growing initiatives.
Torfaen Pollinators Strategy	Reverse declines in pollinators by: • Developing a corridor of pollen rich wildflowers; • Seek to manage council owned green space for the benefit of pollinators; • Wherever	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify • Create working links between key stakeholders and community group • Support and advice on new initiatives • Pilot activity for development of co-operatives

	possible Incorporate opportunities for pollinators in all council run projects	

Integration with WWV & ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes

Integration with EU programmes		
Programme / Strategy	**Priorities and Activities**	**Potential Integration RDP**
West Wales & The Valleys (WWV) ERDF Priority 1 - Research and innovation	Increase commercialisation of RD&I by Welsh businesses within the programme area.	• Co-ordination of existing activity • Desktop study to identify actions • Create working links between key stakeholders and community group • Support and advice on new initiatives • Pilot activity for development of co-operatives • Development of local networks to share resources
WWV ERDF Priority 2 - SME competitiveness	Increase number and survival of SMEs, particularly high growth SMEs (including Social Enterprises). Increase employment growth in SMEs with growth potential by addressing barriers at key stages of growth. Increase the take-up and exploitation of Superfast and Ultrafast Broadband by SMEs in Wales.	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. • Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment. • Mentoring and training schemes to upskill local producers and improve quality and availability of produce available • Development of local networks to share resources
WWV ERDF Priority 3 - Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency	Increasing the number of commercially viable small scale renewable energy schemes . Contribute to	• Map existing data and studies to identify the willingness of businesses and possibilities for co-operative working between business and the community.

	development of marine energy sector. Improve energy efficiency in those households facing the highest levels of fuel poverty	• Exploring small scale and pilot projects for renewable energy potential. • Encouraging resource efficiency and sustainable growth • Signposting to renewable energy advice and support
WWV ESF Priority 1 - Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment *Bridges2Work*	Increasing social inclusion through sustainable employment. Increasing the employability of those closest to the labour market who are most at risk of poverty and exclusion. Increasing the employability of economically inactive and long term unemployed people who have complex barriers to employment.	• Local produce will increase giving consumers more choice and regular access to healthy local produce, helping to improve a healthy diet and healthier lifestyle. • Local people will become more aware of the benefits in alternative energy, helping them to cut down on fuel bills. • a sensitivity to cultural and social dynamics is created • develops activities that help to improve people health and wellbeing • creates a sense of pride and place to not only encourage visitors
WWV ESF Priority 2 - Skills for Growth *Working Skills for Adults II*	Increasing the skills levels of those in the employed workforce with no or low skills. Increasing the number of people in the workforce with technical and job specific skills at an intermediate and higher level.	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. • Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment. • On site training opportunities fro young people

WWV ESF Priority 3 - Youth Employment and Attainment	Increase in youth employment and employability of young people.	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas.
Inspire2Achieve		• Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment.
Inspire2Work	Reduction of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or who are at risk of becoming NEET.	• On site training opportunities for young people
Real Opportunities		• Develop working links with education providers to develop referral systems.

Integration with other LAGs

We intend to work with other LAGs where benefit might accrue to our identified priorities. We have acknowledged certain priorities in our LDS where working with other LAGs will maximise effect. As previously stated we intend to actively participate in the Welsh Rural Network. Cost savings and economies of scale have already been achieved at project level through joint working with neighbouring LAGs on areas of synergy such as food tourism, community growing and on site training schemes.

SECTION 2 – FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE	

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) intends to meet it's financial and compliance based obligations. LAGs need to demonstrate that they have competent financial planning and will comply with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 4 – Management of Operation)

2.1   Management and Administration

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- ❖ The Constitution of the LAG
- ❖ Details of the proposed LAG members including the sectors represented (public, private, third sectors)
- ❖ Terms of Reference for the LAG
- ❖ Details of the Administrative Body
- ❖ Evidence that the working and decision making procedures are clear and transparent. Show how the operating methods of the LAG are compliant with the Commission's regulations and guidance (see Annex 4 of the LDS guidance)
- ❖ Details of compliance procedures and processes demonstrating segregation of duties, reporting systems and capacity to maintain full audit trails for expenditure and indicators.
- ❖ Details of selection, appraisal and approval processes for projects submitted to the LAG
- ❖ Details of declaration of and management of conflict of interest

For the next Programme period a new LAG will be formed which will incorporate some members from the current LAG and some from the current Partnership Board. In order for us to achieve this, an appraisal system has been developed. This is to ensure the members are from all sectors and can bring a wealth and variety of skills and quotable experience to ensure the priorities identified are delivered successfully. The Local Action Group will be selected and developed using an incremental approach if needs be, so as to ensure the compliance necessities of the RDP are fulfilled, taking into account; sectoral, gender and age requirements.

The LAG has an area based Local Development Strategy (LDS) focused on the 9 eligible wards in Torfaen, covering a population in excess of 38,000 people, which offers a good critical mass to support its vision.

The membership will still be made up of representatives from the public, private, third and community sectors working in partnership.

The aim of the LAG is to create a community culture of entrepreneurship, to change

the thinking of local people so that looking for entrepreneurial opportunities over the widest range of activities and resources becomes a way of life.

The LAG will network with neighbouring LAGs and its staff will play a full part in Wales and UK wide networking opportunities. The development of local networks and partnerships will be fore-grounded in its approach.

How the LAG meets the requirements of Article 62 (1) of 1698/2005
There is an integrated Local Development Strategy based on the elements set out above. The LAG represents partners from the socio-economic sectors in the eligible wards. More than 75% of the members of the LAG are farmers, rural women, and other social partners.

The LAG has directed how the LDS has developed and will work with the lead body on evolving projects that meet the aims and objectives detailed in the LDS, ensuring it is multi sectoral in design and implementation. Helping to create interaction between the sectors and project actors, the LAG has been a key player in all consultation undertaken to draft the LDS, including a workshop which focused on the SWOT analysis.

Main Duties of a LAG Member

- Attend quarterly meetings of the LAG.
- Active participation in project design and on-going direction.
- Make consensus decisions on the allocation of funds.
- Procure delivery bodies for rural projects.
- Publicise the work of the LAG.
- Make unbiased decisions that fulfil the aims and objectives of the LDS.
- Act in the best interest of the beneficiaries of the LDS.
- Engage with those that you represent in order to gather their views on rural projects.
- Maximise the involvement of those that you represent in rural projects.
- Share information from the LAG with those that you represent.
- Ensuring sound financial management of RDP funds is maintained.
- Monitoring and evaluating programme outcomes.
- Adhere to the terms of reference of the Local Action Group (TBC by LAG once formed).

LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEMBERS

Local Action Group	Name	Representing
Public		
	Liz Vann	Environmental Health / Beili Glas Farm
	Dave Evans	TCBC - Economic Development
	Katie Gates	TCBC - Tourism
	Rachael O'Shaughnessy	TCBC - Sustainable Development
	Julie Sheals	Day Activities Team Leader, SCH
Private		
	Suzi McIntyre (Vice Chair)	Pet Plus
	Julie Nelson	Raspberry Catering
	John Lewis	Pentranch Farm
	Bill King	Artisan Baker
	Lisa Standley	Cottage Coppicing
	Iona Black	Tasty Bites
Community	Ian Glastonbury	Glastonbees
	Ray Evans	Llanyrafon Manor Community Group
	Jane Dorsett	Jane's Rag Rugs / Torfaen Textiles
	Llian Norman	Tipizza
	Hywell Pontin	Llantarnam Arts Grange

Terms of Reference for the LAG

The work of the LAG underpins the principles of the Rural Development LEADER programme and aims to; boost the rural economy, improve the skills of local people and enhance life in the rural wards of Torfaen.

MISSION STATEMENT

1. To direct the delivery of the Local Development Strategy (LDS), focusing on the key themes and objectives.

2. Ensure all sections of the community are engaged in community regeneration activities.

3. Develop innovative projects that fit with the aims and objectives of the LDS and which follow the LEADER approach.

4. Oversee the coordination, management and monitoring of the projects funded and developed through the LDS.

5. Assist in bringing community consent to the LDS.

6. Promote cross-sectoral working, e.g. with other LAG`s, Regeneration Partnerships, Local Service Board, RSL's etc.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILIES

The role of the LAG will contribute to the overall aims of the LDS, and objectives will be to:

1. Develop the detail of the strategic objectives and pro-actively encourage the development and delivery of the projects under the LDS.

2. Engage grass-roots communities and encourage new innovative ways to sustain rural economic growth in Torfaen.

3. Be responsible for overseeing the commissioning of new projects in line with Welsh Government requirements.

4. Develop and implement co-operation projects.

5. Promote, where possible, awareness of the opportunities available to local businesses and communities to participate in the RDP Programme.

6. Advocate the success of programmes and projects to local partners and communities.

7. Ensure that all activities delivered as part of the LDS have appropriate exit strategies **from the outset** in terms of maintenance, resources and end use as appropriate.

8. Monitor progress against agreed indicators in relation to expenditure, income, timescales and outputs ensuring compliance with Welsh Government requirements.

9. Assess, and as appropriate, approve grant applications received, ensuring that grant is used most effectively to achieve strategic objectives.

10. Develop improved communication and networking of local partners and partnerships.

11. Undertake relevant/necessary training.

In participating in the LAG, members will be expected:

1. To adopt a fair and objective approach, and declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest;

2. To treat circulated information and discussions held, in a confidential manner;

3. Not to discuss information or decisions outside of the meeting until such time as these have been made publicly available;

4. To conduct themselves in a professional manner;

5. To treat all members with respect and to ensure all members have the right and opportunity to speak during the meeting;

6. To have the right to review LAG membership with voting powers of no confidence for individual members of the LAG and to therefore vote on membership of the LAG.

7. To provide confirmation of attendance or apologies in advance of meetings, and that an alternate attends in the event that they are unable to attend.

8. To promote and publicise the benefits of the RDP and associated projects to the wider community.

MODE OF OPERATION

1. All decisions made by The LAG should be reached on a consensus basis. In the unfortunate situation where a consensus cannot be reached, members will vote with a simple majority required. In the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.
2. All decisions made by The LAG shall not be binding upon individuals, allowing organisations to retain their statutory responsibilities and independence of action.
3. Decisions to award project funding from key funds shall be taken by the LAG.
4. Selection of projects must be consistent with the objectives of the LDS, undertaken in a non-discriminatory and transparent manner avoiding conflict of interest.

5. Records of decisions and declarations of interest will be taken at every meeting in the form of minutes.

MEMBERSHIP

1. LAG membership will meet the regulatory requirements through representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests, where at the decision making level neither public authorities nor any single interest group represents more than 49% of the voting rights.

2. A copy of the Terms of Reference will be provided to each member of the LAG, along with a Code of Conduct form, which will need to be signed by each LAG member on an annual basis.

3. The Group will include a minimum of twelve and maximum of sixteen members who are invited on the basis of their skills, experience or background. The LAG will comprise representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, with representatives from non public sector

organisations making up a minimum of 51% of the LAG membership.

4. The quorum of the LAG shall be one third of the membership.

5. In the absence of the Chair or Vice-Chair at any meeting the members present may elect a Chairman for that meeting.

6. Attendance at meetings will be monitored and any member unable to attend three consecutive meetings should inform the group, and provide information for a decision on continuation of membership. Following review by the LAG, the member may be asked to withdraw from the group. In this instance the group will invite another representative of the same sector to take their place.

MEETINGS

1. The LAG will meet monthly or at least quarterly, in accordance with an agreed schedule.

2. The Chair will have authority to call additional meetings for urgent matters unless those items can be resolved using electronic communication.

3. LAG meetings will be organised and supported by staff from the authorities EU policy & external funding service, who will provide LAG members with relevant documentation at least one week before scheduled meetings.

4. Minutes and key actions/decisions will be recorded to ensure an accurate record of meetings, and approved at subsequent meetings to maintain an agreed record.

5. The LAG will receive reports to enable it to monitor the progress of expenditure, agreed indicators, timescales, risks and outputs.

6. The group will agree the membership of any task/delivery team that may be established from time to time.

7. The meetings and sub-groups will be used to co-create initiatives, exchange views and information on what has worked well in other rural areas.

MEETING PROCEDURES

1. LAG members will be required to declare any conflict of interest at the start of the meeting. This will be included as a standard agenda item.

2. The Chair and Vice Chair will be selected by nomination and vote by the group members to serve on an annual / two yearly basis.

3. Additional attendees / Technical Advisors may be invited from time to time in order to provide advice in relation to specific issues, local knowledge and

expense.

4. Welsh Government representatives will have the right to attend the meetings as observers and to receive copies of agendas, papers and minutes of the meetings.

5. A Minimum of 10 working days notice will be given for each meeting.

SECRETARIAT

1. Secretariat support will be provided by the Councils EU policy & external funding service within Torfaen County Borough Council's Strategic & Democratic Services Unit, which will assist and advise the LAG in respect of all the functions and procedures set out within.

2. Agendas, minutes and reports etc will be circulated to members at least one week before the meeting.

3. All documentation will be circulated electronically unless a request is received for paper copies.

4. Approved minutes will be posted on the Torfaen RDP website (subject to any confidentiality issues).

5. Minutes of the LAG meetings along with quarterly reports will be sent to the Partnership Board and Welsh Government.

6. The RDP Programme Manager will be responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders and funders receive up to date management information that enables all appropriate communication, including financial claim documentation is submitted within the agreed time frame.

7. LAG meetings will be utilised to monitor both financial and physical targets across the project as well as identifying and addressing any issues that may prevent the LDS from fulfilling its full potential.

8. The RDP Programme Manager will facilitate RDP Team meetings to verify any documentation being provided to the LAG meetings. These meetings will also be utilised to address and implement any actions required for delivery and service improvement.

DECISION MAKING

1. The RDP Programme Manager will provide recommendations to the LAG for implementation.

2. In the event of a vote on a decision being required, all members will have a vote including the Chair. All decisions at meetings will be made by a majority, in the event of a tied vote, the Chair will have the casting vote (providing the chair has already cast a vote)

3. All decisions will be open and transparent to all members and associated partners.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

1. Members are expected to declare when there could be a perceived conflict of interest regarding matters arising during discussions. Any such declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Having declared their interest, members are expected to leave the meeting during discussion.

2. Members must be open regarding any factor which may, in the opinion of an independent person, influence their opinion. A register of interests will be maintained.

3. Any member who fails to declare an interest and who receives a personal or professional benefit will be removed as a member of the LAG.

CONFIDENTIALITY

1. LAG members recognise that ideas and projects submitted to them are completely confidential and will not use the information gained to further their own or their organisations' interests without the prior permission of the originator.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

1. Terms of Reference will be reviewed and amended as appropriate, or at least on an annual basis.

Details of the Administrative Body

Torfaen County Borough Council has been selected by the LAG as its administrative body. It will be responsible for the LAG budget, 10% Running costs and 15% Animation. The Council, will act as the project sponsor and be responsible for the overall delivery of the programme. and will ensure that all LEADER funding is appropriate and developed to project activities set out in the LDS and Intervention Logic Table. To meet the regulations regarding match funding, the Council will also ensure that the 205 match is achieved. The Administrative Body will be responsible for the delivery of the 75% Implementation costs to develop and implement project activity.

The Council has many years experience in developing and improving compliance procedures. Existing systems will be developed further to ensure all monitoring and reporting systems are inline with the regulations, and provide room for development.

All systems developed will ensure segregation of duties and provide a full audit trail for all expenditure and Performance Indicators. The Control Plan will provide more detail on this system.

LAG Appraisal Process / Project Selection

Since late 2013 the LAG have been developing project ideas formed on the basis of a wide variety of community consultation, research and feasibility studies. The LAG will be responsible for preparing and publishing calls for proposals for involvement in projects. Projects will be commissioned locally following a set selection criteria developed by the LAG themselves, which will include a scoring mechanism to ensure that all calls and decisions operate in a fair, open and transparent manor. This information will be made public through publishing al minutes of project selection meetings on the LG website.

The LAG will ensure that all projects selected are consistent with the aims and objectives stated in the LDS. The projects which have and will be identified are and will continue to be characterised by the LEADER ethos of community ownership. The projects will be implemented through combinations of local people and sectors of the local economy.
The LAG will use creative innovative methods of project design and implementation developing approaches that are new and innovative to the area.
Projects will include co-operative projects, and the development of social enterprises and community development trusts will be a feature.

SECTION 3 - DELIVERY

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) aims to transfer its stated objectives into delivery on the ground. The LAG should have a clear plan that links the result, the outputs that deliver the result, what activities will take place to deliver the outputs, how and when those activities will take place, and who will be responsible for delivering them.
Linked to	Sections 3.4 (including intervention logic table), 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

3.1   Description of the strategy and hierarchy of objectives

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- A description of how the LAG can improve and develop the area
- Identified 'hierarchy of objectives'
- Explanation of how earlier activity has influenced the strategy
- If you have previously implemented LEADER or other relevant programmes

please explain how this experience has influenced the approach

Introduction

. Torfaen joined the Rural Development Programme in 2007; it became quickly evident that it was essential to built opportunities to help regenerate the declining rural wards in the borough. While parts of the borough are actively involved in community and economic development, the majority of its rural wards are struggling to engage in this type of activity. Support is needed on the ground to help mentor and develop this activity. The strategy has been designed to build upon the strengths of the rural communities, including the social, environmental and economic opportunities.

How the LAG can improve and develop the area

The priority areas for action have been identified in consultation with local communities and will therefore tackle local needs. The LAG can help in the implementation and delivery of the LDS and associated projects to tackle the key issues through creating an ethos of innovation, encouraging people to pilot actions with a tolerance of risk, nurturing grass-roots initiatives, developing assets not previously exploited. Developing business knowledge and skills, supporting small businesses or micro-businesses, promoting local produce and rural tourism. Detail of potential for delivery on the ground is contained in the intervention logic table

Hierarchy of objectives

The aim of the Torfaen Local Development Strategy is;

> "to create a place in which people take opportunities to thrive and motivate themselves and others, developing a strong entrepreneurial culture, with improved economic wellbeing and a sustainable society "

The strategy highlights rural issues and how they will be addressed. The key issues have been built upon over the past 6 years and incorporate the ability to grow and sustain the rural economies of Torfaen.

This Local Development Strategy offers the opportunity of delivering an innovative programme across the rural parts of the Torfaen. It will encourage and ensure that LEADER funding is used to develop and implement innovative approaches to achieve successful outcomes, through trial and testing ideas, competing research schemes and developing community and business capacity to help create a sustainable future for Rural Torfaen.

Key Issues to be addressed

> The problems which need to be addressed in the rural areas of these wards include the following:

a)   <u>Declining Farming Incomes</u>

The income derivable from traditional farming in the wards has been declining for the past 20 years. Out of the 179 farms in Torfaen, only 76 are operating on a commercial basis, and many of these survive only because there are other incomes coming into the household.

b)   <u>An ageing population engaged in farming</u>

Many of the farmers are now elderly i.e. mid 60's to 80's, and the next generation has not stayed in farming. A number of farms will become for sale in the next few years as a result.

c)   <u>An aura of decline, evidenced in the neglected appearance of the rural landscape</u>

In some areas there are walls which have broken down and lie un-repaired, fencing is cheap and visibly lacks maintenance; some out-buildings look like shanty town huts made out of recycled building debris, the land is encroached by non-productive plants.

d)   <u>Illegal Activities/Threat of Crime</u>

There is fly-tipping, arson, wildlife crime, off-road motorcycling and theft. The perceived threat of crime to cars or fear of visiting isolated areas leads to a reluctance by people to visit some parts of the rural landscape.

e)   <u>Erosion of Community Infrastructure</u>

The 3 towns of Torfaen, Blaenafon, Pontypool and Cwmbran are seen as segregated Residents of each don't necessarily travel between areas unless for retail.

f)   <u>Lack of investment</u>

The number of working farms has decreased dramatically – this has impacted on the environment. Many fields have become overgrown and this has affected the land quality.

g)   <u>Lack of enterprise and innovation</u>

There is some good work on which to build but Torfaen's rural wards cannot yet be described as having a 'community culture of entrepreneurship' where looking for entrepreneurship opportunities over the widest range of activities and resources has become a way of life for local people'.

h)   Under-developed Tourism potential

This is generally true of the rural areas of Torfaen, though the designation of Blaenavon as a world heritage site has helped to put the tourism potential of that ward at the forefront. The challenge is to generate a critical mass of tourism product, not just in Torfaen but in the sub-region, underlining that tourism development requires a partnership approach with neighbouring local authorities.

i)   Lack of attention to biodiversity

Torfaen has some exceptional biodiversity features - e.g. the greatest concentration of lesser horse-shoe bats in Wales, the greatest concentration of white-clawed crayfish in Wales, the only location in Wales for a rare moth, collections of threatened plants such as the bee orchid, important wildlife corridors such as the canal.

j)   Lack of Sustainable Development initiatives

This is a critical factor on which the whole viability of the rural areas of Torfaen is going to depend. There is a need to help local people understand what a Sustainable Development initiative is, and to assist with resources to bring such initiatives about.

k)   Isolated producers

There are no Torfaen-specific schemes to assist producers in finding markets e.g. niche speciality markets, other than support from the RDP. There is plenty of scope to develop this.

l)   Low skills in some areas

The percentage of people with basic skill needs in Torfaen is 15% higher than the Wales average, and this rises to 50% higher in some of the rural wards. Improving adult basic skills, therefore, is a priority.

m)   Climate Change

The damaging effects of climate change require urgent action both locally and globally to safeguard existing and future generations. Appropriate land management, particularly in the uplands, can help attenuate water at times of high rainfall, which can significantly reduce the incidence and intensity of flooding in urban areas downstream. Additionally, the protection and restoration of peat habitat can capture carbon, helping to reduce the amount in the atmosphere.

Key Themes and Objectives

Our 5 key themes for priority are set out below, listing the key objectives to be achieved through the delivery of this strategy. The following table sets out the

justification for the Intervention Logic Table:

THEME	OBJECTVE
ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT • Broaden the understanding of opportunities to create a sustainable local environment through protecting and enhancing the natural landscape	• Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. • Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment. • Develop opportunities for land based production, i.e timber supply, wood fuel • Assist households and farms in the rural areas of Torfaen to increase the use of micro-renewable sources of energy. • Increase opportunities to recycle land waste products. • Develop links and potential areas for co-operation between land owners and producers.
DEVELOPING LOCAL PRODUCE • To build a locally based, sustainable food industry, through creating opportunities in production, processing and distribution of locally grown food.	• To build upon the mapping exercise undertaken in past programme. • To identify whether there are any new areas of produce for which the land can be used which could be sustainable in the future. • Establish network links between land-based producers in Torfaen and surrounding areas to promote food and create closer working links with producers. • Assist producers to develop speciality foods which can contribute to the market. • Promote awareness amongst urban residents in Torfaen of what is produced on the land in rural areas of the County Borough, where it is available for retail purchase.

	• Establish opportunities for direct sales of local produce through developing a series of festivals and events, including the development of Llanyrafon Manor Food and Craft Market.
	• To create a sustainable infrastructure for land-based food production in Torfaen, well-linked to sub-regional networks and markets, that improves supply chains and strengthens customer base.
	• Develop working inks between producers to develop co-operative working practices.
PROMOTING TOURISM • Increase the visitor offer through the co-ordination of tourism related activities.	• To assess what potential increased tourism may have to provide sustainable economic activity in the rural areas of Torfaen. • To support the development of accommodation ventures to draw in visitors by linking in with Food Tourism Initiatives. • Undertake physical improvements to identified areas to enhance the appearance of the landscape and encourage visitors. • Develop a series of local festivals and events to celebrate Rural Torfaen and educate local communities. • Further exploit cross boundary links to develop regional tourism activities.
ENCOURAGING ENTERPISE • Create opportunities to develop sustainable enterprises by encouraging networking, training and	• To develop the skills of the population living in the rural areas of Torfaen so that they can engage in sustainable economic activity. • To implement a programme of training

mentoring.	and mentoring for businesses and individuals. • To support business start up and growth in the rural areas of Torfaen with in emerging sectors e.g. food, arts and craft, forestry, renewables
COMMUNITY ACTION • To achieve self sufficient rural community leadership, which is well supported and also skilful in championing rural interests in Torfaen.	• Exploit the connections between the rural areas of Torfaen and industrial and social heritage. • Develop Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre into a Rural Community Hub. • Link people with unwanted and under developed land to create community growing initiatives. • Provide alternative ways to develop local rural skills. (i.e. training the trainers schemes)

Learning from past experience

The LAG recognises that addressing rural issues in Torfaen has to be an incremental and iterative process, due to a *relative l*ack of rural identity. Also the development of a 'sense of place' to help support Rural development in Torfaen, is hindered by Cwmbran's 'New Town' status. Likewise, due to the County Borough being comparatively small in size with a focus around key settlements such as Cwmbran and Pontypool the rural landscape is sometimes on the periphery or misconstrued within intervening areas.

Diversification is seen as important to existing farm units in terms of viability by LAG members but it is also recognised as an opportunity for local food production and to establish local markets with an immediate customer base in key settlements. The Branching Out series of support programmes under Axis 4 was identified by the LAG as a way of supporting indigenous growth within land-based production, tourism and other industries linked to the rural economy.

Delivery of the previous RDP programme has allowed the LAG to embed the LEADER grass routes approach, experimenting with various engagement methods to create opportunities in empowering communities and rural businesses. We have

learnt that while some people have confidence and are happy to share ideas and experiences, others struggle to grasp the concept of development, whether it's talking openly in meetings or developing their own business plans. Taking this forward into the new programme, the LDS and associated projects will create a variety of methods to engage and mentor these hard to reach groups and build upon their confidence.

The Axis 4 projects have enabled Torfaen to build local networks and enable people to share knowledge and ideas. Many of whom have created close working relationships with each other. This experience will be taken forward into the new programme and built upon through creating closer supply chains and working co-operatives.

Whilst not formally badged within the LAG, there are some emerging "RDP champions" in terms of farm diversification, local produce and food tourism. The LAG therefore sees its role as a social and entrepreneurial stimulus, developing key rural networks, and focusing narrowly on the sharing of key ideas that enable action.

In the current programming period the LAG has built up working links and relationships with various peer groups across Torfaen and the wider region. The below table illustrates the teams joint working with other EU funded projects:

Name Of Project	Description of Activity	Total Project Cost
RDP 2007- 2013		
Restoration of Llanyrafon Manor	Restoring a grade 2 listed farm building into a heritage centre. Creating a rural hub in Torfaen	**1,743,302**
Branching Out Fund	Offering grants to developing economic development opportunities in diversification and tourism	**167,000**
Rural Training Scheme	Upskilling rural businesses to create diversification opportunities	**37,500**
Taste of Torfaen	Creating support networks and grants to develop rural businesses	**467,955**
Community Foodie	A pilot project that created opportunities for growing local produce.	**102,500**
CONVERGENCE ERDF		
Pontypool Settlement Area	A programme of physical regeneration actions to address key issues affecting the Pontypool Settlement Area	£13,528,366

South East Valleys Community Economic Development Programme	Providing supporting financial initiatives, both capital and revenue to a range of third sector organisations	£2,631,126	
South East Wales Local Investment Fund	Providing small grants to SMEs below the levels of those operated by WAG under the Single Investment Fund.	£3,740,197	
Convergence ESF			
Working Skills for adults	to address low and no skills/qualifications held by employed individuals within the workforce	£4,456,337	
Bridges Into Work	Bridges into Work aims to engage, support and prepare the economically inactive	£3,924,309	
Genesis 2	target economically inactive females, lone parents and individuals who also face additional disadvantages such as BMEs, NEETs.	£3,133,752	
OBJECTIVE 1 ESF			
RISE Learning Network (Incorporating Torfaen Adult Basic Skills, Parents Plus, Reach Further for IT)	Training for adults in basic skills and any other course for returnees to learning.	£3,173,088	
Building Communities First	Capacity building and training in Communities First Areas	£758,000	
Building Garnsychan Partnership	Capacity Building, training and social entrepreneurship in Abersychan Ward	£663,823	
Genesis Wales	Support for childcare for parents training or working	£1,358,820	
14-19	Support for the transition from pre- to post 16 education and training	£165,169	

Support in the workplace	Grants to SMEs to access training	£695,804	
OBJECTIVE 1 ERDF			
Community Key Fund	This project provided a grant scheme designed to allow constituted voluntary and community organisations access funding to support new and developmental projects that will help regenerate their area.	£821,797	
Rural Key Fund	delivered a grant fund to enable capital and revenue grants to be awarded to community-led economic regeneration projects.	£790,476	
Business support grants	This project established grants to SME of up to £5,000 to assist with re-equipping and business modernisation	£1,750,000	
Torfaen Community Portal	The aim of the project was to engage with individuals and their communities and assist in their development through the use of ICT.	£721,198	
Torfaen Innovation Centre	The Torfaen Innovation Centre provides a physical base for the growth and development of innovative businesses	£4,351,320	
Cwmbran Interchange	This was a major infrastructure project with the aim of significantly increasing the use of public transport in the Cwmbran.	£3.3 million	
Informal Recreation Opportunities	Development of footpaths and cycle ways, with leaflets promoting their use for informal recreation.	£689,169	

INTERREG		
NEWTASC	The aims of the project have been to develop best practice and demonstrate solutions in respect of New Towns in the fields of Environment, Social Cohesion and Economic.	£4,000,000
REVIT	REVIT is a partnership project aimed at best practice and practical implementation related to the redevelopment of Brownfield sites.	£500,000
CULTURED	The project will specifically focus on built heritage in rural areas and the urban-rural partnership, as well as cultural heritage as an instrument of regional development	£55,000
BOUNDLESS PARKS, NATURALLY	The aim of the BPN project is realising a better spatial recreational dispersion and a better and more accessible nature in densely populated North West Europe.	£777,285
CROSSCUT	Crosscut is a partnership project aimed developing and promoting guidelines for the classification of recreational waterways within North West Europe and to identify gaps / bottlenecks in the recreational waterway network	£700,000
ENCOURAGE	Developing eco-friendly solutions to physical regeneration.	£1,000,000

Members of (Prog period 2007 – 2014) developed networks and the LAG are now equipped with the relevant experience to take forward into the new programme. Members are keen to use the new programme to engage in cross boundary and co-operation working to enhance the key themes stated under the LDS.

3.2	Co-Operation and Networking

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- ❖ **Describe how you will seek to incorporate co-operation and which of the co-operation stages outlined in the guidance (exchange of experience, transfer of practice or common actions) are envisaged.**
- ❖ **If your area, or parts of your area, have not used LEADER funds before please provide information on how you will learn from other LAGs.**

Torfaen's LAG recognise that Co-operation is one of the key principles of LEADER and that it offers excellent opportunities for us to exchange and learn from experience at four levels of co-operation.

During the delivery of the current programme a variety of preparatory activities have taken place to research potential co-operation initiatives. This included a co-operation network in Brussels in 2012, where links were made with a number of LAGS in the UK and transnationally. Torfaen has built up close working relationships with LAGs in Wales and this will be developed further in the new programme. All LAGs in the south east are in the process of developing a South East Wales Group to look closer at other priorities and identify possible linkages for co-operation projects.

Transnational Co-operation

- Opportunities will be developed to share knowledge and experience across Europe through knowledge exchange networks.
- This will have a particular focus on food tourism research to share best practice on marketing and developing supply chains. Earlier research during the current programme has identified this in a variety of other member states as a high priority.

UK Inter-regional Co-operation

Opportunities will be sought to:

- Exchange knowledge to help create networks that tackle the key themes under the LDS, in particular food tourism initiatives and supply chains.
- Community led approaches will be explored further to share ideas and experiences and build packages of support.

Wales Inter–regional

- Torfaen's LAG will develop its existing links across the region. With a specific focus on land management and tourism activities, given the borders of

Torfaen, the key partners for this type of work will be Monmouth, Newport, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. The aim will be to bring like minded people together to help create economic co-operatives.

- Close relationships will be fostered with other Partnerships and LAGs in the South East Wales Region, particularly with Monmouthshire, Caerphilly and the Brecon Beacons National Park. The aim will not only be to learn from the good practice of others but to develop cooperative projects.
- The LAG will work closely with the WRN to ensure all opportunities of co-operation are exploited.

Torfaen wide

- Supporting and developing tourism hubs and clusters together with developing producer networks, we can help Torfaen's rural businesses grow co-operatively addressing existing disparities within Rural Communities. We can develop opportunities for networking and links between the 3 towns of Torfaen; Blaenafon, Pontypool and Cwmbran.

All the stages of co-operation will include exchange of information and transfer of practice. This will be achieved at first through developing regional networks that cater for the key themes. For example developing Torfaen's Local Producer Network. Members of which are keen to expand membership across the region to gather information on supply chains and selling locally and regionally. Transfer of practice will include opening up membership of networks and liaising with other regional networks.

Key areas for Co-operation:

Theme	Specific Objective	Opportunities for Co-operation
Enhancing the local Environment	- Develop training and mentoring schemes for farmers and landowners, with a focus on upland areas. - Improve on farm training to increase rural skills, enhance the local environment. - Develop opportunities for land based production, i.e timber supply, wood fuel	Opportunities for Torfaen to explore a joint initiative with Monmouth, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly to enhance the uplands.
Developing Local	• Establish network	Opportunities for Torfaen

Produce	links between land-based producers in Torfaen and surrounding areas to promote food and create closer working links with producers. • Assist producers to develop speciality foods which can contribute to the market. • Promote awareness amongst urban residents in Torfaen of what is produced on the land in rural areas of the County Borough, where it is available for retail purchase. • To create a sustainable infrastructure for land-based food production in Torfaen, well-linked to sub-regional networks and markets, that improves supply chains and strengthens customer base.	to explore a joint initiative with surrounding LAGS to develop a joint producer's directory. And to help develop actions to create sustainable supply chains.
Promoting Tourism	• To support the development of accommodation ventures to draw in visitors by linking in with Food Tourism Initiatives. • Undertake physical improvements to identified areas to enhance the appearance of the	Opportunities for Torfaen to explore a joint initiative with surrounding LAGS to help promote food tourism and links the areas together to create a greater food offer in the region. i.e. joint festivals and events… building upon the Country Fair in the

	landscape and encourage visitors. • Develop a series of local festivals and events to celebrate Rural Torfaen and educate local communities.	current programme.

3.3	Description of Innovation

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
  ❖ **Demonstrate how the LDS will take advantage of the potential to experiment and innovate.**

Torfaen's LDS will enable new methods, new systems and new ways of working for beneficiaries of RDP funding during the period 2015-2021;

Collectively the findings from the whole consultation period have led to a series of 10 recommendations for enabling innovation in Torfaen that will encourage sustainable practice whilst also providing a foundation for a co-ordinated supply chain for Torfaen's land based producers.

Torfaen's LAG has defined and agreed its interpretation of 'innovative actions' as being those that have not taken place in Torfaen previously.

The key areas of rural innovation in this LDS are:

1. Developing sustainable Rural businesses

Reducing environmental impacts through energy efficiency measures, preventing food and packaging waste and recycling water, building better relationships with customers and local communities, working together with businesses and suppliers are all actions that forward thinking businesses can take to create stronger more resilient supply chains.

2. Establish a business to business mentoring scheme (to include training opportunities as well i.e. rural skills, food tourism)

To offer LAG help to other farmers organisations and businesses to develop practical and affordable strategies for change. Mentoring is proven to be a valuable way of helping motivate and inspire others. Businesses respond well to other businesses and farmers are accustomed to learning by doing.

A number of companies that received sustainable business coaching through this study have already been identified as 'rural business champions'. With support these can become mentors to others, and in turn create mentors of the future.

3. Develop toolkits and guidance for rural business innovation

Specific challenges and opportunities that Torfaen rural businesses face when trying

to innovate along their supply chains have been identified; these challenges represent barriers to growth. These can be overcome through the development and provision of toolkits and guidance that can be developed specifically to meet the needs of land based producers and rural businesses in Torfaen.

Activities that will stimulate innovation in the rural wards of Torfaen stem from collaborative approaches for distributing produce to customers, marketing and promoting goods, and developing niche products and services.

4. Support for young farmers

The decline in numbers of traditional farms is a problem that exists not just in rural Torfaen. Younger generations are less inclined to take over responsibility of running a family farm.

Rural skills that are possessed by older generations are at risk of being lost if this trend continues. Conversely this trend is in part due to a lack of entrepreneurial skills that the younger generations may be more likely to possess (such as market awareness and computing).

Farmer forums could be established by the LAG to bridge the gap in skills that vary through different generations. Partnership opportunities exist for working alongside the regional Machinery Ring (who offer training to farmers across the region) and Farmers Union Wales.

5. Re-localising the supply chain

A growing population and an insatiable consumer appetite has led to technologies being developed that enable goods and services to be produced to short lead times and on a mass scale. This has brought significant economic benefits and provided convenience to many people, but there have also been consequences.

Many farmers and producer businesses have seen their livelihoods squeezed by buyers demanding more for their money, whilst competition has grown to provide more choice. Torfaen rural businesses need to adapt or they will fail.

One way they can adapt is by operating in a local market place, essentially simplifying and taking ownership of their supply chain. This is about marketing and selling their produce direct to consumers.

6. Farmers and producers markets

Farmer and produce markets have for a long time been an important means for farmers and smallholders to sell directly to consumers. When successful they can be a very good way of supplementing their income.

The recently renovated Llanyrafon Manor offers a good space to hold an outdoor market, being close to the large urban population of Cwmbran, having parking facilities nearby and potentially offering space to producers at council subsidised rates. However, temporary markets in nearby Pontypool have been piloted to mixed success. Nevertheless, both Pontypool and perhaps more importantly the world heritage site of Blaenafon will be looked at in this respect as well.

7. Producer directory and catalogue

Farmers and small producer businesses often lack the resources to market their produce. These needs can be supported by establishing and managing a directory

of Torfaen producers.

A more dynamic producer directory could be developed as a live and online system to allow self-editing and enable product lists, with descriptions, indications of volume available and pricing[1]. Following this a next step is to work with private sector partners such as Vin Sullivan and Phillip Jones (Blaenafon based wholesalers) to develop a local produce catalogue.

8. Social enterprise models

Re-connecting people with food and farming is an important aspect in bringing about positive change in rural areas. The concept of social enterprise provides innovative ways for business and communities to collaborate in their decision making. A variety of producer focussed co-operatives and community based models are now well tested across the UK and have been shown to bring benefits through empowering people to take ownership of supply chains.

9. Food co-operatives (not just food co-operatives, need to link to other i.e. craft, renewable energy)

Food co-operatives are an important way to get food to urban groups with no direct access to farms and the countryside. In Torfaen the local Co-Star initiative was set-up to provide low cost bags of fruit and vegetables to help families get easy access to healthy food.

There is a parallel opportunity for co-operatives working with in this area. Taking advantage of the wider market place and supply chain.

10. Community Growing and Community supported agriculture (CSA)

CSA is a partnership arrangement between producers and consumers. The basic model is simple: consumers provide support for growers by agreeing to pay for a share of the total produce, and growers provide a weekly share of food of a guaranteed quality and quantity. They also reconnect people to farming because people get to know where their food comes from and become more aware of the seasonal implications of food production.

These actions will create new products and services for Torfaen, making the most of its assets through building collaboration between different actors and sectors. Much of this work will be linked into co-operation developments.

3.4   Action Plan

Appendix 1 is the completed Intervention Logic Table. All elements have been carefully selected by the Torfaen Local Action Group through a variety of consultation and research studies undertaken during the current programme. The table identifies Torfaen's own key themes and how they link with the RDP Themes. Each theme has numerous objectives with set detail of activity that illustrates how the LDS will be achieved.

3.5   Promotional Activity

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- ❖ How you will advertise and promote the opportunities / benefits that the project is offering to target participants and/or sectors
- ❖ How you will work with identified stakeholders to promote the operation;
- ❖ How you will publicise the results and impact of your operation;
- ❖ How you will disseminate best practice;
- ❖ How you will ensure that full acknowledgement of the funding from the European Union is clearly displayed including type of media utilised;
- ❖ How you propose to 'fly the EU flag' during the week that includes 9 May;
- ❖ How you propose to ensure that participants and/or enterprises are clearly aware of the funding received from the EU;
- ❖ Confirmation that you will ensure that you liaise with RDP Communications staff and the Wales Rural Network on any proposed launches/press releases to be arranged/issued in relation to LEADER activities;

The LAG has been advertising and promoting the work of the RDP since 2007 and has established a variety of networks through which it is able to promote the opportunities and benefits of the RDP. A Communication Plan has been developed that gives detail of the main features and its promotion and will ensure that the benefits and opportunities available for project sponsors and participants become widely available. Past experience suggests that a wide variety of advertising and communicating tools are needed to maximise engagement. Existing networks will be utilised and developed to ensure information is disseminated widely. We have learnt that a variety of tools are needed to advertise the work as not every one uses social media and websites, although the number is increasing.

Advertising and Promotion

The Communication Plan identifies a number of dissemination tools and methods that will be used to draw together information relating to the results and potential opportunities of all activities within the programme. These will be used throughout the project's lifetime to chart its development, learning and growth, and at the end of

the project.

- Social media tools: websites, web-fora, facebook, twitter, blogs, etc
- Exhibitions at partner events
- Presence at smaller community level events
- Information sharing via the Wales Euro Officer Group, WRN + UK Leader
- Sharing of information through local press coverage
- Community events such as community suppers to raise awareness
- Digital stories and blogs available on websites and possibly DVD

The Councils Communication Team will be engaged throughout the process, ensuring websites are kept up to date, the council's newsletter is delivered to each house in Torfaen and will regularly provide up dates and case studies.

Working with Stakeholders

To secure wider dissemination of results, other mainstream activity will be undertaken. On a local basis this will include sharing individual community and other stakeholder group experiences and ideas with other groups for wider benefits – a key focus being on 'selling' benefits and opportunities including the ability to shape responses afforded by the LEADER approach. Existing networks will be used to advertise the benefits of the RDP, including the LAG's Market Steering Group and Producer Network.

LAG Members

LAG members are tasked with sharing as much detail as possible to friends and colleagues to ensure information is passed on. This is outlined in their Job Descriptions.

Publicising Results

Success stories, developed into short case studies, will also be widely publicised with articles put on the web site, and promoted in local media and via other intermediary bodies. Events will also be held at regular intervals with success stories invited to speak on their experiences. Good news stories will also be fed into the Wales Rural Network for wider distribution.

Disseminate best practice

All dissemination and publicity activity will acknowledge the receipt of EU funding and highlight how LEADER resources and the associated approach adopted allow this type of activity to take place.

Monitoring and evaluation of the LDS and its associated outcomes as a whole will publicise the programmes activity through the use of a number of media.

Acknowledgment of Funding

Torfaen has acknowledged EU funding in the current programme and will continue to do so in the new programme. This is achieved by ensuring logos and relevant branding is well placed on all publicity material.
Every project has received a plaque to display and all marketing is approved prior to

print to ensure compliance with the EU and Welsh government regulations.

<u>Flying the European Flag</u>

During the week of May 9th the programme will provide a series of social media and local events to fly the EU flag. The events will link into the retail side of food tourism activity of the LDS. The Administrative Body will also co-ordinate a section in Torfaen Talks, the councils local Newsletter, delivered to approximately 40,000 homes in the borough, promoting the projects funded through Europe. Participants in all projects will be made aware of the EU support through funding agreements and participant forms.

<u>RDP Communications and Wales Rural Network</u>

We will continue to engage with the WG RDP communication team to ensure all publicity material is in line with the regulations. Case studies will be shared with the team to ensure they are disseminated as widely as possible, across Wales and the EU. The WRN can support all LAGS in the development and delivery of communication, through supporting themed network and events. LAG members will be encouraged to participate in these events as well.

 Attached sets out a detailed Communication Plan that highlights the above activities.

SECTION 4 – MANAGEMENT OF OPERATION

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group and its elected Administrative Body has the capacity and resources necessary to successfully deliver on the planned results, output indicators and activities.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 2 – Financial & Compliance)

4.1   Management and Administration

This Section should include the following as a minimum:

- ❖ Evidence of an effort to collaborate with other LAG areas to produce the most cost effective management and administrative structure for the area
- ❖ A description of the management and monitoring arrangements of the strategy demonstrating the capacity of the LAG to implement the strategy

❖ Details of the number of staff anticipated to run and animate the LDS and structure of the animation/running cost functions
❖ Evidence of skills and training plans for staff of the Administrative Body

Collaboration with other LAGS

A variety of meetings were held to look at the most cost effective method of providing the Management and Administration in the new programme. Meetings were held at a regional level (South East), between the ten Authorities that constitute the South East including Monmouth Lead Body to look at merging the Administrative Function. Following the discussions the LAG held a special meeting on the 27th September 2014 to discuss the options of merging. 2 options were discussed weighing up the pros and cons of each merging and remaining a LAG in its own right. After much consideration the LAG agreed to stand alone. Members felt that the following facts were key in this decision:

- An existing LAG with many years of experience between all members regarding socio-economic issues.
- More authority in terms of deciding where and how the budget is spent
- Opportunities to source more funding
- Internal council systems already in place to check claims and management producers.
- Opportunities will still be available to develop co-operation projects with neighbouring LAGS

Members also felt that the budget would allow the LAG to achieve the following:

- Commission two fulltime officers to focus on the two key themes of Food Tourism and Land Management, each with a project budget to help meet the objectives stated in the Local Development Strategy.
- Co-operation projects can be developed to share ideas and resources, in particular linking with Monmouth through food tourism and Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent for land management – as each area share similar land issues as Torfaen.
- Employ a Manager to drive the programme through its seven year period, developing regional and national links for co-operation projects and searching for opportunities for integration through alternative funding sources.
- Use existing in house services to provide support with claims.

For all the above reasons the Torfaen LAG selected Torfaen County Borough Council to act as the administrative body.

Management and Monitoring Arrangements

Given the value of funding to deliver this element of the programme it is envisaged that a set detailed control plan will be implemented to provide support of the administration side of the programme, mainly in relation to financial checks.

Meetings are regularly held at a regional level (South East Wales), between neighbouring and similar authorities these meetings will continue to provide opportunities for joint and collaborative working, helping to develop Co-operation projects. Also the Wales European Officers Group is the pan Wales forum for sharing of best practice and experiences.

On a regional level projects will be identified thematically and resources pooled to complete one intervention. We have established regional economic working groups such as the RDP task and Finish group beneath SEWDERG. This is likely to act as a vehicle for such projects.

The LAG has directed the development of this LDS and will continue to steer the direction of the strategy with great interest and active involvement. Regular updates and meetings have been organised to ensure this approach is maintained throughout the whole of the programming period.

Staffing Structure

Torfaen will continue to provide the staffing for LEADER as it has in the current programme, thus ensuring continuity of experience and knowledge. The following staffing structure will be implemented in order to achieve both compliance and effective administration of the LAG and associated projects. Due to budget available under the Running Costs and Animation Torfaen Council will provide the role of the Senior Responsible Officer and Finance and Monitoring Officer. The RDP budget will cover the costs of the Rural Development Manger at 18 hours a week; this will be split into 40% for running costs and 60% for animation costs. The administrative body will seek alternative sources of funding to allow a full time post commensurate with the responsibilities foreseen and the importance of the role.

Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

⬇

Rural Development Manager

⬇

Corporate Finance and Monitoring
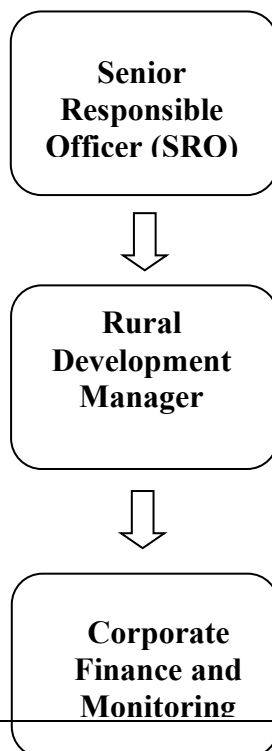
Key roles of members of staff are highlighted below:

1. Senior Responsible Officer – Job Purpose

- Ensuring that the Torfaen RDP programme is subject to review at the key decision points identified by the Partnership and at other points considered necessary.
- Making certain that any recommendations or concerns from reviews are met or addressed before progressing to the next stage.
- Oversee development of the brief for change set out in the LDS and the business case.
- Ensure that the aims of the planned change continue to be aligned with the LDS, and establish a firm basis for the programme during its initiation and definition.
- Secure the necessary investment for the business change.
- Ensuring that there is a coherent organisation structure and logical plan(s)
- Engaging with the work of establishing the Torfaen RDP programme.
- Establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government to align the governance of the two organisations.
- Monitoring and controlling the progress of the LDS projected change at a strategic level (at an operational level this is the responsibility of project or programme managers) the project or programme manager is responsible for providing regular reports to the SRO on progress of the business change. There will be inevitable issues that arise requiring the SRO's advice, decision-making and communication with senior stakeholders, including the Welsh Assembly Government and the Commission.
- Formally closing the project or programme and ensuring that the lessons learned are documented within the 'end of project' or 'end of programme' evaluation report: closure requires formal sign-off by the SRO that the aims and objectives have been met and that lessons learned are documented and disseminated.
  Planning the post programme/project review(s) when the entire benefits realisation process will be assessed.
- Ensuring that the post implementation review takes place, the output is forwarded to the appropriate stakeholders and the benefits have been realised: the SRO is responsible for commissioning and chairing these reviews and ensuring the relevant stakeholders are consulted and involved in the review process.
- Referring serious problems upwards to top management and/or Ministers as necessary and to suppliers within the targeted areas of Torfaen, in a timely manner
- Regular consultation will be required between those delivering the change and the stakeholders and sponsors.
- Ensuring that the communication processes are effective and linkages are maintained between the change team/s and the organisation's strategic direction.

2. Rural Development Manager - Job Purpose

The Torfaen RDP programme manager is responsible, on behalf of the Senior Responsible Officer, for successful delivery of the RDP through interaction with the Partnership the LAG and the Rural communities of Torfaen. The role requires the effective co-ordination of the projects and their inter-dependencies, and any risks and other issues that may arise.

The Torfaen RDP programme manager will work full-time on the programme, as the role is crucial for creating and maintaining enthusiasm and momentum.

The Torfaen RDP programme manager is responsible for the overall integrity and coherence of the Torfaen RDP programme, and develops and maintains the programme environment to support each individual project within it - typically through the Programme Office function.

Specific responsibilities

- Planning and designing the programme and proactively monitoring its overall progress, resolving issues and initiating corrective action as appropriate;
- Defining the Torfaen RDP programme's governance arrangements;
- Quality assurance and overall integrity of the Torfaen RDP programme - focusing inwardly on the internal consistency of the programme; and outwardly on its coherence with infrastructure planning, interfaces with other programmes and corporate technical and specialist standards;
- Managing the Torfaen RDP programme's budget in collaboration with the Financial Coordinator and on behalf of the SRO, monitoring the expenditure and costs against delivered and realised benefits as the Torfaen RDP programme progresses;
- Ensure agreement amongst stakeholders as to what the objectives and benefits
- Ensure strategic fit of the Torfaen RDP programme objectives and benefits
- Obtain commitment from stakeholders to the delivery of the benefits; monitor delivery of the objectives and benefits taking appropriate action where necessary to ensure their successful delivery.
- Facilitating the appointment of individuals to the Programme/project delivery teams;
- Ensuring that the delivery of new products or services from the projects is to the appropriate levels of quality, on time and within budget, in accordance with the Torfaen RDP programme business plan and programme governance arrangements;
- Ensuring that there is efficient allocation of common resources and skills within the project portfolios;
- Managing third party contributions to the Torfaen RDP programme;
- Managing the communications with all stakeholders
- Managing both the dependencies and the interfaces between projects;
- Managing risks to the Torfaen RDP programme's successful outcome;
- Initiating extra activities and other management interventions wherever gaps in the Torfaen RDP programme are identified or issues arise;
- Reporting progress of the Torfaen RDP programme at regular intervals to the SRO;
- On large and complex Programmes such as the Torfaen RDP it may be

appropriate to appoint other individuals to support the Programme Manager for some of the particular responsibilities listed above, for example a communication manager or a financial manager.

3. Corporate Finance and Monitoring - Job Purpose

1. To support the Programme Manager with the financial management of the RDP Programme in Torfaen
2. To ensure the Administrative Body, Local Action Group and third parties are compliant with all Programme financial requirements as set out in the Funding Agreement
3. To ensure the Administrative Body complies with regulations outlined in the Verifiable Standards and Penalties annex.
4. To ensure all grant funding conditions are met.
5. To ensure a full audit trail is maintained for every approved project.
6. To ensure the proper systems and procedures are in place to allow the regular and accurate completion of RDP grant claims and the reporting of project indicator targets.
7. To support the Programme Manager with the completion of management reports, Project Amendment Forms and other management data to the Welsh Assembly
8. To give regular updates to the Partnership and Local Action Group on financial progress.
9. To ensure RDP funding is only claimed on eligible activities and used for the purposes as set out in the LDS and Project application.

Training Programme

A training programme will be initiated at the start of the programme this will be continually monitored in line with general progress of the LDS, and the direction of travel as it progresses over the seven year budgetary period. A subsequent training budget will form part of the running and animation costs and will be available to RDP funded staff and each LAG Member. The training programme will be essential in building the technical skills and business competencies of RDP Staff and LAG members, helping to make positive changes to the way in which they work and make decisions in terms of progress against LDS aims and objectives, project implementation and sustainable outcomes.

SECTION 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

5.1   Financial Delivery Profiles

Appendix 1 is the completed financial breakdown. The Breakdown has been based upon the outcomes of all consultations and feasibility studies undertaken during the

current programme. Projects have and will be designed under the appropriate cost headings to add value and meet the aims and objectives identified in the LDS.

The LAG has endorsed Torfaen County Borough Council as the Administrative Body, together they've opted for simplified costs and will ensure the 20% match funding is achieved.

The budget focusses on the top two priorities in Torfaen:
1) ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT
2) DEVELOPING LOCAL PRODUCE

The financial breakdown incorporates the key themes and objectives under the LDS and will employ 2 full time Rural Development Officers who will act as rural champions through delivering a series of both short and long term projects. The match funding will be cash, in the form of staff time. More detail can be provided once project selection has taken place (including salary breakdown and Job Descriptions)

SECTION 6 – INDICATORS & OUTCOMES

6.1   Monitoring and Results

Expected Outputs, Impacts and Results

The attached Intervention logic Table sets out what the LDS will achieve over the programme.

Once the Framework is completed the LAG will agree a set of performance Indicators to complement the work of the projects and activities illustrated in the Intervention Logic Table. In the meantime we have listed in the table below the key outcomes we expect to be achieved.

Outputs	• Number of Operations • Number of Farm Holdings benefitting • Number of Businesses benefitting • Number of Communities benefitting • Number of jobs created • Total numbers engaged • Number of events
Impacts	• Number of Operations

	• Number of Farm Holdings benefitting • Number of Businesses benefitting • Number of Communities benefitting • Total amount invested • Area developed, broken by ward and hectares. • Number of participants receiving in work training (NVQ 2 and above) • Number of advice/support surgeries in community facilities • Number of community ICT hubs
Results	• Number of jobs created • Number of networks/hubs created and sustained

The LAG and Administrative Body will also ensure that a range of demographic data is collated over the programme period, to highlight any increased activity in employment and training.

We will ensure the delivery and success of these PI`s through the following methods:

On site monitoring of project activity and financial information will be undertaken at regular intervals and reported to the Partnership. A pro-active approach and regular communication with all delivery organisations will ensure all issues are addressed at an early stage. If remedial action is required, this will be carried out in line with the funding agreement and Verifiable Standards and Penalties Annex.

To ensure that the programme is monitored at a high level the Rural Development Manager will carry out the day to day management of the contract on behalf of the LAG. They will ensure the delivery organisation undertakes the tendered element of the project in line with the required WAG/EAFRD regulations and procedures. This will include:

- Undertaking a Due Diligence check on the delivery organisation (this will be done as part of the tender appraisal process)
- Ensuring all project expenditure is in line with approved allocation and eligibility criteria
- The project proceeds in line with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement
- Any relevant conditions in the Standard Verifiable Penalties annex are met
- Robust monitoring systems are in place to ensure a satisfactory audit trail for all project costs and to allow timely completion of grant claims
- Regular monitoring meetings will be undertaken to ensure all management and financial information is available for inspection or submission to WAG's Rural Executive
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of all defrayed expenditure and supporting document prior to submission any claim to Rural Payments

- Undertaking on site monitoring and financial visits to the organisations
- The relevant project officer from the successful Delivery organisation regularly attends Partnership meetings
- Monthly monitoring of achieved outputs to ensure they are in line with approved targets and contribute to the relevant objective of the LDS

The Local Action Group itself will be involved in all stages of the programme and receive regular updates from the Manager. This will be to:

Ensure that the programme is subject to review at appropriate stages.

- Ensuring that the Torfaen RDP programme is subject to review at the key decision points identified by the Partnership and at other points considered necessary.
- Making certain that any recommendations or concerns from reviews are met or addressed before progressing to the next stage.

Own the programme brief and business case

- Oversee development of the brief for change set out in the LDS and the business case.
- Ensure that the aims of the planned change continue to be aligned with the LDS, and establish a firm basis for the programme during its initiation and definition.
- Secure the necessary investment for the business change.

Develop the Torfaen RDP programme organisation structure and logical plan

- Ensuring that there is a coherent organisation structure and logical plan(s)
- Engaging with the work of establishing the Torfaen RDP programme.
- Establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government to align the governance of the two organisations.

Monitoring and control of progress

- Monitoring and controlling the progress of the LDS projected change at a strategic level (at an operational level this is the responsibility of project or programme managers) the project or programme manager is responsible for providing regular reports to the SRO on progress of the business change..

Formal project closure

- Formally closing the project or programme and ensuring that the lessons learned are documented within the 'end of project' or 'end of programme' evaluation report: closure requires formal sign-off by the LAG that the aims and objectives have been met and that lessons learned are documented and disseminated.
- Planning the post programme/project review(s) when the entire benefits realisation process will be assessed.

6.2   Evaluation Plan

<u>Evaluating Performance</u>

The LAG recognises that monitoring provides the bedrock for subsequent evaluations of RDP activity, and that evaluations provide the authoritative evidence that will be needed to prove that the aims and objectives of the Local Development Strategy are truly making a difference to the Rural communities of Torfaen.

Specific Evaluation arrangements will include:

1.   Developing a robust monitoring database specific to each project to monitor against targets and finance.
2.   quantitative and qualitative
3.   To ensure the Local Action Group and third parties are compliant with all Programme financial requirements as set out in the Funding Agreement
4.   To ensure the LAG complies with regulations outlined in the Verifiable Standards and Penalties annex.
5.   To ensure a full audit trail is maintained for every approved project.
6.   To ensure the proper systems and procedures are in place to allow the regular and accurate completion of RDP grant claims and the reporting of project indicator targets.

<u>Methodology</u>

Project staff will attend monthly LAG meetings to update the group, giving the members an opportunity to comment on future development.
The administrative body will closely monitor project development and given updates to the LAG on targets and financial spend.

In the light of a project not being meeting aims and objectives the LAG will hold a meeting with all the project staff involved in the project to identify the incorrect activity. All claims will be held back until the issue is resolved, with a clear action plan developed.

We will also produce standard documentation (including in electronic media) for the collection and analysis of monitoring data. These standard forms will be used by all relevant staff and delivery organisations to help ensure consistency of data collection and good data quality.

Actual performance against agreed targets will be evaluated to establish the delivery of objectives as set out in the Local Development Strategy. The result of project activities and how they contribute to the aims of the LDS will be a priority for the LAG.

Mid and End Term Evaluations will be externally sourced to ensure a fair, just and accurate evaluation is provided. This will include measures of success, improvements and any gaps in the LDS delivery.
The appointed consultant will be required, as part of the evaluation, to develop a research methodology that demonstrates the most appropriate approach and study

design for evaluating the impact of the RDP in Torfaen, that can be used for this and future evaluations.

As such the proposed research methodology might be expected (but not exclusively) to include:
- Interviews with key stakeholders/partners at strategic and operational levels;
- A robust survey of primary beneficiaries to gather insights into the impact of the intervention and its added value;
- Assessment of financial inputs (e.g. management & administration) and activities;
- Desktop analysis of project documentation – strategic and delivery information e.g. monitoring returns on expenditure, milestones, outputs;
- Desktop analysis of key local and national strategies.
- Assessment of standards of service provided;
- Cost-benefit analysis.

Questions the research should address in particular to the projects will include:
- Community and business involvement
- How to improve market focus
- How to improve sustainable supply chain
- How to improve the performance of primary producers
- How to bring together the two industries of agriculture and tourism

The continuous monitoring will provide a formative process on the developments of projects which will enable the LAG and Administrative Body time to reflect and make any necessary changes to the projects activities. The mid and end term evaluations will provide a summative point of view and help shape any future sustainability and mainstreaming.

Baseline Data

Data has been collated through out the current programme in terms of number of rural businesses, number of people attending training courses, number of people engaged in networks. This will continue to be monitored and with the support of the activities undertaken in the programme will increase. This will be evidenced through using the SWOT analysis in section 7.2 of the LDS, setting out methods of specific data to monitor throughout project delivery. This will be reported on a regular basis to Welsh Government.

Baseline data has also been provided in section 1.1 and will be closely scrutinised during the programme and linked to the other EU Programmes to gain maximum impact.

SECTION 7 – SUITABILITY OF INVESTMENT

7.1 A description of the community involvement process in the development of the strategy

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- ❖ Communications Plan showing how the various interests have been consulted with in preparation of the strategy and how they will continue to be included and kept informed during delivery
- ❖ Evidence of dialogue with and between local citizens at each of the key stages in the design of the strategy

Since the LAG was created in 2007, ongoing progress has resulted in a series of continuous consultations between all stakeholders involved in the RDP in Torfaen.

Monitoring and evaluation processes have provided a number of opportunities for local stakeholders to identify emerging need, ideas and themes for the new LDS. These have included:

Consultation Exercise	Target Group	Date
Land based production study (a full copy is available upon request)	Farmers Rural Businesses Community Enterprises	2011- 2013
Producers Network	Food producers Artists Crafters	Quartile meetings 2011 - 2014
Food and Craft Market Steering Group	Food producers Artists Crafters	Quartile meetings 2011 - 2014
LAG and Partnership Board Meetings	Regular attendees	Special meetings held on 25th March 2014 17th July 2014

		22nd September 2014 2nd March 2015
Meetings with partner agencies and key TCBC staff	Tourism Economic Development Countryside	Meetings held from July – September 2014
An on-line survey of beneficiaries, Local Action Group (LAG) members, Rural Partnership members and other rural agencies and organisations; (a full copy is available upon request)	Farmers Rural Businesses Community Enterprises Food producers Artists Crafters	April - May 2013
A series of qualitative interviews with beneficiaries as part of the evaluation process; (a full copy is available upon request)	Farmers Rural Businesses Community Enterprises Food producers Artists Crafters	June - July 2013
A workshop session held on the development of a Food Tourism Action Plan on 23rd July 2014. (a full copy is available upon request)	Farmers Rural Businesses Community Enterprises Food producers Artists Crafters	July 2013

The following is a summary of key the comments and messages emerging from the consultation process:

1. Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources by providing one to one business support to create sustainable businesses, and support

for business innovation, land based production, tourism, food tourism, heritage, diversification, social enterprise.

- Social media courses for rural businesses;
- Grants for starting projects to grow food e.g. grants for buying and planting orchard trees, fruit bushes, vegetables; grants for greenhouses and polytunnels;
- Training needs, business support and advice, funding, discounted group presence at other markets/festivals/events etc, work together with other areas of the council ie the market in Pontypool, the proposed monthly/outdoor market in Blaenavon etc.
- Look at training needs gap analysis for businesses and farms / raise the profile of food with a big food fayre (festival); bring in local chefs and high profile chefs to raise the awareness, promote the nutritional and financial benefits of local produce including the green credentials, support the local food business with advice and guidance to enable them to use local produce;
- More formal links with business support units / environmental health at management level;
- More open business support sessions, 1-1 and group sessions; more advice for tourism SMEs;
- Look into funding barn conversions, to holiday lets to keep tourists within the community they are visiting;
- Advice on different areas if required and relevant information on how to progress through the maze that is council red tape; Make businesses aware of what help is available

2. Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains through mentoring schemes, grant development and development of current producer networks, specifically linking local food to local hospitality.

- Help with planning permission; horticulture courses; guidance for individuals in best use of their land; grants for equipment needed to start, maintain and expand projects;
- Use existing resources; trading standards, food safety for advice before, not after problems occur. Organisations such as the Centre for Business for pre/post business idea support. use local successful business men and women (there are many of them) in a mentoring scheme, networking events;
- Mentoring would be beneficial in making local businesses aware of what is available as well as making connections to other local businesses instead of outsourcing business and promote working together;
- Guidance for local food businesses on developing menus and business acumen utilising local producers. Networking with local food businesses and linking with all businesses support units within TCBC;
- Producer networks and grant development;

- Mentoring schemes, possibly through enterprise facilitation model used in Blaenau Gwent;
- Creating a list of suppliers of produce to match an approved list of outlets;
- To get local producers into larger events giving the supplier a taste of how they could move their brand / product forward... For example a pop up tent in a high profile event with a number of producers.... Many people are scared of big events so they keep to small local markets and not having the opportunity to trade at a high profile or larger event... E.g. Cardiff bay food weekend, Royal Welsh show the list is endless.....

3. Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services by providing opportunities for networking and research

- Any help or advice would be gratefully received if requested. To know you have support if needed is crucial;
- Networking would help this theme;
- Marketing and actual help with this;
- Providing a updated list of originations to trade with within the community.

4. Exploitation of digital technology by supporting and facilitating rural business accessing current or future options under this theme

- Courses and advice in web design, social media, e-marketing;
- Basic IT training, funding for IT equipment, social media training, e-commerce/online selling training, website creation/use/design courses, computerised accounts even as simple as excel spreadsheets;
- Link and utilise the expertise in the local providers to aid others;
- This will help further awareness;
- Maybe e-marketing;
- Help assist with providing updated fibre optic/broadband network.

5. Renewable energy at Community level by exploring the options to do this at an individual and group level by carrying out scoping exercises and investigate interest free loan options

- Co-ordinate and facilitate renewable energy opportunities and provide help to see projects through to production, otherwise we get lost in the paperwork etc and such projects die;
- Obviously this is the way forward and interest free loans will be helpful for new or small businesses;
- Very limited opportunities - not enough hills for hydro. Limited to solar or wind. Cost associated with connection and legal problems a challenge;
- Perhaps need to start by exploring renewable energy at a council level first, then filter down to a community level, do as I do, not do as I say;

- obtaining information on grants available and facilitating the individual and the grants/ find feasible farms /opportunities and provide the information to aid the provision of renewable energy link with Trading Standards to ensure the no fraudulent activities;
- Grants and networking opportunity;
- Develop local energy consortium;
- Support in funding green renewable like ground source heat pumps, solar panels or individual wind turbines.

The Food Tourism Workshop held in July this year, was successful in gaining in-depth information and ideas from a variety of local producers, and below illustrates the mood boards developed during the workshop.

Future Involvement

The administrative body and LAG will continue to consult and involve local actors/project participants in the development and decision making process throughout the programme period. The attached communication plan illustrates how the benefits of the RDP will be disseminated to project participants and the wider communities in Torfaen. This will also allow for regular consultation to take place. The new website will include a consultation section, called `have your say`. To enable views to be collated on an ongoing basis. This will be reported to the LAG on a quarterly basis.

7.2 SWOT Analysis to show development needs and potential of the proposed area

The SWOT analysis has been produced as a result of consultation with the community, Local Action Group and Partnership Board. Key Strategies have also been analysed to produce the table below:

TORFAEN SWOT ANALYSIS			
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITES	THREATS
Farmers wishing to strengthen their business	Decline in traditional farming	Support for larger rural businesses	Current economic position
A developing tourism sector	Lack of opportunities for unskilled and/or unqualified people	Support for smaller rural businesses and the art and craft sector	Increase in unemployment
Increase in local produce	Lack of support for smaller rural businesses	Developing Tourism attractions and accommodation	Further decline in employment opportunities
Emerging arts and crafts sector			Global Market
Developing small holders	Lack of support in developing local produce	Increased demand for local produce	Climate change
Increase in diversification activities	Loss of cultural traditions	Promotion of alternative land use, including energy and production of bio fuels	Slow development of community participation
An establishing and professional voluntary sector	Unemployment		Development of out town retail
	Disjointed communities		
Transport links to	Lack of rural identity	Potential to capitalise on the natural	

the M4 corridor		environment	
Beauty of the environment			
Strong community links			

8.1   Cross-Cutting Themes

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
  ❖ Information as to how you intend the LDS activities to maximise their contribution to the Cross Cutting Themes of Equal Opportunities, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Exclusion
  ❖ Show how the LDS will follow the terms of the Welsh Language Commissioner's document 'Grants, Loans and Sponsorship; Welsh Language considerations'.

The national strategies for Equal Opportunities, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Exclusion have been integrated into the delivery of the programming activities from the outset. This has Involved developing a comprehensive monitoring system to ensure the cross cutting themes are mainstreamed into all LAG Planning and RDP funded delivery. The themes will ensure that the LDS and its subsequent activities add value, raise awareness and create maximum participation of Torfaen Rural communities.

Equal Opportunities
One of Torfaen's top priorities in the LDS is community action, where it will ensure that people from all walks of life have the opportunity to engage in the programme. The consultation highlights that women are a key player in the art and craft industry. This will be built upon helping to upskill and create employment opportunities. The LDS has been designed to cater for all ages and will ensure that young farmers and young people play a key role in this.

Sustainable Development
This LDS understands the importance of sustainable development. It will create opportunities to add value and build upon existing assets as well as creating new initiatives that will impact positively upon rural tourism and economic development. Helping to empower local actors and help them to take responsibility for economic growth.

Tackling Poverty and Exclusion
Poverty resides in many of the rural wards in Torfaen, with Blaenafon being a

Communities First area. Two Locks, Abersychan are classed high in WIMD. The activities funded under the LDS will ensure that the wider community benefits. In particular food poverty will be addressed though developing local produce and helping people to grow their own food locally.

Enhancing the local Environment		
Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming	Sustainable Development	Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion
• Encouraging local involvement in all actions undertaken • All training to involve all user groups • Engage young people in on site farm training • Encourage young people to have their say • Ensure any landscape development are accessible to all • Ensure all materials are available in a variety of formats	• Supporting existing land owners to develop innovative ways to grow produce on their land. This will be defined through the feasibility study to help build new products in Torfaen, that are not currently available. • Environmental sustainability will be enhanced through growing more local produce, which will have a positive effect on local biodiversity and support land owners in learning new skills to increase effective land management. • demonstrates low impact on the environment • ensures that developing activities are ecologically and add `green developments` where ever possible • ensuring the activities funded have minimal impact on or takes into account the environment, e.g. any buildings restored or developed make use of micro renewables • reduced pollution and	• tourism that maintains and strengthens biodiversity • tourism that maintains and enriches our unique and diverse culture of the environment • build capacity of local groups • ensure hard to reach groups are identified and opportunities are available to engage • Ensure all publicity materials are available in various formats, that websites and social media tools are inclusive and easy to use.

	degradation of the global and local environment	

Developing Local Produce		
Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming	Sustainable Development	Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion
• A marketing strategy will be developed in partnership with the Rural Network and Local Action Group, to ensure that each initiative is focused on both the needs of the producers and consumers, ensuring all target groups are reached. • All training to involve all user groups • Engage young people in training and mentoring schemes • Encourage young people to have their say • Ensure all material are available in a variety of formats	• Local produce will increase giving consumers more choice and regular access to healthy local produce, helping to improve a healthy diet and healthier lifestyle. • A series of food access points will be developed throughout the borough to help market and sell produce, including local produce markets, direct sales and e-sales.	• Local people will become more aware of the benefits in alternative energy, helping them to cut down on fuel bills. • a sensitivity to cultural and social dynamics is created • develops activities that help to improve people health and wellbeing • Improving the health and educational outcomes of children, young people and families living in poverty • build capacity of local groups • ensure hard to reach groups are identified and opportunities ae available to engage • Ensure all publicity materials are available in various formats, that websites and social media tools are inclusive and easy to use.

Promoting Tourism		
Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming	Sustainable Development	Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

• Ensuring all activities are appealing and accessible to all • All training to involve all user groups • Engage young people in training and mentoring schemes • Encourage young people to have their say through trialing new ideas • Create opportunities for networking • Ensure all material are available in a variety of formats	• Creates a sense of pride and place to not only encourage visitors but to also encourage residents to stay in the area • Community involvement in tourism planning and management, • Safe, satisfying and fulfilling visitor experiences	• Raising household income • Tourism that improves the quality of life of local communities • Build capacity of local groups • Ensure hard to reach groups are identified and opportunities ae available to engage • Ensure all publicity materials are available in various formats, that websites and social media tools are inclusive and easy to use.

Encouraging Enterprise		
Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming	Sustainable Development	Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion
• Consideration and inclusion of all stakeholders • Marketing and communications strategies that target specific groups • Engage young people in training and mentoring schemes • Encourage young people to have their say through trailing new ideas • Create opportunities for networking • Ensure all materials are available in a variety of formats	• Support new or existing producers throughout the rural wards to develop a sustainable supply chain in Torfaen. • Developing local marketing and branding initiatives which will benefit the producers, helping to position Torfaen in the regional, national and global markets. • Focus on matching supply with demand, providing support to enable producers to cope with the demand. Smaller producers can link together to create collaboration initiatives to ensure the demands are met.	• Quality employment opportunities, fair pay and conditions for all employees • Improving skills • Increasing consumer consumption and having a positive impact on local economic performance. • Producers will develop a pride in their identity, adding value to the produce and bring life back into our rural heritage and maximise the impact of profitability. • Build capacity of local groups • Ensure hard to reach groups are identified

	• Sound financial and business planning environmental management • Efficient management, training and customer service • Long term vision • Long term competitive and prosperous tourism businesses	and opportunities ae available to engage • Ensure all publicity materials are available in various formats, that websites and social media tools are inclusive and easy to use.
Community Action		
Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming	Sustainable Development	Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion
• Consideration and inclusion of all stakeholders • Marketing and communications strategies that target specific groups • Engage young people in training and mentoring schemes • Encourage young people to have their say through trailing new ideas • Create opportunities for networking • Ensure all material are available in a variety of formats	• Co-ordination of growing food locally, ensuring it is well advertised through out the borough • Develop local hubs to create networking opportunities	• Create awareness of the benefits of the RDP through out Torfaen • Ensure hard to reach groups are identified and opportunities ae available to engage • Ensure all publicity materials are available in various formats, that websites and social media tools are inclusive and easy to use. • Encourage new networking opportunities

Welsh Strategies

Written Communication
The public are welcome to write to the Administrative Body in Welsh or in English. The corporate standard for responding to communication written in Welsh is the same for communication written in English. Where communication that is initiated by the person whose known preferred language is Welsh, then that correspondence will be in Welsh. A database of those wishing to receive correspondence in Welsh will be maintained and made available to all staff.

Telephone Communication
As per the administrative body's corporate standards for managing telephone calls to and from the public, a bilingual greeting will be used together with either the full name of the administrative body, the name of the service, office, department or individual's full name as appropriate.

All automated or voicemail systems which are linked to published telephone numbers will be bilingual, uncomplicated and easy to use.

If a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh and the officer who answers is unable to speak Welsh, the call will directed to a member of the administrative body with Welsh Language Skills. Alternatively the caller may be put through to the administrative body's Welsh Language Team. If there is no one available, the caller will be informed that a Welsh speaker will return the call as soon as possible.

Face to Face Contact
Any customer who wishes to deal with the administrative body in Welsh will be able to do so with the minimum possible delay. Every effort will be made for bilingual officers to be available to aide staff working in reception areas/customer centres.

On an occasion where it is not possible for a Welsh speaking officer to meet face to face, the member of public will be offered a choice of speaking to a bilingual officer on the telephone, returning at a later time or date or to put their request in writing. The implementation of the administrative body approved Welsh Language Skills Strategy will ensure that the necessity to have these other options will decrease over time.

Administrative Body Publications
The administrative Body is fully committed to publishing all material directed at the public in Wales, bilingually. An Editorial Policy will be issued as part of the Scheme to ensure that published material is produced in line with this Scheme.

Public Meetings
The administrative body /LAG frequently arrange public meetings for consultation. Members of the public are welcome to use either Welsh or English.

People attending public meetings (including Hearings, Inquiries and other legal Proceedings) arranged by the administrative body are welcome to use the Welsh language if that is their choice. The number of days notice required to organise suitable translation facilities will be indicated on the formal notices regarding attendance at meetings

Teaching of the Welsh language will be part of the programme of training available in the Action Plan and details of where people can access classes provided throughout the area will be on offer.

8.2   Supporting the Uplands

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- Define the areas of uplands which the LAG feels should be a priority with a description of interventions and activities which are envisaged under the LEADER themes.

Torfaen Uplands – an Overview

- **Eastern Uplands**

Primary Landscape Qualities and Features

Dominant ridgeline on the eastern flanks of the narrow Afon Llwyd Valley, rising up to 500metres AOD at Mynydd-y-gam Fawr. An open, exposed landscape of medium scale and uniform character it includes areas of upland karst landscapes. Historically an important relict landscape of upland common, with Bronze Age funerary deposits. Forms part of the Registered Historic Landscape and World Heritage Site. The vegetation is dominated by dry, dwarf heathland and it lies within the Blorenge SSSI.

Key Policy and Development Issues
- The World Heritage Site Management Plan provides the key guidance in this respect and should form the focus for management actions.
- Ensure proper management of upland common to retain habitat diversity and maintain SSSI status.
- Careful management of historic landscape features, including distinctive boundary network and styles of stone walling and cloddiau.

South West uplands

Primary Landscape Qualities and Features
An area of upland hillside and scarp slopes, typified by rough pasture, rising up to 460 metres AOD. The southern section has extensive woodland cover, primarily coniferous but includes areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved habitat, elsewhere it is characterised by dry terrestrial heath and unimproved acid grasslands. It includes important geological features, Mynydd Henllys being the site of an ancient rotational landslip, and the area contains substantial coal reserves. The area also exhibits medieval and post medieval agricultural landscapes, such as on Mynydd Maen, with later industrial relics making it an archaeologically sensitive area. The settlement of Upper Cwmbran predates the Newtown development and reflects the earlier development and land use of the area.

Key Policy and Development Issues
- Longer term management and development of plantations.

- Impact from recreational use.

- Management of open upland landscapes.

- Management of agricultural landscape features, particularly field boundaries and small woodlands.

Western Uplands

Primary Landscape Qualities and Features
An area of mixed landscapes including an open upland plateau which rises to 550

metres AOD and includes the peaks of Brygwm, Waun Wen and Gwastad. This is dissected by a series of small valleys, more enclosed and vegetated with a regular pattern of small side fields bounded by hedgerows and walls and small areas of broadleaved woodland. The uplands have a vast, open character, mostly covered in dry heathland and acid grasslands but with a strong sense of place. As with much of the area, the SLA exhibits the impacts of post medieval industrial landscapes upon the post medieval agricultural landscape which results in the area being archaeologically sensitive.

Key Policy and Development Issues
- Longer term management and development of plantations.

- Impact from recreational use.

- Management of open upland landscapes.

- Management of agricultural landscape features, particularly field boundaries and small woodlands.

Key Issues Across the Uplands

Lack of management has also meant that boundary features such as dry stone walls, fences and hedgerows are no longer maintained. One other important loss to traditional grazing management has been the removal of Welsh Mountain Ponies from the commons. These ponies are known for their hardiness and excellent grazing characteristics and sell for significant sums. Consequently, there is considerable interest in developing high quality blood lines. However, the illegal introduction of non pedigree 'scrub ponies' onto the commons has caused all local Welsh Mountain Pony breeders to withdraw their ponies.
The invasion of the commons by bracken has led to the loss of significant areas of heather moorland. Upland heather moorland is a priority habitat and a review of its condition, conducted by the Partnership in 2007, has shown that it is now in unfavourable condition. Furthermore, it is essential habitat for the red grouse, a 'UK Priority Species'.
The continuing decline of heather moorland habitat quality is having a catastrophic effect on the local red grouse population.
The reduction in interest in maintaining the commons in a condition fit for grazing and to support important wildlife is leading to a reduction in the skills base amongst the commoners and other commons users such as the Blorenge Shooting Syndicate.
Whilst the separate nature of the enclosed lower valleys and the open upland commons of the Blaenafon area has perhaps become more emphasised, especially since the demise of heavy industry, there have always been strong historical and cultural links between these landscape zones.

The Vision for the Uplands

The aim is to create a distinctive, viable place, which maximises its potential as a visitor destination and stimulate economic activity. The historical and biodiversity resources of this area will be maximised, to reduce environmental crime and develop recreational opportunities.

It is envisaged that the RDP will support capacity building in the area and develop a series of training and mentoring schemes as well as specially designed toolkits that will create a holistic package of benefits, including:

- Wildlife and important biodiversity habitats through improved management, habitat creation and monitoring

- Climate change resilience by helping to store water particularly during flood periods thereby reducing the incidence of flooding in the Valleys

- Climate change resilience by capturing carbon in the improved peat and heather areas

- The commoning community by helping restore grazing areas, access for livestock, bracken control, reduced risk of fire and the identification of new sources of income derived from the commons

- Local residents and visitors by maintaining and enhancing the landscape for walking and other forms of quiet recreation

- The local economy by making the uplands more attractive to visitors and boosting tourism

Key actions to be addressed through the RDP:

- Delivery of the forthcoming Eastern Valleys Uplands Natural Resource Management Plan
- Identify where and how to manage natural resources for the services they offer – carbon capture, holding water in the uplands for longer and improving water quality, etc.
- Manage access in both a sustainable and beneficial manner to ensure local people and visitors can enjoy the uplands
- Explore opportunities for Torfaen to progress a joint initiative with Monmouth, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly to enhance the uplands.
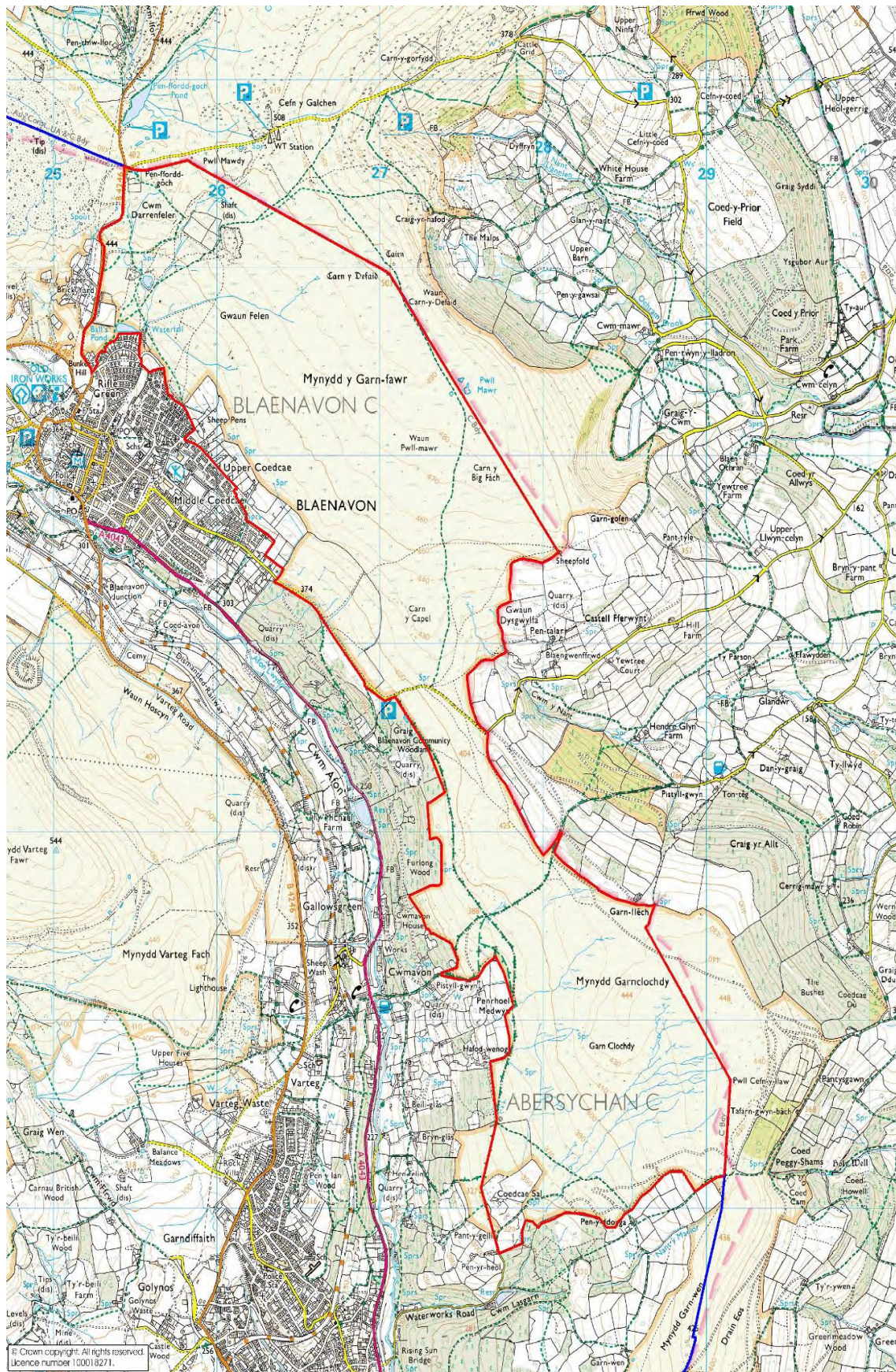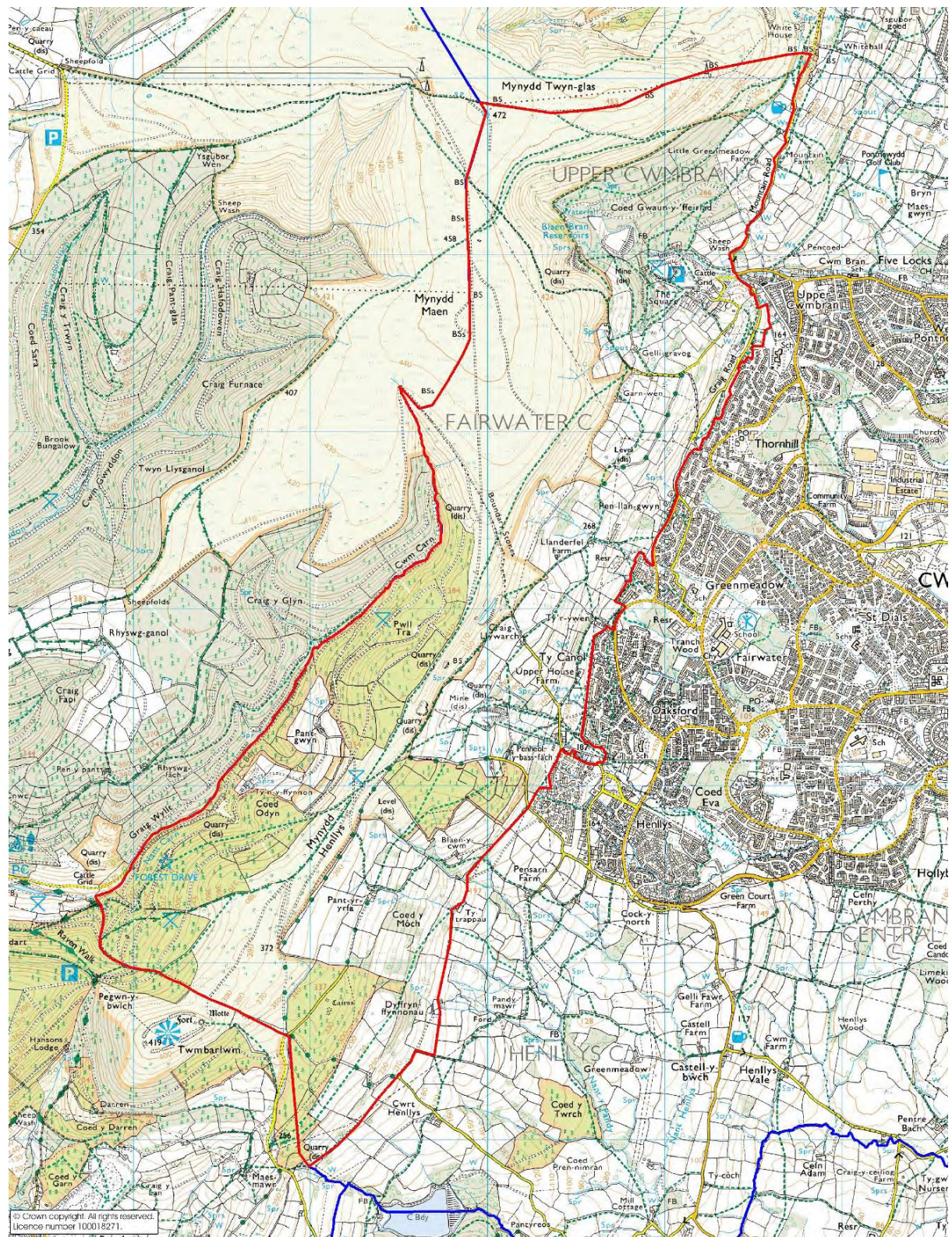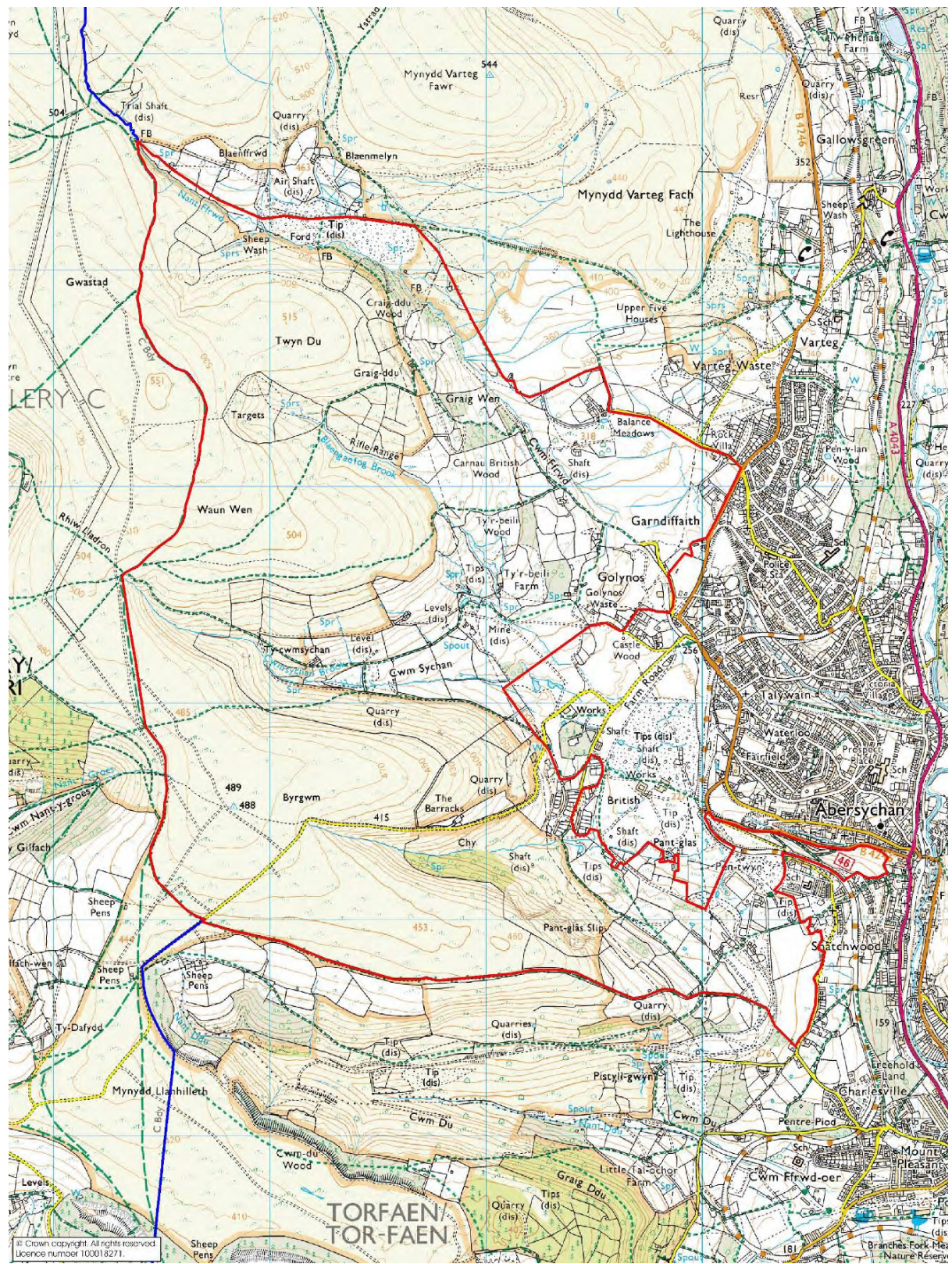
Western Uplands

9.1   Mainstreaming Plan

Dissemination Plan

We plan to create dissemination through all of the activities stated in the Intervention Logic Table. Dissemination will be imbedded into the programme from the outset. There will be a number of dissemination tools and methods that may be used to draw together information relating to the results of all activities within the community foodie project. These will be used throughout the project's lifetime to chart its development, learning and growth, and at the end of the project.

- Social media tools: websites, web-fora, facebook, twitter, blogs, etc
- Exhibitions at partner events
- Presence at smaller community level events
- Information sharing via the WRN + UK Leader network
- Sharing of information through local press coverage
- Community events such as community suppers to raise awareness
- Digital stories and blogs available on websites and possibly DVD

To secure wider dissemination of results, other mainstream activity will be undertaken. On a local basis this will include sharing individual community and other stakeholder group experiences and ideas with other groups for wider benefits – a key focus being on 'selling' benefits and opportunities including the ability to shape responses afforded by the LEADER approach. This could include a speaker from one area sharing their experiences with another group. Where relevant, this may even include inviting representatives from the other 'partner' LEADER groups to inject new ideas and perspectives.

Success stories, developed into short case studies, will also be widely publicised with articles put on the web site, and promoted in local media and via other intermediary bodies. Events will also be held at regular intervals with success stories invited to speak on their experiences. Good news stories will also be fed into the Wales Rural Network for wider distribution.

All dissemination and publicity activity will acknowledge the receipt of EU funding and highlight how LEADER resources and the associated approach adopted allow this type of activity to take place.

Monitoring and evaluation of the project as a whole will publicise the programmes activity through the use of a number of media.

Mainstreaming

Following on from experience of mainstreaming in the current programme, the success of this will be reviewed and transported to the new programme. Examples of mainstreaming in the current programme is:

1 – Food and Craft Market - now privately owned and gaining momentum.
2- Llanyrafon Manor - externally procured and Managed
3 – Successful grant applications turning into successfully operating businesses, turning a profit.

The key to these successes has been the support from the project staff on the ground, providing daily communication to those who need it. This will continue in the new programme.

Engaging the `right people` in project's is another key element of mainstreaming. To engage people and businesses who can offer experience to others and in themselves gain confidence to be able to develop their businesses, in turn impacting positively upon the economic climate in rural Torfaen.

All of the activities set out in the Intervention Logic Table have been developed with mainstreaming in mind. Below sets out how the activities under each of Torfaen's 5 Themes will encounter mainstreaming:

Torfaen Rural Development Theme	Activities to mainstream
Theme 1: Enhancing the Environment	• Maintained uplands • Developed farm land • Develop and maintained underused land • Transfer of knowledge and skills • Engagement of younger generation
Theme 2: Developing Local Produce	• Developed farm land • Transfer of knowledge and skills • Engagement of younger generation • Wider community with new skills • Sustainable businesses developed • Sustainable supply chains developed
Theme 3: Promoting Tourism	• Local events will help to market the food offer in Torfaen helping to create sustainable businesses • Tourism offer co-ordinated to create future links between the various sectors in Torfaen. • Close working links developed between producers • Networks and Steering Groups set up to run events in the future.
Theme 4:	• Business to business support – low

Encouraging Enterprise	• resource, no long term cost • Business networks continue	
Theme 5: Community Action	• Torfaen accepted as rural and local people gage their heritage of the area. Creating a sense of place. • Wider community benefits from access to locally grown food. • Wider community health is improved	

SECTION 10 – DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I am acting with the authority of the Local Action Group and certify to the best of my knowledge and belief the information provided in this Local Development Strategy application and supporting documentation are true and correct and the application for financial assistance is for the minimum required to enable the project to proceed.

I undertake to notify the Welsh Government in advance of carrying out any changes to the nature of this project.

I also confirm that I am not aware of any reason why the project may not proceed and that the commitments and activities can be achieved within the timescales indicated.

Local Action Group (LAG) Representative

Signed:	
Name:	
Chair/Deputy Chair LAG:	
Date:	

Administrative Body Representative

Signed:	
Name:	
Position in Administrative Body:	
Date:	