LEADER 2014-2020

Regenerate NPT
Neath Port Talbot Local Development Strategy

July 2015
NAME OF LAG AND CONTACT DETAILS

| Name of Local Action Group | Regenerate NPT |

Administrative Body Primary Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ben Riseborough</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tel</td>
<td>01636 686076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:b.riseborough@npt.gov.uk">b.riseborough@npt.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Partnerships and Community Development The Quays Brunel Way Baglan Energy Park Briton Ferry Neath SA11 2GG</td>
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Administrative Body Secondary Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Angeline Spooner-Cleverly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tel</td>
<td>01639 686044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:a.spooner-cleverly@npt.gov.uk">a.spooner-cleverly@npt.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Address</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Partnerships and Community Development The Quays Brunel Way Baglan Energy Park Briton Ferry Neath SA11 2GG</td>
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LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Start Date</th>
<th>1 July 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(no earlier than 1 January 2015)</td>
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</table>
SECTION 1 – STRATEGIC FIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Sections 3.1 and 3.5 of the LDS Guidance June 2014</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1.1 Definition of the area and population covered by the strategy

The County Borough of Neath Port Talbot comprises urban and rural areas. Most of the urban areas lie within a narrow coastal strip, with the remainder of the County Borough being made up of upland areas which are dissected by five rural valleys. Therefore the heavily urbanised coastal strip makes up the minority of the geographical area of the County Borough, with 51% being rural in nature.

The rural areas face significant challenges such as an ageing population, outward migration (especially amongst young people), and environment challenges including the potential for 38% of Wales’ new wind farm capacity being located in the county borough under TAN8. Other factors affecting the rural areas are: a high level of economic inactivity; below average levels of earnings; the need to attract new businesses; the need to improve people’s health and wellbeing; and an ailing public transport system which has been ravaged by severe cutbacks forced by austerity measures. All of these issues are testing the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Neath Port Talbot’s diverse rural areas.

However, there are many positive attributes of our rural areas including a strong community spirit, an attractive environment, and diverse cultures, all of which contribute to the growing appeal of the area to visitors from far and wide.

The County Borough of Neath Port Talbot has a population of 139,812, split 48% males and 52% females (2011 Census). It covers an area of 44,126 hectares, rising from sea level in the west to 600 metres at Craig y Llyn, above Glynneath. Neath Port Talbot is predominantly an upland area dissected by the valleys of the Afan, Neath, Dulais and Tawe rivers which all flow to the sea in Swansea Bay. These valleys are separated from each other by ridges of high forest or moorland. A narrow coastal strip extends around Swansea Bay where the main centres of population are found. The surrounding valleys are rural in aspect with scattered communities, many of which were previously dependent of the coal industry. The
rural valley communities still contain a significant number of Welsh speakers. The major urban centres in the county borough are Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe.

The map below shows the geographic distribution of Neath Port Talbot’s rural, service and host wards.

Specific wards to be covered by Regenerate NPT are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Ward</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Service Centre</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdulais</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>Trebanos</td>
<td>1,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaengwrach</td>
<td>1,989</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn &amp; Cwmavon</td>
<td>6,538</td>
<td>Alltwen</td>
<td>2,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryncoch North</td>
<td>2,176</td>
<td>Cadoxton</td>
<td>1,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeffranc West West</td>
<td>2,652</td>
<td>Tonna</td>
<td>2,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crynant</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>6,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cwmllynfell</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymmer</td>
<td>2,825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyffryn</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyncorrwg</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glynnneath</td>
<td>3,430</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godre’r graig</td>
<td>1,644</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen</td>
<td>2,910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwynfi</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Brynamman</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margam</td>
<td>3,017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onllwyn</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelenna</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontardawe</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolven</td>
<td>3,135</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhos</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breakdown of rural population by age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>3,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>9,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-64</td>
<td>38,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>11,664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Census.

Individual Rural Areas

Afan Valley
Bryn and Cwmavon
Cymmer
Pelenna
Dyffryn
Glyncorrwg
Gwynfi

A key strength of the Upper Afan Valley is that it has been transformed into one of the most scenically attractive valleys in South Wales and it is quickly emerging as a destination for leisure tourism. Afan Forest Park encompasses an area of 11,000 hectares, forming part of a 30,000 hectare valley forest. Community led developments such as the Glyncorrwg Ponds and Mountain Bike Centre as well as the existing Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre and South Wales Miners Museum, has demonstrated that activity based tourism can be a magnet for visitors. Over 75,000 people visited the mountain bike trails in 2013 and this is encouraging investment in visitor accommodation, new businesses such as a bike shop and bike hire all of which are creating local jobs and building community confidence.

The Cognition Project (funded by ERDF Convergence, Western Valley and Heads of Valley Strategic Regeneration Areas) has heavily invested in the Valley widening the product offer for mountain bikers, to attract a wider market with a specific focus on family mountain bike trails.

Regenerate Neath Port Talbot would like to further build on the opportunities already created to maximise the potential of the Valley and encourage greater participation economic and health opportunities presented through mountain biking by the community.
Dulais Valley
Crynant
Seven Sisters
Onllwyn

This Valley has a strong sporting tradition and in recent years has become a preferred dormitory location. The nine communities in the valley have a long history of coal mining which means that the Valley has a rich cultural heritage with a strong community spirit. Therefore, compared with other valleys, this valley is well provided for in terms of community facilities. The upper part of the valley is a Communities First area which has brought some additional resources, but it is also an indicator of the deprivation of the area which Regenerate NPT will seek to address and add value to the Communities First programme.

The main areas for further tourism development are accommodation development, taking advantage of the close proximity to Brecon Beacons National Park, establishment of Onllwyn as a hub for the Sarn Helen walk, wider development of motor sport and the industrial heritage relating to the coal mining history of the Valley.

Neath Valley
Resolven
Glynnneath
Blaengwrach

This valley is perhaps the most agricultural of all the valley areas with a broad valley floor containing the main settlements of Glynnneath, Resolven and Blaengwrach. The Valley is well placed in terms of infrastructure. The A465 provides access into neighbouring Rhondda Cynon Taff and onwards to Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff.

A key challenge is to promote worthwhile jobs by focusing on the accessibility of the Valley and on making better use of the Valley’s natural beauty and attractions to create a hub for tourism activity and a driver for economic growth. Water and “activity” based tourism and the rich industrial heritage of the Valley can become the key to capitalising on the advantages of the Valley has to offer. The forests, the Neath canal that runs through the Valley, and the complex of lakes at Rheola above Resolven have great tourism potential. Some restoration to the Canal has been undertaken but a navigable route to Glynnneath still needs to be developed.

Glynnneath, within the Neath Valley, has recently been designated as a Lower-Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) under the Communities First programme. Over 20% of people in Glynnneath are of retirement age or above. This is a priority area for activity identified by the LAG.

Swansea Valley
Alltwen (Host Ward)
Trebanos (Service Centre Ward)
Pontardawe
Godre’rgraig,
Ystalyfera (Service Centre Ward)
Cwmllynfell
Rhos

The Valley has a rich cultural tradition and natural environment. It is one of the most accessible Valleys in the County Borough. The A4067, from the M4, is a major route to the Brecon Beacons National Park which includes activity based attractions such as Dan yr Ogof, Craig-y-Nos and other local attractions. There are an array of communities within the Valley ranging from the reasonably prosperous villages of Trebanos, Rhos and Alltwen in the south to the more deprived communities of Godre’r graig and Ystalyfera in the North. Like the Amman Valley, communities in the Swansea Valley have strong roots in the Welsh language.

Pontardawe, with its Arts Centre, is recognised as a place for cultural excellence and it plays a strategic role serving the cluster of communities in the mid and upper Swansea Valley. The town provides a range of retail, leisure, recreational, health and commercial facilities. An area of Pontardawe has just been classified as a LSOA under the Communities first scheme. It is envisaged that the Regenerate NPT will work with Communities First to ensure that projects are developed in partnership.

Upper Amman Valley
Gwaun Cae Gurwen
Lower Brynamman

The Upper Amman Valley includes the communities of Cwmgors, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Taiargwaith and Lower Brynamman, and is a close knit area with low cost housing, a strong sense of identity and an active community spirit which is associated with little in the way of change. The Valley has a strong Welsh language base and contains the highest proportion of Welsh speakers in the County Borough - Gwaen Cae Gurwen 67.9%.

The main issues affecting the area are the challenges faced in improving the environment in view of commercial pressures and a historical legacy of mining. This area also has an active open cast mine that brings its own challenges and opportunities. Many people have to travel to work so the creation and expansion of employment opportunities in the Valley is important.

Any planning of services and facilities needs to take into consideration cross-boundary opportunities since some have a cross-boundary catchment area with Carmarthenshire County Council.

Wards outside of the Valley areas

Bryncoch North lies off the A474 between Neath and Pontardawe. It is a relatively affluent area of the County Borough, however still faces issues as a rural community.

Aberdulais
The village of Aberdulais is situated on the River Neath about 1½ miles outside of
Neath town centre. It is close to the Aberdulais basin where the Neath and Tennant canals meet. The village grew around the famous Aberdulais Falls and industrial site now under the ownership of the National Trust. The industrial heritage of this area goes back to 1584, when copper was first manufactured. Iron smelting and corn milling followed, with a tin plate works being built around 1830. As well as powering industries for over 400 years, this waterfall inspired artist J M W Turner in 1795. Today, the site, which is owned by the National Trust houses Europe’s largest electricity-generating water wheel.

Coedffranc West
Consists of areas such as Crymlyn Bog, Crymlyn Burrows, Jersey Marine, Llandarcy and Skewen. Many of the areas border the City and County of Swansea. The former Visteon axle factory is now occupied by a number of companies involved in the Film and production industry and Da Vinci’s Demons was recently filmed here. Crymlyn Bog is a nature reserve and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSi) of international significance.

Coed Darcy is also located in Coedffranc West; the 1,000 acre site is set to become a sustainable community of 4,000 traditionally-styled Welsh homes. In addition to this it will provide more than 10,000 residents with exciting new living opportunities, including retail, leisure, sports and community facilities and acres of green open space.

Dyffryn
This ward is only 2.7 square miles but is the location of the ruins of Neath Abbey which was an abbey founded by Richard de Granville in 1130 and the old iron works, located just outside the old abbey gate house extends up into the Dyffryn Clydach Valley. Neath Abbey is under the guardianship of CADW.

Margam
This ward is on the outskirts of Port Talbot town centre close to Junction 39 of the M4 motorway. Margam was an ancient community formerly part of the cwmwd of Tir Iarll, initially dominated by Margam Abbey, a wealthy house of the Cistercians founded in 1147.

With the arrival of the industrial revolution, Margam became important for two reasons: firstly it had a good harbour which was ultimately developed into Port Talbot and secondly it had coal deposits. The combination of local fuel and good transport links from the harbour made Margam an important part of the industrial landscape of South Wales.

Within the ward of Margam is the famous 340 hectares of Margam Country Park with Margam Castle at its heart. Margam Park also houses a magnificent 18th century Orangery and the remaining ruins of the Cistercian Abbey.

In the early 20th Century Margam became the site of the important British Steel works and the cooling towers became a local landmark. The steel works is now owned by the Indian company Tata Steel, the contribution to the local and national economy of Wales and GB cannot be overstated.
Taibach,
Meaning Little Houses, is on the outskirts of Port Talbot town centre centred around the main A48 road between Aberavon and Margam. The area benefits from the Taibach library and the Talbot Memorial Park. To the east of the area is the Eastern Primary School where the actor Richard Burton attended as a child. A Richard Burton trail was recently created to highlight the key places within the community that were part of his life.

Cross Boundary Working
The area covered by Regenerate NPT sits within the Swansea Bay City Region. The Swansea Bay City Region encompasses the Local Authority areas of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

The relative economic performance of the Swansea Bay area has been poor and the ongoing nil or very low economic growth scenario means that this is unlikely to improve in the short to medium term.

In addition, the challenges in terms of job and wealth creation remain the same today as they were a generation ago with all the related social issues such as health, poverty and community cohesion.

The City Region offers a new approach to economic regeneration:

- Larger and more efficient labour markets and therefore better prospects for job creation;
- Scope for better planning of housing, transport, support for business and other services beyond existing administrative boundaries;
- Better prospects for attracting investment, innovation and value added economic activity

Projects developed under the Regenerate NPT Local Development Strategy will reflect the work the City Region Board has already undertaken and will specifically address, albeit on a small scale, the social issues such as health, poverty and community cohesion as well as building on pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains relating to rural business development adding value to existing economic activity in the region.

The table below highlights how the key issues identified within the Swansea Bay City Region Strategy are linked with the Regenerate NPT Themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swansea Bay City Region Issue</th>
<th>Regenerate NPT Theme</th>
<th>Regenerate NPT – areas for action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have too few businesses and we are not growing our</td>
<td>Enterprising NPT</td>
<td>o Green energy for rural businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green NPT</td>
<td>o Further promotion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Business base quickly enough | and development of mountain biking in NPT  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Encouraging local producer markets and shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Tourism support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Broadband exploitation programme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| There are major skills deficits - not enough people with higher level qualifications and too many with no qualifications at all | Accessible NPT  
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Skills development for rural residents</td>
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| Unemployment and economic inactivity levels are too high | Accessible NPT  
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Skills development for rural residents</td>
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</table>

| Our infrastructure is not meeting the needs of modern business and communities | Vibrant NPT  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Cycling and walking trail development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Encouraging local producer markets and shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Further promotion and development of mountain biking in NPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Too many of our communities suffer high levels of deprivation and poverty | All 4 themes  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All areas for action will address this key issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| We are not as well connected as we should be to encourage investment | Accessible NPT  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Public transport improvements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regenerate NPT projects will work cooperatively with neighbouring LAGs within the City Bay region to ensure that they are delivered across the patch. Initial discussions have already taken place in relation to community transport, mountain biking development and raising awareness of the local environment and natural resources.

Outside of the Swansea Bay City Region boundaries Regenerate NPT will also cooperate with Powys in relation to the Brecon Beacons Nation Park. Links will also be made with Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly Local Action Groups in relation to the ongoing work at the existing Mountain Biking trails which are currently part of the
Cognition Project. There is also scope for a number of activities to be carried out cross-boundary to compliment the work on-going in Bridgend.

1.2 Description of the Integration

Adopting a strategic approach

The LEADER programme will drive a joined up, strategic and locally enabled approach to rural community development.

LEADER is an important, targeted, but relatively small player in relation to the wider policy, strategic and funding environment. Therefore, it is appropriate to align LEADER with this wider funding support and funding environment, in as much as such linkages can bring shared outcomes and added value to rural communities without compromising the independence and principles of LEADER. Strategic coherence of themes at local level will have the objective of aligning services and investment to maximise their impact in rural areas.

As shown in the diagram above, the Rural Development Programme sits within other European funding streams which themselves are situated strategically amongst local, regional, national and international strategies.

1.2.1. European Strategies

Europe 2020

This is the European Union’s ten-year growth and jobs strategy that was launched in
2010. There are 5 targets which form the backbone of this strategy relating to:

1. Employment  
   - Creation of rural jobs  
2. Research & Development  
   - Promoting and piloting innovative projects  
3. Climate change and energy sustainability  
   - Promoting and piloting community energy schemes  
4. Education  
   - Providing skill development opportunities  
5. Fighting poverty and social exclusion  
   - Increasing employment opportunities for all rural residents

All of these targets will be addressed through the implementation of this local development strategy, via the actions highlighted in bold.

Horizon 2020

This is a seven year programme which runs from 2014-2020 and is dedicated to promoting and encouraging research and innovation in three categories. These are:

- Excellent Science  
- Industrial Leadership  
- Societal challenges

The latter category is comparatively more compatible with LEADER than the first two categories. Projects related to societal challenges can fall under these headings:

- Health, Demographic change and wellbeing  
- Secure, clean and efficient energy  
- Smart, green and integrated transport  
- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency  
- Secure societies – protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens  
- Food security

It is clear from these headings that many of Regenerate NPTs proposed actions (Section 3.4) are very similar. This means that there is potential for the results from innovative LEADER pilot projects to feed into the Horizon 2020 programme by informing best practise.

1.2.2. Key Welsh Government policies and programme areas

**Economic Renewal Programme**: Welsh Government’s vision for economic renewal is of a “Welsh economy built upon the strengths and skills of its people and natural environment; recognised at home and abroad as confident, creative and
ambitious; a great place to live and work."

Forming the basis of this framework are 5 main priorities. (The relevant LEADER interventions are highlighted in bold).

- High quality & sustainable infrastructure
  - Green energy
- Making Wales a more attractive place to do business
  - Business support for SME's
- Broadening and deepening skills base
  - Increasing skills development (targeting NEETs)
- Encouraging innovation
  - A key LEADER principle (Explored in section 3.3)
- Targeting business support
  - Ensuring integration and cooperation with other business support programmes in NPT.

The strategy also states that in order for all of these priorities to be met, there needs to be “continuing engagement and partnership”, which is a shared principle of the LEADER programme.

Vibrant and Viable Places

The Vibrant and Viable Places strategy includes £100m of investment for regeneration activities for certain local authority areas in Wales between 2014-2017. The strategy largely mirrors that of Communities First, with Healthy, Prosperous and Learning Communities forming the three main pillars of the policy.

Neath Port Talbot is due to receive an allocation of £9.643m and work will be focussed on 9 projects, predominantly in the urban centres. Due to the lack of activity in rural areas through this scheme it will be challenging for LEADER funding to collaborate directly. However, it will be important to ensure that LEADER funding will help rural communities to benefit from the improvements being made through Vibrant and Viable Places framework.

1.2.3. Regional schemes

South West Wales Regional Tourism Strategy

The South West Wales Regional Tourism Strategy is due to run until the end of September 2014, due to budget constraints. At that point a formalised strategy for tourism development in this region will cease to exist. However Regenerate NPT has many proposed interventions linked to tourism and therefore the LAG will ensure they keep their finger on the pulse in regards to any new developments in this sector. In the meantime Visit Wales will be kept fully up-to-date with all tourism related activities undertaken by Regenerate NPT and opportunities for communication and involvement will be available at all times throughout the new LEADER programme.

Regional Transport Plan
Neath Port Talbot forms part of the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWITCH). This consortium is one of 4 across Wales, tasked with developing a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) which will itself contribute to the overarching Wales Transport Strategy.

The key aim of the RTP for South West Wales is, “…to improve transport and access within and beyond the region to facilitate economic development and the development and use of more sustainable and healthier modes of transport”.

The proposed actions of Regenerate NPT under the new LEADER programme fully address the aim of the RTP. Through piloting new and innovative transportation schemes to overcome accessibility issues for rural communities, the LAG will hope to ascertain and share best practise in order to guide future transportation strategies, both regionally and nationally. Proposals have also been made to trial more sustainable fuel sources for community transport vehicles and to promote cycling and walking across the county borough.

Swansea Bay City Region

The Swansea Bay City Region encompasses the Local Authority areas of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. City Regions offer a new approach to economic regeneration. In July 2013, Edwina Hart, Minister for Economy, Science & Transport officially launched the Swansea Bay City Region, the first of its kind in Wales. The City Region has been designed to create jobs, boost prosperity and encourage inward investment. The City Region team brought together key organisations in the region to carry out a comprehensive, frank and honest assessment of the scale of the challenges faced and the opportunities.

1.2.4. Neath Port Talbot Strategy

Single Integrated Plan – 2013-2023


Over the next 9 years NPTCBC will work towards these 5 aims:

- All people are physically and emotionally healthy and enjoy a good quality of life;
- People feel safe and are safe;
- Communities and environment are sustainable;
- A strong and prosperous economy, leading to reduced poverty;
- People fulfil their full learning potential.
Priorities:

In developing the SIP, Neath Port Talbot has reviewed its partnership arrangements and existing priorities and the Welsh Government’s Programme for Government priorities. In doing so, the paper outlines 4 “cross-cutting” priorities:

- **Children and Young People** — working together to ensure that children and young people get the best possible start in life and achieve their potential.
- **Anti-Poverty** — working together to support families on low incomes
  - Work to mitigate the impact of welfare benefit reforms;
  - Work that enables Neath Port Talbot to make the best use of the European funding which is available.
- **Transport** — Review different options for transport and assess impacts on communities.
- **Inequities in health and well-being** — Narrowing the gap between the most and the least healthy in the community.

This LDS meets with all 4 of the cross-cutting priorities outlined in the SIP in a number of ways. Firstly, “Children and Young People” and “Transport” are both areas identified in the SWOT analysis, in **Section 7.2**, as opportunities/weaknesses in need of attention. Therefore Regenerate NPT plan to implement specific projects that will aim to alleviate rural transportation issues and specifically work with NEETs to improve skill levels, as shown in the intervention logic in **Section 3.1**. In regards to Anti-poverty and Inequities in health and well-being, these are both cross cutting themes of LEADER and will be addressed as highlighted in Section 8.1.

### 1.2.5 The range of RDP schemes and activities to which LEADER can make a contribution

This strategy is set within the framework of the national and regional priorities of the 2014-2020 LEADER programme for Rural Development of which there are 7 principles:

- A bottom-up approach
- An area-based approach
- An emphasis on local partnership
- Multi-sectoral integration
- Networking
- Innovation
- Inter-territorial and international cooperation

As well as this, LEADER programmes are expected to contribute to one or more of the following six overall priorities of the RDP. **(Proposed Regenerate NPT actions are highlighted under each priority in bold)**

- Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas.

  - **Helping neighbouring communities work together on projects of**
- Mutual benefit.
  - Sharing best practice between different communities and LAGs
  - Providing opportunities for innovative approaches

- Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability
  - This will not be a priority under the programme

- Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture
  - Promote benefits of local produce to local food retailers
  - Encourage networking between local producers
  - Creation of local food markets and events
  - Provide business support for new producer start-ups

- Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
  - Coordinate environmental volunteering opportunities

- Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors
  - Explore potential for community level renewable energy
  - Promote benefits of reduced energy to businesses and residents

- Promoting social inclusion poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas
  - Supporting local job creation
  - Supporting skills development (especially for young people)
  - Exploiting capabilities of broadband for businesses and residents

Leader funding makes up just a small part of RDP funding, and there are several ways that LEADER can co-operate and compliment the other RDP schemes. All areas of RDP are listed below.

1) Human & Social Capital Measures
   - Knowledge transfer and innovation
   - Advisory services
   - Cooperation
   - The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

2) Investment Measures
   - Investments in physical assets
   - Farm & Business Development
   - Quality Schemes
   - Risk Management
   - Restoration of Agricultural Production Potential
   - Restoration of Forestry Potential
As a part of the implementation of this strategy, Regenerate NPT plan to recruit 3 Rural Community Project Facilitators that will act as a gateway and signposting service to all forms of RDP funding that will be relevant to LEADER beneficiaries.

1.2.6 Other initiatives and schemes

Communities First

Communities First is a Welsh Government anti poverty programme which supports the most deprived communities in Wales. The programme is an outcome led approach concentrating on three themes – Healthier, Prosperous, and Learning Communities. Each of the three themes have their own sets of priorities and there is considerable overlap of some of these with the LDS priorities as detailed below.

Healthier Communities – Under this strategic column are 6 priorities and there is one of particular relevance to this local development strategy – “Promoting Physical Wellbeing”.

Learning Communities – There are 5 priorities under this framework, of which one links directly with this LDS - “lifelong learning in communities”.

Prosperous Communities – There are 6 priorities under this strategic column and 5 of them are of relevance to this local development strategy. “Helping people to develop employment skills and find work”, “Reducing youth unemployment and disengagement”, “Promoting digital inclusion”, “Financial Inclusion”, and “Supporting enterprise and time banking”.

Neath Port Talbot has four Communities First Clusters:

- Afan Cluster – Total Population: 9,836
- Neath Cluster – Total Population: 16,266
- Sandfields/Aberavon Cluster – Total Population: 13,457
- Western Cluster – Total Population: 13,589

Two clusters are based within Rural NPT, Afan Cluster and the Western Cluster, and co-operation activities will be focussed on these two clusters. The Communities First central team is currently situated within the Partnerships and Community Development team and monthly team meetings currently take place to discuss synergy between the two funding streams. These regular meetings will continue.
during the project development stage of the next round of funding in order to reduce the potential for duplication and ensure maximum co-operation is achieved.

**Big Lottery Fund**

Although included in the WAG RDP Axis 3 and 4 guidance, in our view the Big Lottery Fund is neither a programme nor an initiative. It is however a potentially important match funding source for community and other groups wishing to access RDP resources (dependent on the implications of other large scale and high priority demands on its resources). It is not considered practical to offer suggestions how this LDS might link to Big Lottery priorities, especially as these are wide and tend to change over relatively (compared to the life of the RDP) short time periods.

**Superfast Cymru**

Maximising the benefits of broadband availability is a strategic priority for Regenerate NPT. The partnership will therefore wish to enter into a constructive dialogue with officials of the Superfast Cymru team.

1.2.7. Activities of other LAGs

In order to maximise communication between ourselves and neighbouring LAGs in South West Wales, early-stage meetings have taken place between Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire, Powys and Ceredigion. All areas agreed that it would be beneficial to hold quarterly programme officer meetings whereby each group can update to the others on progress and best practise.

It is also proposed that alongside Carmarthenshire, Powys and Ceredigion we will conduct joint evaluation. This will consist of mid-term and final evaluations in an attempt to cut costs for each LAG area.

Regenerate NPT currently seek to cooperate with neighbouring LAG groups on a number of specific projects. These are in relation to transportation, time banking, mountain biking, farm diversification and local produce. As the implementation of this strategy progresses, the LAG will continue to seek further co-operation through other kinds of projects in order to spread costs and widen the positive impacts.

1.2.8 Other European programmes and funding streams

**Convergence ERDF and ESF**

The priorities for the next round of convergence funding have already been specified and they are as follows.

**ESF Priorities**

- Tackling poverty through sustainable employment
- Skills for growth
- Youth employment and attainment
- Technical assistance
ERDF Priorities
- Research and innovation
- SME Competitiveness
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Connectivity and sustainable urban development

After reviewing these priorities, there is lots of potential for complimentary activity between LEADER and Convergence activity. All of the priorities highlighted above are also an integral part of this LDS, with the exception of the latter ERDF priority, “Connectivity and sustainable urban development”. However, sustainable rural development forms the backbone of this strategy and there would be room for synergy through equivalent urban development.

In Neath Port Talbot Council there are strong links between the Partnerships and Community Development team (within which the RDP team sit) and the European team. Regenerate NPT’s Lead Body team will hold monthly update meetings with the European & External Funding Co-ordination Manager to compare project development on both sides and explore the potential for co-ordination and synergism.

SECTION 2 – FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) intends to meet its 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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 4 – Management of Operation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Management and Administration

In May 2014 work began on the selection processes for the new Local Action Group to oversee LEADER activity in Neath Port Talbot. A meeting was held on the 20th May 2014 which involved LAG and Regeneration Partnership Members from the previous round of funding, during which much of the groundwork was laid for the development of the new LAG. It was decided that all existing members of the Regeneration Partnership and the LAG would be given the opportunity to apply for the Regenerate NPT LAG along with an open invite to all rural stakeholders. Paramount to this was a list drawn up of all the relevant stakeholders in the proposed RDP wards of Neath Port Talbot. These included representatives from: local businesses; social enterprises; the local authority; town councils; and government bodies. A key element of this list of candidates was that the final group of stakeholders represents the private, third and public sectors evenly as well as each of the 5 rural valleys, in order to ensure equality.

Once the list of representatives was finalised, it was agreed that the current
administrative body would design and send out Expression of Interest (EOI) forms to all of the agreed organisations, a copy of which can be found in appendix 1. The returned EOI forms were then analysed by the administrative body in order to gauge the amount of interest from each geographical area and from the private, third and public sectors.

When recruiting members to the new LAG it was vital to ascertain that every one of the new members would provide a valid and effective contribution in the implementation of LEADER funding. It is important that new LAG members have the following characteristics:

- Rooted in local communities and with direct experience of the issues and opportunities facing these communities;
- Be ambitious for the achievements of the LAG and the difference that the Programme can be made, and energetic and inspiring advocates of its value;
- Have a practical bent and understanding of whether projects will work in practice;
- Able to make connections across a range of networks;
- Able to bring specific technical skills, insights and experience;
- Have a sense of the strategic context for CLLD and how to position it effectively;
- Able and willing to devote time to LAG work;
- Constructively challenging;
- Creative thinkers able to encourage and support innovative thinking and approaches.

With that in mind, once the EOI’s were analysed, a questionnaire was forwarded to each of the applicants with the aim of determining the candidates’ suitability to sit on the proposed LAG. Questions were asked on their: understanding of RDP; opinions on the priorities of the area; knowledge and skills; experience of European funding programmes; and involvement in other relevant partnerships. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

A scoring matrix was designed by the lead administrative body in order to effectively quantify their qualitative answers to ensure that all of the candidates selected were proven as highly capable of managing and overseeing the next round of LEADER funding in NPT.

Once all of the questionnaires were scored it was then possible to draw up a final list of new LAG representatives and invite them to the first meeting. The chosen list of representatives is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Preece</td>
<td>Chair of Trustees</td>
<td>Canolfan Maerdy</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Anthony Taylor</td>
<td>(Chair)</td>
<td>NPT CBC</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Davies</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
<td>BayTrans</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhysian Pengilley</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Glynneath Training Centre</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Walters</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Groundwork Bridgend &amp; Neath Port Talbot</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clive Ball</td>
<td>Projects and Funding Officer</td>
<td>NPTC Group</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Morris</td>
<td>Regeneration and Development Manager</td>
<td>NPT Homes</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise King</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
<td>Cognition mtb trails South Wales</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan McCallum</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Awel Aman Tawe</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Isaac</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>NSA Afan</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catrin Evans</td>
<td>Countryside and Wildlife Team Leader</td>
<td>NPTCBC</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Potts</td>
<td>Head of Regeneration</td>
<td>NPTCVS</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Whitehead-Ross</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Reed</td>
<td>Transport Services Development Officer</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Hunter</td>
<td>Blaenhonddan Community Councillor - Cadoxton Ward</td>
<td>Blaenhonddan Community Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel T Packer</td>
<td>NPT - Branch Committee Representative</td>
<td>Federation of small businesses - swansea bay branch</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Wilcox</td>
<td>Project Development and Funding Officer</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Brereton</td>
<td>Director, Centre for Business</td>
<td>Centre for Business</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angeline Spooner-Cleverly</td>
<td>Community Economic Regeneration and Communities First Manager</td>
<td>NPTCBC</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony McGetrick</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Tourism Swansea Bay</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Williams</td>
<td>Representative of Neath Trades Union Council</td>
<td>Neath Trades Union Council</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr David Lewis</td>
<td>Community Councillor - Alltwen Pontardawe Swansea</td>
<td>Cilybebyll Community Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Lynda Williams</td>
<td>Community Councillor - GCG</td>
<td>GCG Community Council</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Owen</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Development Officer</td>
<td>DANSAS Limited</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley Smith</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Dove Workshop</td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pie chart and table below, show the composition of the LAG in relation to the sector they represent.
As well as the even distribution of sector representatives, each of the five rural wards are represented by at least 1 LAG member. It is worth noting however, that the vast majority of the new LAG members represent Neath Port Talbot as a whole, and this will help to ensure parity during decision making processes.

**Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference for the group can be found at appendix 3.

**Administrative Body**

At its meeting on 24th July 2014 Regenerate NPT agreed that they would like Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to continue with the administrative Body role for the new round of LEADER funding (minutes of meeting at Appendix 3a). Attempts to Brigade on the administrative duties with neighbouring authorities were made however Carmarthenshire had previously decided to take the lead for Swansea and a stalemate occurred between Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot were both LAGs were keen for their Local Authority to take the lead. With this in mind Regenerate NPT decided that NPT CBC would continue to lead on administrating the Strategy locally but that they would work hard to deliver collaborative projects with the LAGs in Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Bridgend. NPTCBC can deliver the administrative role for Regenerate NPT at under the 10% running costs margin.

The Administrative Body will consist of 1 Regenerate NPT Manager, 1 Finance and Monitoring Officer and 1 Rural Community Assistant. Full details of the management and administration of the LAG can be found at section 4.1 of this Strategy. The team will form part of the Partnerships and Community Development Section of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

**LAG Working and Decision Making Procedures**

Regenerate NPT will have delegated powers to bring forward and fund projects in line with the agreed Local Development Strategy (LDS) and Rural Development Programme (RDP) objectives. This cannot be delegated to any other organisation or sub group outside of the main LAG. The LAG is supported by the Administrative
Body and the LAG staff (delivery staff and animators) in its operations as shown in the diagram below.

The Local Action Group is responsible for the overall management and the strategic direction of the LDS under the authority of its Administrative Body. The LAG itself is governed by a constitution and an agreement with its Administrative Body which outlines the roles of all parties involved in delivery of the programme.

The LAG agreed the contents of this LDS on 18th September 2014 (minutes attached at appendix 3b) and subsequently following LDS approval at its meeting on 18th February 2015.

The LAG will appoint an independent Chair from its membership through an open and transparent process that will be outlined in its constitution and will be reviewed annually. In order to ensure swift progression of funding approaches and as outlined in the LAG’s governing documents, provision is made for a Steering Group or small panels to be established to act on behalf of the wider LAG. Clear terms of reference for any such group will be laid out and agreed by the LAG and Administrative Body in advance.

The working practices of the LAG are compliant with the commission’s regulations and guidance on the functions of a LAG in that it:

- Builds the capacity of local people to develop and implement activity
- Draws up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoids conflicts of interest, that shall ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are (from) partners which are not public authorities and shall allow selection
by written procedure
- Selects and prioritises operations according to their contribution to meeting the LDS objectives and targets
- Prepares and publishes calls for proposals or an on-going project submission procedure, including definition of selection criteria
- Receives applications for support and assesses them
- Selects operations and fixes the amount of support and presents the proposals to the Responsible Body for final verification of eligibility before approval
- Monitors the implementation of the strategy
- Monitors progress of the programme

**Reporting Systems**

The LAG reports to the Local Service Board (LSB). A member of the LAG (likely to be the Chair) will be a corresponding member of the LSB and will provide reports on the delivery of the intervention logic and LDS on a regular basis.

The LAG will also report to the City Region Board in the same way to ensure the 2 partnerships are kept up to date on the progress of the LEADER programme. The diagram below illustrates the reporting system:

**Audit Trails**

The Administrative Body has experience of running the Business Plan 1 and 2 RDP programmes in Neath Port Talbot. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has in place the necessary systems to maintain full audit trails for expenditure and indicators. The Administrative Body will be supported by the
Councils, accountants and auditors to ensure the correct information is maintained. Financial and monitoring information will be reported to the LAG at every meeting.

**Project Selection, Appraisal and Approval Processes**

**Selection and Application**

Regenerate NPT’s project selection and application process has 3 stages:

**Stage 1  Eligibility of Proposed Project Idea**

All projects or activity will be initially assessed for eligibility by the Rural Community Facilitator. The project will need to demonstrate that it contributes towards the delivery of the Regenerate NPT Local Development Strategy by meeting its themes, objectives, outcomes and priorities. These are outlined in the Regenerate NPT Intervention Logic. If the project idea fits then the sponsor can proceed to the next stage.

**Stage 2  Expression of Interest**

The sponsor will be invited to complete an expression of interest form (appendix 4) which will be reviewed by the LAG and assessed against a set criteria (appendix 5) and scored using a set method (appendix 6). If the minimum score is met then the sponsor will be invited to progress to stage 3. If the minimum score is not met the sponsor will be referred to the Rural Community Facilitator to further develop ideas for resubmission to the LAG at a later date.

**Stage 3  Formal Application for funding**

The sponsor will be required to complete an application form (appendix 7) which will be assessed by the LAG against a set criteria (appendix 8) and scored using a set method (appendix 9). If the minimum score is met then the sponsor will be offered funding.

**Appraisal of Projects**

**General principles under which the process will operate**

The appraisal process will ensure that the following principle are followed:

- Project allocation, appraisal and approval functions are kept separate;
- The value of good project design and development is recognised to ensure viability and sustainability of projects;
- The value of technical and specialist knowledge is recognised and utilised wherever required;
- The value of adequate networking and consultation with key partner organisations is recognised and utilised wherever required particularly in relation to ensuring there is no duplication with other projects and other...
funding programmes
- Documentary evidence will be kept for all stages of the process;
- Sufficient, adequate information on all projects and alternative options will be sought before undertaking a project appraisal to avoid badly informed decisions.

General Division of Responsibilities for the Process as a Whole

It is important that there is clear division of responsibilities in the appraisal and decision making process to retain the integrity and transparency of the system. The following divisions of responsibility are as defined;

- It will be the responsibility of all LEADER staff to ensure that the project appraisal process is implemented effectively and that communities involved in the LEADER process are aware of its requirements.
- It will be the responsibility of the Regenerate NPT Manager to ensure that all information is accurately collected to ensure the process can operate effectively. It will also be their responsibility to ensure that all relevant consultations have been carried out to ensure there is no duplication with other projects/funding programmes.
- It will be the responsibility of the Regenerate NPT Manager to facilitate the appraisal with the assistance of the LAG or a sub group of the LAG.
- It will be the responsibility of the LAG to check that each project is properly appraised and approved according to this guidance.
- It will be the responsibility of the Regenerate NPT Finance and Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the assigned finance staff within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (as administrative body) to ensure that claims are processed effectively. This division of duties achieves effective separation of duties between the inspection and administrative roles of individuals involved in application and claim processing.
- It is the responsibility of the Administrative Body and LSB through the governance review and through staff management to ensure that the LEADER programme overall has adequate systems in place to appraise and approve projects as required and to check that these systems are being used.

Operation of the Decision Making Body (LAG)

Fairness

All LAG members exercise their functions in the public interest. Decisions must be made openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons. This means that decision makers must:
- Come to the decisions they make with an open mind and demonstrate they are open minded;
- Make a decision only after due consideration of all information reasonably required upon which to base such a decision;
- Seek further information if it is felt there is insufficient information to reach a decision; and
- Act with impartiality – not seek to benefit a particular sector, geographic
area, interest group, etc over others.

It is important that decision makers have not already taken a firm view on a matter, nor give the appearance of having made up their mind before the formal consideration of an application. LAG members should not seek to benefit from access to sensitive or restrictive information, to which they are privy as a result of sitting on the group.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The LAG has a Conflicts of Interest Policy which will be adhered to in any decision making process (appendix 10).

If a LAG member is to be a direct beneficiary of LEADER funding, they should not be involved in decisions that directly affect the project under scrutiny. A LAG member should declare an interest at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from any subsequent discussion. The LAG member will be asked to leave the room whilst any discussion takes place. The same applies if a LAG member faces a conflict for any other reason. LAG members will be asked to declare any interests prior to receiving any application forms.

A LAG member may, however, participate in discussions from which they may indirectly benefit, for example where the benefits are universal to all users/beneficiaries/community members, or where the benefit is minimal.

If a LAG member fails to declare an interest that is known to the LAG and/or the chair of the LAG, the chair will declare that interest.

In the event of the LAG having to decide upon an issue in which a LAG member has an interest, all decisions will be made by vote, with a simple majority required. The LAG member who has a conflict of interest will leave the room and won’t be part of the decision making process. A quorum must present for the discussion and decision; interested parties will not be counted when deciding if the meeting is quorate. Interested LAG members may not vote on matters affecting their own interests. All decisions under a conflict of interest will be recorded by the secretariat and reported in the minutes of the meeting.

The report will record:
- The nature and extent of the conflict;
- An outline of the discussion;
- The actions taken to manage the conflict.

Where a LAG member benefits from the decision, this will be reported in the minutes and will be subject to scrutiny by LAG members and the LSB.

**Decision Making**

No project will be perfect in all respects. It is a matter of selecting the best available. However there are certain issues which should be taken very seriously
and result in rejection of a project. These are:

- The project not contributing to the Regenerate NPT Action Plan outcomes
- The project duplicating activity already undertaken locally
- The project not being deliverable or the risks to delivery being so great and unmanageable that successful delivery is unlikely
- The project not providing good value for money

In other cases the pros and cons will be weighed up in taking a decision. In some cases a problem with a project will be reduced by putting a condition on how it is implemented. Such conditions will usually be related to reducing risk.

At the end of the third stage all applicants will be informed of the LAGs decision. Those who are successful will be offered funding subject to a decision agreement which will clearly set out all that is required from a project sponsor to deliver the project. There will be no appeals process once a decision has been made.

Minutes of the LAG meetings where decisions relating to project selection will be published on the Regenerate NPT website regenerate.npt.gov.uk to ensure that the process is made public and is open and transparent.
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

The Regenerate NPT LEADER LDS development has been based on a bottom-up approach and driven by the LAG a local public/private partnership. The LDS is an area-based strategy which will support innovation, cooperation and networking with integrated and multi-sectoral actions.

The main aim of the Regenerate NPT Strategy is:

*Working together to make our Valleys more accessible, vibrant and enterprising.*

The SWOT analysis highlighted the main development needs and opportunities that the LAG has decided to prioritise and are listed below:

- Potential to capitalise on physical activity in natural environment
- Volunteering opportunities for rural residents
- Need for business tourism support following local authority budget cutbacks
- Improve availability of local produce
- Support for farm diversification
- Support services for enterprise development
- Pressure on local transportation options through cutbacks
- Pressure on local authority budgets offer a chance to innovate
- Improvement of specific skill levels amongst rural residents
- Opportunity to develop time banking
- Potential for greater deployment of renewable energy sources
- Making community transport more energy efficient
- Potential to fully exploit the capabilities of superfast broadband

Based on the SWOT analysis, consultation with rural residents and stakeholders and all the research provided by the Think Links project Regenerate NPT have prioritised the above opportunities into 4 Key Themes which have been linked to a
set of specific objectives and actions:

Green NPT
Maximising the potential for the green economy in NPT including development of all aspects of renewable energy at a community level and the promotion of eco-tourism

Specific objectives
- To increase the business and employment potential of outdoor activity
- To encourage local communities to take an active approach to improving their local environment
- To secure community support or more renewable energy sources
- To explore alternative sources of fuel for community transport

Vibrant NPT
Building on the unique physical, social and cultural assets of NPT, enhancing the image of NPT as a good place to live and do business with vibrant, sustainable communities and high quality of life

Specific objectives
- To increase the business and employment potential of outdoor activity
- To encourage local communities to take an active approach to improving their local environment
- To increase the use of local produce to add value and shorten supply chains

Enterprising NPT
Creating an enterprising environment that sustains and encourages the growth of new and existing micro and social businesses within NPT

Specific objectives
- To increase the business and employment potential of outdoor activity
- To provide a support service for rural tourism enterprises including networking, promotion and developmental support to improve the visitor experience
- To increase the use of local produce to add value and shorten supply chains
- To encourage and support local farmers to develop non-agricultural business opportunities
- To encourage and support the development of new enterprises in NPT
- To provide training for rural residents to develop skills levels to address identified gaps
- To increase exploitation of superfast broadband by all members of rural community

Accessible NPT
Improving access to basic services, considering new, innovative and sustainable ways of supporting individuals to overcome barriers and to reach their full potential. Indicative Actions:

Specific objectives
- To identify new and innovative ways of overcoming local transportation barriers
To identify opportunities for council services which would benefit from delivery and by the community
To provide training for rural residents to develop skills levels to address identified gaps
To promote and encourage a time banking scheme in NPT
To explore alternative sources of fuel for community transport
To increase exploitation of superfast broadband by all members of rural community

The Intervention Logic at appendix 11 shows how these priorities and types of project activity will be delivered including an outline of the proposed outcomes from project activity supported by the LAG, and how they fit with the cross cutting themes. While their inclusion in this document is not a guarantee of support, they provide an indication on how the overall aim and the strategic objectives can be turned into practical actions.

The LAG has prioritised activity relating to adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources and activity relating to pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains. The table below illustrates how the LAG has allocated its funding. Theme 2 of the programme has been allocated the largest proportion of funding as the board felt that there is more scope under these theme to achieve the greatest results specifically in relation to assisting rural business and creating jobs in rural areas. The LAG felt that this theme will contribute most to tackling poverty locally. Also the LAG felt strongly that the image of our rural communities needed to be enhanced as a good place to live and do business. Members are keen to build on the natural and cultural resources and have therefore allocated a substantial proportion of funding to theme 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme / Sub Measure</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>£457,333.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>£558,963.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>£457,333.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>£251,956.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>£285,833.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>£105,864.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous LEADER activity

The Think Links Axis 4 project previously delivered by the LAG in NPT has enabled the LAG to produce an action plan that fully reflects the needs and priorities of
Think Links has been running since 2011 and is due to be completed by the end of 2014. The project is, in essence, a community audit that aims to identify gaps in basic service provision and determine the main priorities for rural communities in order to guide future funding to ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources. Therefore, the project aspires to ascertain a complete overview of rural NPT by encompassing many different groups of the rural community, such as; businesses, residents, the elderly, farmers, young people, and private and third sector representatives.

The Think Links project has provided a thorough and in-depth consultation programme which has influenced the development of priorities and activities in this Strategy.

During the development of this Strategy drop-in session were held in each valley to allow rural residents to have their say in the development of the Action Plan. Attendees were asked to prioritise the activities that came out of the Think Links research project thinking about what would be most important to their community. The results are listed below:

1st Encouraging local producer markets and shops
2nd Public transport improvements
3rd Tourism support service
4th Cycle and walking trails
5th Further promotion and development of mountain biking in NPT
6th Skills development for rural residents
7th Green energy for rural residents
8th Broadband exploitation programme

These results although not conclusive do tally with the prioritisation undertaken by the LAG in that most emphasis is being placed on business development and networking.

**Appendix 12** illustrates how the types of project activity identified by community members and stakeholders during the Think Links research project meet the objectives of the LEADER programme in Wales and how they address the 4 priority areas for action set by the LAG.

### 3.2 Co-Operation and Networking

#### Co-operation and Networking

**Past experience**

LEADER funding in Neath Port Talbot has in the past been relatively under-utilised.
In the last round of RDP funding Neath Port Talbot was successful with just one bid for Axis 4 funding, as the previous approach was to focus on Axis 3 activities. The successful bid was for the “Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability” project, a community audit project that aimed to ascertain the needs of rural communities in order to assist with the preparation of this strategy. This has been very useful in terms of supplying the evidence base for future projects, yet due to its distinctiveness, little experience can be carried forward into the next round, as none of the proposed projects for this round are of a similar nature to it. However, through administering this project, the Lead Body does now have experience of LEADER compliance procedures and this will be of great value in the next round.

Several members of the new LAG have experience of overseeing RDP projects as they were also involved in the Regeneration Partnership, in place for the last round of funding. Therefore several of the people involved in the next round of LEADER have experience of European funding and this will be of great worth leading into the future programme.

Co-operation

There have been discussions with neighbouring Local Action Groups of the potential for joint officer meetings to be held quarterly. The LAGs in question are:

- Ceredigion
- Carmarthenshire
- Swansea
- Powys
- Pembrokeshire
- Neath Port Talbot

The meetings will provide an opportunity for all LAG representatives to update their neighbouring colleagues on the progress of their projects and to share their own methods and disseminate best practise. The meetings will also offer a chance to look at increased co-operation and joint working between the represented LAGs and their prospective projects. These meetings will be an invaluable chance for all the LAGs included to consider alternative methods in order to manage all projects as efficiently as possible.

As LEADER funding has been relatively under-utilised in Neath Port Talbot it will be essential to gather substantial advice and information from other, more experienced areas. As described in Section 4.1 it is proposed that there will be 3 Rural Community Facilitators in NPT whose task it will be to aid the development of all LEADER projects. In order to do this efficiently, it will be required of them to communicate with other Local Action Group representatives in an attempt to learn from them and decipher best project development methodologies.
### 3.3 Description of Innovation

Regenerate NPT view LEADER funding as a key opportunity of overcoming barriers through examining and trialling innovative new schemes. Given Local Authority budget austerity and the wider economic climate as a whole, there has never been a more appropriate time to find innovative solutions to rural issues that will be cost effective and contribute to improving the quality of life of rural residents.

**Transport**

Following extensive community consultation, it can be concluded that lack of transport is one of the most important issues facing all rural areas in NPT. Making transportation services financially sustainable has always been more of an issue in rural areas as opposed to urban areas, due to a smaller and sparse population. Given the current economic climate and the austerity measures currently facing public sector bodies, transportation services are under more stress than ever before.

Therefore, Regenerate NPT recognises the need for an innovative approach to tackling the transportation barriers facing rural communities. The LAG will make full use of the opportunities presented through LEADER to commission pilot projects to trial new ideas that will provide sustainable new services for rural communities and help save money for service providers and users. The results of these pilot studies will be communicated to other LAGs and could help transform future transportation policies.

**Digital Technology**

The opportunities that Next Generation Broadband (NGB) presents could have far reaching positive impacts for all of NPTs rural communities. Regenerate NPT, in line with the LEADER theme of “exploitation of digital technology” will trial innovative approaches to exploit digital technology through a variety of different projects, as well as a project dedicated to this priority. The aim of this priority is to: make more services available online; to improve ICT skills of rural residents; to create new mobile phone ‘apps’ for residents and tourists; to trial digital ‘hubs’ in remote areas; and to find innovative opportunities for networking.

**Renewable Energy**

With ever-increasing energy bills and a surge in recent years of environmental awareness, there is an evidenced need for new renewable energy technologies in rural communities. Therefore LEADER funding will be used to explore innovative approaches to providing renewable energy at a community level, by implementing pilot projects in relation to new small-scale installations and also to explore the use of bio-fuel for community transport.

**New approaches to delivering previously council-run services**
The massive budget cuts by the Neath Port Talbot local authority mean that many previously council-run services could be handed over to communities. The next round of LEADER funding is therefore timed perfectly to be able to help implement innovative new approaches to how these services are managed in the future.

Skills Development for rural residents

In Neath Port Talbot there are a plethora of projects and schemes which aim to increase the skill levels of residents. Therefore it is important, as with any LEADER project, that there is no duplication of services, and that any project funded under LEADER will compliment the other schemes on offer. Therefore in relation to skills development, Regenerate NPT will be looking for new ways to target unemployment and ensure more rural residents are reaching their full potential.

Tourism

Tourism is a crucial component of NPT’s rural economy. As described in Section 1, most of NPT consists of beautiful upland areas which are dissected by 5 valleys. This picturesque setting is ideal for outdoor activities, and mountain biking in particular, is quickly gaining in popularity. Given the huge benefits that mountain biking has brought to remote areas of NPT, it is important that the growth of this industry continues to develop in a sustainable manner. Therefore Regenerate NPT will look to fund an innovative pilot study into the maintenance of the trails by the users themselves to ensure the continued financial and environmental sustainability of the industry.

Through public consultation, there were suggestions that there is a need for a one-stop-shop for mountain biking tourists to be able to plan their whole trip including: accommodation; trail usage; places to eat; and activities for the whole family. Therefore Regenerate NPT will look to pilot an innovative project aimed at providing this service and boosting the number of tourists visiting NPT.

3.4 Action Plan

The LAG has made a decision to adopt the Intervention Logic as its main action plan as it contains all of the information relevant to implement the strategy. The Administrative Body will maintain separate systems derived from the Intervention Logic to monitor progress on the delivery of the outputs.

3.5 Promotional Activity

Promotional Activity

3.5.1 Promotion of opportunities/benefits
Advertising the benefits

The first requirement of the newly formed LAG is to efficiently and effectively promote the opportunities and benefits of LEADER funding to all relevant community groups and organisations. This will be done by:

- Publishing information flyers, posters and leaflets;
- Promoting on Social Media, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram;
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Website updates
- Press releases
- Holding a launch event

It will be necessary to effectively communicate the key points that LEADER funding is a unique opportunity for community organisations to take community development into their own hands, and LEADER provides an opportunity to trial new ideas and approaches to alleviating rural issues.

It will be essential before releasing any press releases to communicate and cooperate fully with Wales Rural Network and RDP communications staff to ensure compliance with official procedures.

Stakeholder cooperation

The LAG is made up of an even distribution of stakeholders from all three sectors. They will be tasked with disseminating the opportunities of the LEADER programme to all of the people they represent. As well as this the current lead body has built up a strong relationship with several key rural stakeholders across the county borough and they are always very willing to help promote Rural Development Plan activities in their communities, and often show a proactive approach to advertising.

The stakeholders represent:

- Schools and colleges;
- Youth groups;
- Private businesses;
- Community centres;
- Third sector organisations;
- Other Local authority departments and councillors;
- Sports clubs;
- Transportation organisations;
- Tourism bodies and groups.

3.5.2 Publishing results

The LAG and Lead body will be responsible for publishing all of the results and impacts of the projects implemented under the new LEADER programme. This will be achieved through a variety of methods designed to maximise the reach, such as:

- Quarterly newsletters;
- Regular website updates;
Updates via social media; 
Yearly progress update events; 
Press releases.

3.5.3 Disseminating best practice

As shown in the intervention logic table (Section 3.1) several pilot projects are proposed in the next round of funding. It will be essential to ensure that any positive impacts are publicised to other Local Action Groups in order to disseminate best practise. This will be done in a number of ways.

- Communicating results through the Wales Rural Network;
- Through quarterly RDP officer meetings with neighbouring LAGs from Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Powys;
- Through LEADER newsletters distributed across the county borough;
- Reporting results back to the South Wales RDP officer meetings;
- Ensuring transparency of project progression;
- Yearly progress events;
- Through website updates.

In order to affectively promote best practice, it will be essential to have effective monitoring practises in place to ensure measurement of the exact outcomes against specific baseline data. It is hoped that the joint RDP officer meetings will be of great use during the project development phase as it will be of interest to all the representatives to explore the different methods and approaches used by the contributing LAGs.

3.5.4 European Union

Funding Compliance

As in previous rounds of RDP funding, all publicity items produced will have to show full acknowledgement of European Union funding. This has involved including LEADER logos on all media materials produced. Examples of publicity materials that will have to show the LEADER logos are:

- Leaflets, brochures, flyers, newsletters and other publications;
- Posters and display panels;
- Billboards and plaques;
- Website or webpages concerning funded activity;
- Letterheads and compliment slips;
- Audio-visual material;
- Non-visual applications such as a radio advertisement should include an acknowledgement in the script;
- In advertisements (including job advertisements);
- Press releases.
‘Flying the Flag’

Regenerate NPT view it as essential that the 9th May is recognised as a day of celebration in Neath Port Talbot. The local authority area has benefitted hugely from several years of Convergence, and previously Objective 1, funding. Previous rounds of funding have helped create jobs, enhance the local environment, and help instigate societal developments, all of which has boosted the quality of life of NPT communities.

Within NPT Council, the European team are responsible for administering and facilitating all ESF and ERDF funded projects and it is proposed that on the 9th May, each year, a day of celebration will be organised. These celebration days will give representatives from all European funded projects (ESF, ERDF, EAFRD, EMFF) a chance to network and discuss the merits and impacts of their projects. It will involve: presentations by project representatives; an opportunity to sample local produce; invitations to be sent to E.U. representatives; stands and display boards highlighting the positive impacts of projects; public attendance; press releases before and after the event.
SECTION 4 – MANAGEMENT OF OPERATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 2 – Financial &amp; Compliance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Management and Administration

Management arrangements

The Administrative Body will be responsible for delivery of the programme on behalf of the LAG, it will holds itself responsible for successful conclusion of the programme, and undertake to ensure that financial propriety and compliance is observed in its management and administration of the programme.

The LAG have agreed that NPT CBC will continue to provide the administrative function for the Group for the new programme for the period July 2015 to December 2020. The LAG voted unanimously in this decision and they felt that the local authority officers have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to provide the service and to administer public funds on behalf of the LAG. NPT CBC has a proven track record of providing the secretariat for many different funding programmes including Objective 1 and Convergence Funding. Also within the Community Economic Partnerships and Community Development section of the Local Authority the staff have the skills and ability to work with community groups to sufficiently animate the rural areas. Community Groups within the area already have a working relationship with many of the staff having worked together on a wide range of projects.

We feel that the structure below demonstrates the most cost effective management and administrative structure for the area as attempts to brigade on the administrative duties with neighbouring authorities were made however Carmarthenshire had previously decided to take the lead for Swansea and a stalemate occurred between Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot as both LAGs were keen for their Local Authority to take the lead. However when collaboration models were researched the cost savings were minimal. With this in mind Regenerate NPT decided that NPT CBC would continue to lead on administrating the Strategy locally. NPTCBC can deliver the administrative role for Regenerate NPT at under the 10% running costs margin and over all the running and animation for Regenerate NPT comes in at 21.435% demonstrating a cost saving of £76,828.
This diagram illustrates the structure of the running and animation team:

The Administrative Body will consist of:

1 LAG Manager
1 Finance and Monitoring Officer

The Rural Community Facilitators and the Rural Researcher will be part of the implementation project and will be funded by NPTCBC. The Facilitators will work with community groups in rural areas to build capacity, develop projects under the 4 themes of the LDS and signpost to other funding inc. RCDF and other RDP streams. The Researcher will conduct various feasibility studies on behalf of the LAG.

Below is a breakdown of the main duties of the staff in the Administrative body and the Rural Community Facilitators and Rural Researcher:

LAG Manager

- Responsible for line managing all LEADER staff
- To be responsible for managing and monitoring a suitable financial and audit system jointly with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Regenerate
NPT
- Taking the lead on building capacity of the LAG
- Responsible for networking, preparing project applications
- Ensure the effective promotion of the work of the LAG
- Organising and leading on LAG meetings
- Overall financial responsibility for managing LEADER budget
- Attending local and national events to represent the LAG
- To establish and maintain working relationships with all stakeholders in relation to rural development
- To undertake all annual reports in relation to the LEADER programme in Neath Port Talbot
- To provide guidance and advice to Regenerate NPT and other key partners on the delivery of the programme

Finance and Monitoring Officer
- Liaise with project development officer to collect appropriate financial and monitoring information relating to LEADER funded projects.
- Collate and interpret financial and monitoring information, prepare and submit quarterly financial and monitoring claims, ensuring that these are undertaken in accordance with project spend profiles
- Ensuring that the LEADER budget is spent to profile and in a timely manner.
- Verify claims made by third party delivery organisations to the LAG.
- Work with project and finance officers in responding to queries raised on submitted claims by WG and Audit.
- Maintain appropriate financial and monitoring records and audit trails relating to the LEADER grant and monitoring claims.
- Provide regular updates and liaise with the project and finance officers in relation to project progress.
- To process invoices for goods and services within the LEADER team, including monitoring expenditure of the team’s budget.
- To take responsibility for procurement of services to deliver LEADER projects.
- To monitor the progress of project in achieving outcomes.

Rural Community Facilitator
- Liaising with project leads to ensure smooth running of the projects
- To provide an advice service to project leads on the running of LEADER projects in accordance with WG guidance
- To provide the Finance and Monitoring officer with any relevant project information needed for claims and the management of the budget
- To prepare information in relation to promotion of LEADER activities
- To ensure that funding is maximised and in conjunction with the LAGs priorities
- To network with rural communities to ensure that their priorities are being catered for with the LEADER funding.
- To organise community participation events to build capacity within the rural areas
- To assist project sponsors to prepare project applications
- To report to the LAG on the findings of community liaison
To report to the LAG on the progress of LEADER projects

**Rural Researcher**

- To work with the Local Action Group to develop pieces of research to address themes in the Local Development Strategy including feasibility studies, ad hoc pieces of research to inform project development.
- To scope out remit and outcomes of research and prepare research reports.
- To provide an advice service to project leads on the results of research undertaken.
- To prepare information in relation to promotion of LEADER activities.
- To ensure that funding is maximised and in conjunction with the LAGs priorities.
- To network with Rural Community Facilitators to ensure that the needs of the communities are being catered for with the LEADER funding.
- To organise community participation events to feedback findings of research within the rural areas.
- To report to the LAG on the findings of research.

When recruiting to the above posts detailed job descriptions and person specifications will be provided and adhered to, to ensure that the staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to administer the programme, this will be tested via the NPT CBCs recruitment process. Regular personal development reviews will be undertaken for all members of staff and skills and training plans will be developed to ensure any gaps in provision are catered for.

The Administrative Body will be responsible for:

1. **Monitoring**

Projects will be monitored at least quarterly to ensure any emerging problems or risks are identified and mitigated as early as possible. This will mostly be at claim stages through the progress reporting, but will also be carried out in the form of visits during the life of the project. Where any issues are identified appropriate action will be taken which may be in the form of a change to the project, or as a last resort, withdrawal or reduction of the funding.

Annual reviews of the LDS delivery plan will help to ensure that it is kept on track and any areas of potential weakness are quickly identified and addressed.

2. **Claims and Payments**

The Administrative Body will have responsibility for supporting applicants with their grant claims and with confirming calculations and checks are correct. The procedures included in the Programme Delivery guidance (yet to be produced) will be complied with, including use of the PIMMS system and recording tools such as an asset register to be kept by the Administrative Body. Regenerate NPT via the Administrative Body will make its own quarterly claims for running costs and animation, for which full evidence will be kept including timesheets, receipts and evidence of payments being cleared.
Capacity of LAG to Deliver LDS

Members of Regenerate NPT were recruited through a robust process. This included a questionnaire (appendix 13) to assess their knowledge of the LEADER ethos, local rural area, community development, RDP and other forms of funding. A threshold score was set and only those who met the threshold were invited to become a member of the LAG. A skills analysis will be undertaken and a training programme for LAG members will be developed to ensure that any skills deficits are identified and catered for. The broad areas of training outlined below will be provided to the LAG, which will mainly be delivered in-house by the LAG Manager, the team or other individuals with the appropriate skills and experience:

• Code of conduct and conflict of interests procedures and agreement
• Re-cap of the Local Development Strategy, the priorities and targets
• Understanding of the LEADER ethos and aims of the new round of EU support
• Overview of risk management, state aid, media and publicity
• Role and tasks of the LAG, including example projects and forms
• Visits to previously supported projects
• Raised awareness of sector needs and priorities
• Raised awareness of related funding schemes and support

A LAG member handbook will be provided which will include information on the programme and the role of LAG member.

We will encourage LAG members to assist with application assessments and project monitoring and evaluation visits. This will have the following key benefits:

a) a greater pool of expertise is made available by bringing in LAG members
b) the LAG becomes more engaged with the wider process of decision making and ongoing support, as their understanding of project delivery is enhanced.

Template forms and processes will be developed and full training will be provided, with shadowing encouraged for early visits to gain the experience needed.
SECTION 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Explain how the proposed actions and expenditure outlined in the Local Development Strategy represent the best use of EU funds. Explain how the costs included are reasonable, such as the cost and number of staff required to deliver the proposed activities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Section 3.4 and 4.0 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 Details of Section 3.4 have already been provided in Section 3 of this template (Intervention Logic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Financial Delivery Profiles

The Financial Delivery Profile is attached at appendix 14

In summary:

- The LAG has agreed that the LEADER programme in Neath Port Talbot will commence in July 2015 and end in December 2020.
- The Administrative Body function will be delivered by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- The LAG is not requesting any preparatory costs
- The Running Costs have been calculated at 9% of the total RDP funds
- The Animation Costs have been calculated at 12.4% of the total RDP funds
- The total running and animation costs come in at 21.4% of the total RDP funds available in NPT. This demonstrates a cost saving of 3.6% or £76,828 as the LAG does not propose to combine costs with another LAG. Attempts to Brigade on the administrative duties with neighbouring authorities were made however Carmarthenshire had previously decided to take the lead for Swansea and a stalemate occurred between Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot were both LAGs were keen for their Local Authority to take the lead. With this in mind Regenerate NPT decided that NPT CBC would continue to lead on administrating the Strategy locally but that they would work hard to deliver collaborative projects with the LAGs in Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Bridgend
- Information to support the rationale of all calculations can be found at appendices 15-24
SECTION 6 – INDICATORS & OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Explain how the Local Action Group intends to deliver the result and output indicators identified and all associated targets.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Section 4.1 of the LDS Guidance June 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.1 Monitoring and Results

In summary the table below (data extracted from Performance Indicator table within the delivery profile) outlines the targets to be achieved by the end of the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Operations</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Businesses assisted</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Communities assisted</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of jobs created</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Farm Holdings assisted</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of LAGs involved in the Co-operation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Inter-Territorial Co-Operation (ITC) projects</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further to the above indicators set by WG, Regenerate NPT has identified a range of its own potential output indicators. The following are considered relevant to the particular local circumstances of rural Neath Port Talbot, and to our themes, priorities and target groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regenerate NPT Theme</th>
<th>Broad Outcomes</th>
<th>LAG Targets to be achieved by Dec 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green NPT</td>
<td>making rural businesses more efficient</td>
<td>No of businesses adopting green energy technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increase potential for job creation</td>
<td>No of new jobs created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decreasing impact on environment</td>
<td>No of businesses seeing a reduction in their annual energy bills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increase in green tourism</td>
<td>number of mountain bikers visiting increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increase in green tourism</td>
<td>number of visitors using trails increased by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved environmental awareness</td>
<td>Number of people advised about local environmental issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrant NPT</td>
<td>Increasing visitor numbers</td>
<td>number of mountain bikers visiting increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>job creation in tourism related</td>
<td>No of jobs created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising NPT</td>
<td>Accessible NPT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>businesses</strong></td>
<td><strong>improved access to internet for residents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improving health and wellbeing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of people highlighting improved physical activity through mountain biking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPT is a preferred mountain biking destination</td>
<td><strong>Number of people highlighting improved physical activity through walking/cycling</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improving health and wellbeing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increasing visitor numbers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NPT is a preferred mountain biking destination</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of people indicating increased knowledge of local area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improving identity of Neath Port Talbot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new business created specialising in local produce</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved promotion local heritage and culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of people indicating increased knowledge of local area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improving identity of Neath Port Talbot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new jobs created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job creation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new jobs created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New businesses creation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new businesses created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved networking between businesses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of businesses enrolled</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved networking between businesses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new businesses created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>job creation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of new businesses created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>making NPT a preferred destination</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of businesses showing a reduction in running costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New businesses creation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of businesses offering new online services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>cost saving for businesses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of more people able to use internet efficiently</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved sales and marketing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents becoming computer literate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved access to internet for residents</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents accessing at least 1 service regularly</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved computer literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents gaining a new qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved access to services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of people participating in positive activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>barriers to employment reduced</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents gaining employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>increased self esteem for rural residents</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents being able to access work through transport service</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>reduced levels of unemployment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number jobs created</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>jobs safeguarded</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents being able to access at least 1 service regularly</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>reduced levels of unemployment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents being able to access social activities regularly</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>improved access to services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of more people able to use internet efficiently</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>social opportunities increased</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of rural residents gaining employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process of monitoring and review will form an essential part of effective managerial control of the programme. It will facilitate learning, which may lead to policy changes, ranging from fine tuning to substantial revision of particular elements,
reordering of priorities and resources between different activities, and even, on occasions, the complete withdrawal of an unsuccessful project or scheme. Information gained from monitoring will prove invaluable in justifying involvement in a specific area.

Regular review procedures will be established and implemented by the LAG. The strategy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and at least quarterly in order to assess the extent to which individual proposals have been implemented or programmed, and whether, in the light of changing circumstances, activities should be added to or revised.

The Finance and Monitoring Officer will be responsible for carrying out monthly monitoring visits to each project to ascertain whether the project is delivering to profile both financially and to timescale. This visit will also monitor achievement of targets. The Administrative Body will use this information to make an informed decision as to whether the project is achieving what it set out to deliver or whether more support is needed to bring the project back on-line, the Rural Community Facilitator will be informed of any decisions made and provide the necessary support and guidance. Monitoring visit reports will be provided to the LAG on a quarterly basis.

### 6.2 Evaluation Plan

This Section should include the following as a minimum:
- Please specify your proposals for evaluating performance against the LDS
- Provide details of the methodology you propose to use to evaluate the benefits of the LEADER activity
- Details of baseline data
- Provide an explanation and justification of the chosen evaluation methods both during the life of the operations or activity (formative) and at the end of the operations or activity (summative)

**Proposals for evaluating performance**

The proposed outputs listed in the Intervention Logic will be the main targets the LAG will be working to achieve over the length of the programme. When evaluating performance the LAG will be monitoring progress of achieving these targets along with delivering the SMART indicators listed against each specific objective. The evaluation will need to highlight what impact achieving the targets has had on rural communities.

The Rural Community Facilitators will have a role in collecting and providing information that will allow a full evaluation of the proposed projects. Along with this information the Administrative Body Finance and Monitoring Officer will carry out monthly monitoring visits to projects to ensure that projects are being delivered according to plan and within budget. Data collected at these visits can also be used
as part of the evaluation process.

It is envisaged that the Rural Community Facilitators will carry out an annual evaluation of the projects they have been facilitating within communities. This report will provide the LAG with an on-going update of what the projects have been achieving, how they have been delivered and also the impact the project has had on the communities. The Facilitators will review:

- Project targets and achievement of these targets against project profile
- Project staff to ascertain how project is being delivered on the ground
- Beneficiaries of project activity
- Spend profile
- The exploration of the sustainability of project once funding ends

The LAG will also commission a mid-term and final formal evaluation of the programme locally. These will include a review of:

- All LAG projects delivered or being delivered
- The value of the projects in achieving the objectives and outcomes of the LDS
- The effectiveness of the LAG in managing and overseeing delivering of LDS
- The effectiveness of the Administrative Body in managing the programme
- Management and delivery of the programme
- Impact on local communities
- Merit of each project in addressing the cross-cutting themes
- Lessons learned

The evaluations should allow scope for any other relevant and appropriate issues.

The evaluation method should be as participatory as possible, especially with the project leads, Administrative Body and the partnerships and communities assisted. It should use both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Methods should include:

- Desk research – documental evidence and analysis
- Utilising all available monitoring data
- Interviews – face to face and telephone
- Questionnaires
- Focus groups and discussions with stakeholders
- Any other participation techniques deemed appropriate.

**Baseline Data**

On commencing the programme the Administrative Body will set up a framework of data which will be used to monitor and evaluate the programme. This framework will include the following data:

**Theme 1**
- No of outdoor activity related businesses in rural wards
- No of jobs in outdoor activity related businesses in rural wards
- No of communities where an outdoor activity related business is based
- No of cycling and walking trails in rural wards
- No of volunteers taking part in local environmental improvements
No of residents with qualification in environmental related skill
No of volunteering opportunities in environmental projects in rural wards

Theme 2
No of tourism related businesses receiving advice, guidance and developmental support in rural wards
No of local produce businesses trading in rural wards
No of local producer networks
No of jobs in local produce businesses in rural wards
No of local producer events held per year
No of farmers who are operating a non-agricultural business in rural wards
No of businesses (not including tourism related businesses) in rural wards receiving advice, guidance and developmental support
No of social enterprises operating in rural wards

Theme 3
No of innovative transport schemes operating in rural wards
No of young people (16-24) using community transport on a regular basis (at least twice a week)
No of bus routes operating in rural areas
No of council services delivered by community groups in rural wards
No of training and support programmes for NEETs
No of training courses provided locally in rural areas
No of volunteers achieving a new skill or qualification

Theme 4
No of community energy schemes in rural wards
No of community organisations in rural wards who are aware of green energy sources
No of community organisations in rural wards who have adopted a renewable energy source
No of community transport schemes using an alternative source of fuel

This data will be used by the Rural Community Facilitators to carry out their annual evaluation of projects. This data will ascertain the impact projects delivered under the LDS are having on our rural wards. The baseline data will also be provided to outside evaluators to utilise when carrying out the mid term and final evaluations.

The Administrative Body is considering working with Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Swansea and Powys LAGs for both a joint mid term and final evaluation. A working group will be established to facilitate this process and resources will be allocated accordingly. Within Regenerate NPT a steering group will be established to oversee the formal evaluation process.

Evaluation reports will used to inform the LAG and its stakeholders regarding the delivery of the programme locally they will also be made available via the Regenerate NPT website to other LAGs and interested parties (including WG) to ensure that a wide range of people are able to understand the impact of the LEADER programme in Neath Port Talbot
**SECTION 7 – SUITABILITY OF INVESTMENT**

| Description | Explain the need and demand for the Local Action Group and the actions identified in the Local Development Strategy and whether this demand is already being met through existing provision. Explain how the Local Action Group will be able to successfully deliver the proposed activity. |
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**7.1 A description of the community involvement process in the development of the strategy**

In order to produce a Local Development Strategy that fully reflects the needs and priorities of NPT’s rural communities, a thorough and in-depth consultation programme has been undertaken. In Neath Port Talbot, consultation began very early as the previous LAG was successful in applying for a project entitled, “Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability”.

The Axis 4 project has been running since 2011 and is due to be completed by the end of 2014. The project is, in essence, a community audit that aims to identify gaps in basic service provision and determine the main priorities for rural communities in order to guide future funding to ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources. Therefore, the project aspires to ascertain a complete overview of rural NPT by encompassing many different groups of the rural community, such as; businesses, residents, the elderly, farmers, young people, and private and third sector representatives.

In order to gather the vast amount of information needed, 4 questionnaires were developed aimed at: residents; farmers; businesses; and young people. By aiming questionnaires at these 4 different groups, the questions could be designed and adapted accordingly to ensure that all necessary data was collected quickly and efficiently. The questionnaires asked a range of questions on different topics in order to ascertain all of the needs of NPT’s rural communities. Question topics included: public transport; broadband speed; clubs and activities; local tourism opportunities; employment and education; volunteering; natural and cultural heritage; local services; and wellbeing.

The questionnaires were made available online to reduce printing costs and to target
as many people as possible. To date, 651 people have completed a questionnaire either online or on paper and all of their feedback has been hugely beneficial to the project. Copies of the four questionnaires can be found in Appendix 25.

As well as the questionnaires, other methods were used to gather the large quantity of feedback required. Such as: focus groups, attending relevant stakeholder meetings, and organising 1-to-1 meetings with relevant stakeholders including business owners, farmers, and local authority representatives.

In addition to gathering feedback, other forms of research were required in order to help recommend the types of projects and themes to develop during the next round of funding. These involved undertaking best practise visits to already established projects, attending relevant conferences and events, and analysing local, national and European strategies. Only by carrying out all of this additional data collection could the project conclusions and action plan effectively direct the next round of funding.

**Key Statistics from Think Links**

Number of women participated – 344  
Number of elderly people participated - 172  
Number of young people participated - 152  
Number of Welsh speakers participated - 228  
Number of individuals with disabilities participated - 99  
Number of underemployed people participated - 112  
Number of communities engaged - 53  
Total number of individuals engaged - 754

**List of Consultees of Think Links**

**Lead Body Neath Port Talbot Council:**  
Julia Jenkins (RDP Team Leader)  
Leanne Woodley (Former RDP Claims & Monitoring Officer – Now of Communities First)  
Richard Jones (RDP Assistant)  
Alex Williams (Community Economic Regeneration & Tourism Development Manager)  
Lisa Jenkins (Former Community Economic Regeneration & Tourism Development Manager)

**Local Action Group (Pre 2014):**  
Angeline Spooner-Cleverly, Communities First  
Bill Cuttiford, Business Connect Neath Port Talbot  
Clive Ball, NPT College  
David Davies, Common Land Development Officer  
Glyn Rees, NPT Trades Council  
Grace Halfpenny, Older Persons Strategy  
Jan Jones, Youth Service, NPTCBC  
John Cronin, NPT Trades Council  
John Thomas, Private Sector
Leighton Davies, Countryside, NPTCBC  
Len Preece, Canolfan Maerdy  
Lucy Von Webber, South West Wales Tourism Partnership  
Richard Walters (Chair), Groundwork  
Stuart Douglas, Dulais Valley Partnership  
Sue Reed, Community Transport, NPTCBC  

**Local Members:**  
Cllr Steve Hunt, Seven Sisters  
Cllr Rosalyn Davies, Godre’rgraig  
Cllr Rob Jones, Margam  
Cllr Anthony Taylor, Taibach and Bryn & Cwmavon  
Cllr Linda Williams, Gwaun Cae Gurwen  

**Communities First:**  
Liz Randall, Afan Valley  
Dean Cawsey, Western Valleys  
Vicky Bishop, Western Valleys  
Mari Shufflebotham, Afan Valley  
Leanne Woodley, Western Valleys  

**Various Stakeholders:**  
Lynnette Grey, Project Manager, Enterprise in the Valleys  
Joy Khaghanian, Manager – Community Learning, NPTCBC  
Rhian Mc’eachen, Community Development Officer, NPTCBC  
Rhysian Pengilley, Glynneath Training Centre  
Lesley Smith, DOVE Workshop  
Helen John, Canolfan Maerdy  

**NPT Youth Service:**  
Joanne Fisher  
Emma Culleton  
Jason Haeney  
Christine Ham  

**Menter Iaith:**  
Alun Pugh  

**Focus Group Members:**  

**Healthy Living Focus Group:**  
Julie Davies, Communities First  
Gillian Day, Public Health  
Mike Catling, Children and Young People’s Partnership  
Pauline Morgan, Glynneath training Centre  

**Economic Prosperity Focus Group:**  
Lynnette Grey, Project Manager, Enterprise in the Valleys  
Steve Lewis, Partnership Manager, Job Centre Plus  
John Honour, Rural Enterprise Support Officer, Business Connect
Observed Groups:
Vale of Neath Tourism Steering Group
Heritage, Environment & Tourism Group Dulais Valley Partnership
CVS Passenger Transport Forum
NPT Heritage Network
Swansea Valley Tourism Stakeholder Group
Tourism Swansea Bay Stakeholder Group

The Spring 2014 interim report outlining the key findings of the Think Links project, can be found at appendix 26.

A series of drop-in sessions were arranged to allow local residents to contribute to and comment on the development of the Regenerate NPT Strategy. The map below highlights the work undertaken during the LDS development stage allowing local people from all walks of life to have their say on the proposed LEADER activity. All feedback from the sessions has been included in the final Strategy. More detail of these sessions can be found at appendix 27.

Ongoing involvement of the local residents and stakeholders is planned for the duration of the Strategy, an outline of the type of work can be found below. This work will be carried out throughout the Valleys areas.
Communications Plan

Our Objectives:
- To build awareness about the Local Development Strategy.
- To raise awareness with regards to LEADER funding in the rural areas of Neath Port Talbot County Borough.
- To disseminate information to a wider audience – covering more of our rural wards.
- Identify ways in which we might need to target and promote the scheme as this may be different for each stakeholder?
- To signpost stakeholders to various additional funding strands available through RDP.

SWOT analysis:

Strengths
- Individual LAG members, well located in centre of tight knit communities
- Revenue client of Welsh Government and European Union which gives kudos
- Funding available to benefit local communities
- Funding available to increase job opportunities
- Friendly staff and atmosphere/good relationship with LAG
- Diverse programme of activities can be supported

Weaknesses
- Lack of budget
- Small staff team and lack of staff time
- Time and geographical restrictions
- Poor local economy and low disposable income
- Weak local transport systems
- Small marketing budgets
- High costs of advertising and design

Opportunities
- Partnership working with local community organisations
- Targeting specific profile groups
- Merchandising
- Marketing opportunities
- Launch of Regenerate NPT website, encourages promotion in hard to reach areas
- Use LAG members to distribute new information via quarterly newsletter
- Identify and attend local Business/Voluntary/Jobs events and fairs
- Need to build RDP prominence
- Identify training opportunities for LAG members
Threats
- Geographical position of Administrative Body poor in relation to rural areas
- Pressures on LA budgets have resulted in a renewed push for asset community transfer which will affect the types of projects applications that we receive.
- Poor public transport
- Negative perception of bureaucratic procedure
- Resistance to change/apathy
- Current economic climate

How can we promote RDP within NPT?
- Engage with local media through NPT Marketing & Comms Team to secure editorial on RDP, RCDF opportunities and on-going projects to raise awareness of the scheme and its website. Arrange timely photo calls and press releases.
- Social Media to update news and events on Facebook/Twitter.
- Quarterly Newsletters (hard copy/e.copy – dependant on preferences of target audience).
- 2015 Launch Event – Stand alone event OR link the launch with another local event?
- Presence at rural events and fairs – within the specific LEADER rural wards: eg. Business network meetings, job clubs, to gauge interest in and promote the scheme and also expand and update our network of contacts.
- Yearly drop-in/progress events in LEADER rural areas.
- Merchandise – freebies to hand out at events promoting our website for information on RDP/RCDF and Regenerate NPT.
- Regular, relevant and timely updates on Regenerate NPT Website
- Publicity material promoting the LAG, LEADER Themes and RDP/RCDF opportunities. Annual Brochure detailing successful projects. Seek to de-jargonise the scheme by creating publicity material in ‘laymans’ terms, making it easier for people to understand.
- Develop relationships with groups, individuals and local leaders with whom the LAG and/or RDP team can work together to help disseminate the scheme eg. Communities First Officers, Libraries, CVS, Community Centre Officers and Business Networks.
- Identify opportunities for participating in seminars and workshops.
- Identify who, in the team, is going to be responsible for the planned activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Preparation 2014</th>
<th>Year 1 2015</th>
<th>Year 2 2016</th>
<th>Year 3 2017</th>
<th>Year 4 2018</th>
<th>Year 5 2018</th>
<th>Year 6 2019</th>
<th>Year 7 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drop-in sessions for development of LDS</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neath Food Fair Stall – Merchandise</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch event for LDS Merchandise</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at rural events/conferences</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly progress update events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarterly newsletters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Brochure</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP Website updates</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook/Twitter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*No. of activities.

Evaluation of Marketing and Communication Plan:

The following priorities have been identified in the future development of this marketing strategy:

- Create a new relevant, up to date database of contacts.
- Gain a wider audience with a greater awareness of what’s available through RDP and RCDF and the relevance of the LDS in Neath Port Talbot.
- Develop good relationships with a varied, far reaching range of local groups and community leaders.
- Develop better relationship with NPT Media Relations in order to help promote the scheme.
- Develop a strong brand/image within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
- Develop a comprehensive timetable for marketing opportunities and improving partnership working to share resources and increase cost effectiveness of marking activity.
### 7.2 SWOT Analysis to show development needs and potential of the proposed area

With the overview of the characteristics of the County Borough shown in Section 1.1, this SWOT analysis identifies the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats which will help to further inform the identification of key issues affecting rural areas. The SWOT analysis provides an additional evidence base in this Local Development Strategy.

The SWOT is based on:

- The analysis of socio economic data
- The feedback from Valleys drop-in sessions
- Axis 4 Think Links research
- Prioritisation from the LAG based on a provisional SWOT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• An attractive natural environment;</td>
<td>• Environmental constraints contribute to poor image of some parts of NPT;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong community spirit;</td>
<td>• Shortage of key skills;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A plethora of community organisations seeking to make a difference;</td>
<td>• Lack of entrepreneurial tradition;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategic Location with the M4 and A465 road links plus rail links to</td>
<td>• Poor computer literacy and digital inclusion levels;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London;</td>
<td>• high unemployment in rural valleys;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Population becoming more skilled through various programmes and</td>
<td>• low GDP as a result of high inactivity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiatives;</td>
<td>• Poor energy infrastructure;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rich industrial heritage;</td>
<td>• Lack of effective transport links to rural/valley areas leading to their isolation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Much of the rural population participating in physical activity;</td>
<td>• Low level of business formation and growth;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A prosperous mountain biking sector in NPT;</td>
<td>• Ageing population and high levels of long-term illness, disability, heart disease, cancers and respiratory disease;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strong work ethic, flexible labour market and competitive production</td>
<td>• High levels of social and economic deprivation in rural/valley areas;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>costs;</td>
<td>• Discontinuation of the Local Authority Tourism Development Function;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strong business support network with Partnerships involving WAG,</td>
<td>• High levels of NEETs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Connect NPT, Workways, Local Authorities, the private sector,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and voluntary sector.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Opportunities</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Farm diversification;</td>
<td>• Local Authority austerity measures;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community Benefit Funds;</td>
<td>• Inward investment competition from South East Wales and rest of Wales;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Convergence funding;</td>
<td>• Lack of commercial and industrial property in rural areas of the county borough to provide local job opportunities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two Communities First clusters in rural areas;</td>
<td>• Outward migration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversification of the economy through encouraging inward investment;</td>
<td>• High proportion of adults whose highest qualification is NVQ level 2 or below;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improved networking through the development of the Swansea Bay City Region Model;</td>
<td>• Impact from welfare reforms will be severe in NPT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pressure on local authority budgets offer chance to innovate;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feeding tariff for renewable energy sources;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Capitalising on the picturesque countryside by developing new cycle and walking routes;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An appetite amongst rural residents for more volunteering opportunities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduction of next generation Broadband to rural areas should be exploited fully;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to improve availability of local produce.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Exploring new ways of making community transport more efficient.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 8 – CROSS CUTTING THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Explain how the Local Action Group will maximise its contribution towards the Cross Cutting themes of Equal Opportunities, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to</td>
<td>Sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the LDS Guidance June 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1 Cross-Cutting Themes

From the outset of the preparatory actions for the next round of LEADER funding, cross cutting themes have been of upmost importance, and have therefore been at the forefront of the “Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability” community consultation project agenda. All of the proposed cross-cutting contributions are highlighted in the Intervention Logic table in Appendix 11.

**Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming**

It was recognised from the beginning of the “Think Links” consultation project, that in order for the conclusions to be effective and significant, all groups within rural communities would need to be given the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the project findings. The project was committed to gather opinions from a wide range of demographic groups, such as:

- 175 from older generations (50+)
- 173 females
- 150 young people (16-30)
- 150 Welsh speakers
- 150 underemployed individuals
- 72 individuals with disabilities
- 3 from ethnic minorities

All of the above targets were achieved and most were greatly exceeded and to date over 750 people have contributed to the project. By developing our consultation in this way, it has been possible to identify the most pressing priorities from all of the demographic groups within Neath Port Talbot’s rural communities. Therefore equal opportunities have been built in to the very foundations of this strategy, and all eligible beneficiaries will benefit from the projects that are funded through LEADER. It is recognised that in order for this strategy to have the largest positive impact for NPT, all members of the rural community should be given ample opportunity to benefit from, and participate in the delivery of the programme.

**Sustainable Development**

A key element of this local development strategy is that all three elements of sustainable development are addressed through our 4 Themes. The three elements of Sustainable Development are shown below.

As the diagram above shows, only through a strong economy, healthy environment and an equal society, can sustainable development be achieved. It also highlights that symbiotic project outcomes and equal development across all three pillars is
essential for long term sustainability.

With these 3 pillars in mind, the 4 themes of NPT's LEADER strategy are a perfect fit to ensure that Sustainable Development is considered and addressed via every project that is implemented under each theme. Green and Vibrant NPT both involve projects relating to the environment, Vibrant and Accessible NPT contribute to societal development, and Accessible and Enterprising NPT will primarily aim to boost economic prospects. This is shown in diagrammatical form below.

By developing our strategy in this way, we can ensure that any project aimed at improving either the economic, social, or environmental prospects of NPT, will not have any negative impacts on the other pillars of sustainable development, and that the effects of any action are mutually beneficial, whereby they compliment the other projects from different themes. It is also easier to consider the negative impacts of any action and boost the sustainable ambitions of Neath Port Talbot's rural areas.

7.3 Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

The Regenerate NPT LAG takes the Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion agendas very seriously and views them as priorities. As examined in section 2 of this document, Neath Port Talbot remains an area of high deprivation with several areas making up the most deprived 10% in Wales, according to Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Through the implementation of this strategy it is planned that many sustainable jobs will be created and the necessary support services for rural communities will be readily accessible, to enable them to successfully apply for any new job opportunities.
In order for Poverty to be tackled effectively, there are some key issues that need addressing in NPT, and the LEADER programme offers a golden opportunity to pilot new schemes in order to find effective ways of alleviating these problems in a way that is most advantageous for rural communities. These issues are:

- Lack of jobs
- Lack of affordable childcare
- Accessibility of services
- Increasing energy prices
- Lack of services to relieve the problems of indebtedness
- Digital exclusion
- Welfare reform
- NEETs

Our four proposed themes have been designed in a way that ensures each of these issues are tackled efficiently and effectively.

**Green NPT** – Projects within this theme will be centred around the development of all aspects of green energy in order to address rising energy prices for residents and enterprises. A knock-on effect of this is that businesses will save vast sums of money, allowing them to employ more staff and expand their company. NPT’s eco-tourism sector will also be developed as a way of creating further sustainable job opportunities.

**Vibrant NPT** – Projects within this theme will need to evidence that they can improve quality of life for rural communities. This will be done through the helping local producers to expand their market base, developing new exercise groups to take advantage of NPT’s picturesque countryside, creating new volunteering groups to improve skills and personal development, and expanding NPT as a key destination for eco-tourism through the continued promotion of walking and mountain biking activities in rural areas. All of these projects will help to create new jobs and expand rural skills and expertise to ensure a sustainable economic platform and make rural NPT an attractive area to live.

**Enterprising NPT** – This theme aims to develop and expand opportunities for new business start-ups, including agricultural diversification, and push the growth of existing enterprises as a way of creating and safeguarding jobs. Projects within this theme must be seen to be actively encouraging networking and cooperation between NPT’s rural business community.

**Accessible NPT** – As detailed earlier, access to basic services in NPT is an evidenced problem. Without addressing this issue, new job opportunities cannot be fully capitalised upon as rural communities often lack the necessary support available to enter employment. This theme therefore aims to develop innovative projects relating to: transport options; childcare availability; skills development services; financial advisory services; Welsh language services; financial education for children; and digital exploitation programmes.
7.4 Welsh Language

Within NPT there are several areas where the medium of Welsh thrives and Regenerate NPT sees it as a priority to ensure that all potential projects are offered bilingually and that there are ample opportunities to develop and learn new Welsh language skills.

This LDS will contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Government’s strategy for a bilingual Wales, *A Living Language, A Language for Living* (2012). The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established the post of Welsh Language Commissioner. The Commissioner currently supervises Welsh Language Schemes and will supervise the impending language Standards when applicable to organisations. Two principles underpin the Commissioner’s work:

- **In Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language**
- **Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.**

We will seek to implement these two principles throughout the duration of the LEADER funding programme, not only in our dealings with individuals and organisations via project development, but also in respect of our administrative staff and LAG members. We will also ensure that all promotional material is produced in line with Welsh Language obligations.
### Regenerate NPT Theme 1: Green NPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed actions which will support EO &amp; GM:</th>
<th>Proposed actions which will support SD:</th>
<th>Proposed actions which will support TP &amp; SE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- Ensuring information is disseminated in a way which is accessible both in content and in method.
- Consultation with local people including those experiencing particular isolation e.g. disabled people, carers etc.
- Opportunities to engage young people in the development promotion of community energy schemes.

- Advice and support for communities to deliver energy check schemes to individuals.
- Dissemination of energy information in a way which is accessible and fit for purpose within the local community.
- Opportunities to link with New Start Ups and Business Support programmes to explore potential schemes.
- Opportunities to gather information and good practice from elsewhere and disseminate.
- Consultation with local people on ideas and potential opportunities.
- Opportunities to promote the natural environment as a positive commercial aspect of the area.
- Opportunities for volunteering to enhance the local environment both physical and natural.

- Advice and support for communities to deliver energy check schemes to individuals.
- Opportunities to link with New Start Ups and Business Support programmes to explore potential schemes.
- Consultation with local people on ideas and potential opportunities.
- Offering new and building on existing skills of local people to support enhanced employment opportunities through volunteering.

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<tr>
<th>Regenerate NPT Theme 2: Vibrant NPT</th>
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<td>Proposed actions which will support EO &amp; GM:</td>
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<td>Proposed actions which will support EO &amp; GM:</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encouraging local involvement and engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Positive action measures which engage with isolated individuals and groups within the community e.g. disabled, BME, LGBT people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage intergenerational involvement in local development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Opportunities which enable young people to make their voice heard in the shaping of their community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Opportunities to link tourism and diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support capacity building within local groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promotion of the established community more widely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Production of fully accessible/bilingual websites to promote activity.</td>
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Regenerate NPT Theme 3: Enterprising NPT
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<th>Proposed actions which will support EO &amp; GM:</th>
<th>Proposed actions which will support SD:</th>
<th>Proposed actions which will support TP &amp; SE:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| • Services which target support on business development ideas to underrepresented groups e.g. disabled people  
• Grant allocation assessments which require due diligence to equality issues.  
• Opportunities to trial ideas, especially for young people  
• Activities which provide accurate information to potential recipients’ of grants e.g. market trends, supply chain information etc.  
• Opportunities for networking with others developing ideas / businesses | • Opportunities to develop business ideas which enhance the environment  
• Opportunities to promote and market local produce  
• Grant allocation assessments which require due diligence to sustainable development issues.  
• Opportunities to promote the natural environment as a positive commercial aspect of the area. | • Services which target support on business development ideas to underrepresented groups e.g. disabled people  
• Ongoing advice and support on finance management issues.  
• Raise awareness of relevant courses to enable better management of personal or business finances, including promoting Further Education options.  
• Opportunities for potential applicants to pool ideas, funding and risks in a partnership,  
• Opportunities to trial ideas, especially for young people  
• Entrepreneurship - working with schools, Further Education establishments, youth and Young Farmer groups.  
• Promote opportunities for businesses to diversify or empower people to investigate self employment options including the possibility for a number of individuals with a shared interest and assorted skill sets to work together.  
• Offer mentors for those who are either establishing a business for the first time or looking to expand and require support to consider their options.  
• Opportunities to provide training to all sections of the community to benefit from digital technology especially in relation to training and employment support. |

Regenerate NPT Theme 4: Accessible NPT
| Use of community transport for a range of activities including: Training, employment advice, family support services, mobile creche, health and welfare services, to overcome isolation and exclusion. • Community newsletters • Resource sharing • Time banking opportunities • Opportunities for volunteer training and support • Opportunities which support the development of intergenerational schemes for support and care within the community. • Support for ICT hubs to enable participation. • Opportunities to provide training to all sections of the community to benefit from digital technology. |
| Actions which support community transport issues. • Opportunities for volunteering to enhance the local environment both physical and natural. • Source and supply ICT equipment of the highest energy efficiency rating. |
| Activities which support resource sharing. • Time banking opportunities • Explore the options of establishing a Credit Union in schools or community halls. • Where appropriate establish links with Communities First Clusters in order that the Clusters can expand and/or rotate their outreach services. • Opportunities to provide training to all sections of the community to benefit from digital technology especially in relation to training and employment support. |

### 8.2 Supporting the Uplands
Regenerate NPT recognises the importance of the Uplands regions as they comprise some of the most important ecological systems and the fragile communities based there are culturally and linguistically significant. The upland regions of Wales are subject to a number of pressures, all of which can conflict and combine to have detrimental impacts on the long-term sustainability of these areas. These pressures include; a lack of economic diversity; over reliance on agriculture; access to services; increased transportation costs, conflicts of interest of recreational activities; wind farm developments and associated infrastructure; and from balancing the needs of farming and nature conservation.

**Neath Port Talbot**

Neath Port Talbot is predominantly an upland area which is dissected by 5 valleys. These areas are dotted with many old industrial features such as coalmines, collieries, railway lines and a tram road, all of which are an important component of the County Borough’s historical and cultural identity.

NPT’s upland areas are also covered in a patchwork of environmental conservation designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats.

The upland areas of NPT have seen many windfarm developments taking place since the TAN 8 strategic search areas were identified in 2005. The suggested strategic search areas impacted NPT more than any other Local Authority areas in Wales as shown below:
Upland areas in NPT are a honeypot for recreation and tourism activities. Facilities include: Sustrans cycle network, Argoed Country Park, Golf Courses, Extensive open access land and links to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

**How Regenerate NPT will address upland priorities**

The “Unlocking the Potential of the Uplands” report by the Wales Upland Forum outlines a number of priorities for wider support: access to services, transport, ICT, sense of place, the Welsh language, and local supply chains.

All of these priorities will be addressed by at least one of the 4 themes proposed by Regenerate NPT. This is shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to services</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>ICT</th>
<th>Sense of Place</th>
<th>Welsh Language</th>
<th>Local Supply chains</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green NPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vibrant NPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprising NPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessible NPT</td>
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As the table above shows, all of the Uplands priorities will be tackled by at least one of the proposed Regenerate NPT themes.

**Access to services**

Under the Accessible NPT theme projects will be funded that aim to improve access to basic services, considering innovative approaches to overcoming barriers in a sustainable way. The types of projects under this theme are: a broadband exploitation programme, and skills development for rural residents.
Broadband exploitation programme – This project will aim to give rural residents the opportunity to improve their computer literacy, whilst giving them access to a range of digital devices. The programme will also work with enterprises and organisations to develop more services online in order to make them more accessible for remote communities. This will involve the development of mobile phone ‘Apps’ that will further increase ease of access to services due to the rise in popularity of ‘smart’ phones.

Skills development for rural residents – This proposed project is to complement other skills development related projects and to fill any gaps in current provision in rural areas. The scheme will be available for all ages and will endeavour to provide equal opportunities for the whole community.

Volunteering opportunities – The aim of this project is to encourage local communities to take an active approach to improving their local environment, whilst learning new skills that would make them more employable. Upland areas would greatly benefit from a project such as this as it would give residents in remote areas a chance to learn new skills and also improve their local environment.

Transport

Through community engagement, it has been determined that there is a consensus of poor opinion of the current service provision, therefore under Accessible NPT a transport related project will be supported. The LAG will commission a feasibility study into potential innovative options for improving the service and this study will be asking community groups to come forward with suggestions of innovative project ideas on how to tackle this issue in order to help people access services county-wide.

ICT

As stated previously, a broadband exploitation project is proposed by the LAG and this will fit under the Accessible NPT and Enterprising NPT themes as it will be working simultaneously with residents and businesses, respectively. This ICT project will benefit the most remote communities in NPT, those in upland areas, by reducing the need to travel and increasing their accessibility to a range of services.

Sense of Place

It is well documented that improving the identity of an area by helping visitors and residents relate to its cultural and historical uniqueness, will help to improve local quality of life. The theory being that if residents feel a sense of pride in their area, they will be compelled to preserve and develop it, and in turn, tourists will want to visit the area. This is particularly relevant to upland areas as their remoteness and unique characteristics can be viewed as a positive rather than a negative. Through the Vibrant NPT and Green NPT themes, projects are proposed developing: cycle and walking trails and local producer markets and shops.

Cycle and Walking Trails – This project will aim to conduct feasibility studies around
the creation of new trails in rural NPT. The need for this was identified through public consultation where it was recognised that there is a great deal of local residents who partake in walking and cycling in the picturesque countryside of NPT. It was also noted that there is a strong cultural heritage in the area and there is potential for ‘themed’ trails that will guide users through areas of historical significance. Promotion of mountain biking in NPT has seen a huge rise in visitor numbers and the continued success of this niche market will be addressed under this intervention.

Local Producer Markets and Shops – This project theme is proposed as a result of public consultation and a consensus amongst all local communities that local produce needs to be made more readily available for residents, businesses and tourists. This will involve giving rural communities the skills to be able to produce their own goods, whilst encouraging established local producers to network with neighbouring businesses. This project would help to contribute to the sustainable development of upland areas by: creating short supply chains; creating a sense of pride in the area; and boosting local businesses, which will boost the local environment, society and economy, respectively.

Welsh Language

All of the projects supported by Regenerate NPT will need to be able to stipulate their proposals for Welsh language provision. Welsh language must be seen as a priority for all projects to ensure that the positive impacts of LEADER will be felt and implemented by all, regardless of first language.

Local Supply chains

As stated previously, a project relating to local producer markets and shops has been established as a priority through public consultation. This project will actively seek to establish local supply chains in order to boost the local economy by creating local jobs, preventing money from leaving the county borough, and cutting transportation costs.

As well as this, through the Enterprising NPT theme, a project aimed at supporting local tourism enterprises has been evidenced as a key priority for NPT, especially in the aftermath of the Local Authority’s decision to discontinue their tourism department. A project of this kind must establish networking and cooperation between the LAG area’s tourism enterprises in order to encourage local supply chains. This is nowhere more relevant than in the uplands due to the remoteness of these areas and the already extended travelling distances required when trading.

There will also be a specific intervention in regards to farm diversification. Farms make up a key part of upland economies and it is imperative that their long term sustainability is addressed. Farmers will be offered pre-commercial developmental support to aid them in progressing with diversification activities.
9.1 Mainstreaming Plan

Dissemination of actions supported under the LDS

In the application stage, all projects will be assessed in relation to their long-term sustainability and preference will be given to projects that have stipulated their approach to achieving this in their application. Projects that have stated that LEADER funding is a stepping stone to self sufficiency will have priority.

Quarterly reports will be provided to the LAG in relation to the progress of all projects and it will be down to the LAG members themselves to disseminate the results to the organisations/communities they represent in order to help guide future practises.

If projects are not envisaged to become financially sustainable by the end of the LEADER funding cycle, it is proposed that during the closing stages of the individual projects, the three Rural Community Facilitators will work with the project managers in order to implement their exit strategies. This may mean helping to source new funding streams in order to ensure the continuation and evolution of successful projects.

Mainstreaming successful actions

As highlighted in the Description of Innovation, Section 3.3, Regenerate NPT wish to conduct several pilot studies in order to find new ways of overcoming long-standing rural issues. Therefore the results of these pilot studies will be widely disseminated in order to share best practise and help advise all relevant organisations and groups to adjust their strategies in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future project development.

As stated in Section 3.2 the LAG will hold yearly events that will highlight the positive actions to arise from LEADER innovation. All local stakeholders will be invited to these events.

In order to make a meaningful and holistic contribution to local strategy development, the Local Service Board for NPT and Swansea Bay City Region board will be updated with LEADER project progress. Through these updates it is envisaged that there will be potential for the mainstreaming of successful action into and current and future strategic development and project implementation.

Types of Pilot Projects Proposed

Mountain biking - Project in relation to packaging of biking holidays
- Project to promote sustainability of industry

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Management</th>
<th>- With local authority cutbacks there is potential for innovative approaches to community-run services</th>
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<tr>
<td>Local produce</td>
<td>- Projects offering training to new local producers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural transport</td>
<td>- New ways of getting people to work</td>
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<td>- New forms of fuel for community vehicles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>- Project looking to raise awareness of indebtedness amongst young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time banking</td>
<td>- Developing time banking in Upper Amman valley and cross boarder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community energy</td>
<td>- Pilot for small scale installations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital exploitation</td>
<td>- Projects aiming to ‘digitise’ services</td>
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The list above underlines the range of different pilot studies proposed. This means that LEADER could have an influence on a range of strategies and sectors such as: Tourism; I.C.T; Renewable energy; Youth services; Business Development; and Transportation. Therefore LEADER could pave the way for innovative thinking in a number of fields in Neath Port Talbot and will help to bridge some of the gaps gouged by Local Authority austerity measures.

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**

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<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Chair/Deputy Chair LAG:</td>
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**Administrative Body Representative**

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Scheme Management Unit, Welsh Government, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. SY23 3UR

Please submit an electronic copy to: LEADER2014-2020@wales.gsi.gov.uk