

## **Rural Development Programme (RDP) Update February 2016**

### **Overview of the programme**

The RDP LEADER contracts for the Vale of Usk Local Action Group (LAG) area were exchanged between MonCC and Welsh Government mid-August 2015. The LAG areas includes all of the rural and service centre wards of Monmouthshire and Newport.

The programme is revenue only, and has a Europe and Welsh Government (WG) figure of £2.79 available for the period 2015 to 2020. A match funding element of 20% is required for the actual projects that are delivered. A community led Local Development Strategy (LDS) submitted by the Vale of Usk as the application for funding was approved by WG nine months ago.

The programme has five principal themes that it will address namely:-

- Exploitation of natural and cultural heritage (aligned to tourism in rural areas);
- Pre-commercial development and short supply chains;
- Alternative ways of delivering non-statutory services;
- Renewable energy at a community level; and
- Digital exploitation.

A separate LEADER programme encourages and part funds cooperation projects which can be delivered across different LAG areas (18 in Wales). This approach allows projects to be more robust and cost effective.

The LAG, is a volunteer group made up equal numbers of public, private and third sector members totalling 21 members at this time. The members have formed small 'thematic' groups to allow focus and development of potential projects.

The LAG meets quarterly (sometimes more often if the chair sees fit) where projects for approval are presented to the members and subsequently voted upon.

The funding supports innovative community led projects which tend to be testing ideas with the longer term aim of mainstreaming or making projects sustainable, in other words incubator projects.

### **Bryn-y-Cwm opportunities**

The wards within Bryn-y-cwm that can attract maximum funding are the rural wards of

Crucorney, Llanover, Goetre Fawr, Llanfoist Fawr, Llanelly Hill, Llanwernarth Ultra and Mardy. The service centres have slightly different funding criteria which can be explained separately.

### **Where are we with projects.**

The first set of projects are being presented to the end of February 2016 LAG meeting to seek approval for funding. A verbal update will be given for these, and other projects that are in the development phase.

A major part of the programme animation is mapping the community facilities with the broadband rollout in the region. This would help us to identify appropriate centres for delivering innovative digital projects that require broadband as a prerequisite.

### **Other Funding Sources**

There are a number of capital programmes operated directly by WG of which some have been opened to accept expressions of interest in receiving funding support. The complimentary capital fund to LEADER is the Rural Communities Development Fund RCDF again operated directly by WG. Maximum grants are available up to £128k again with 80% intervention rate. All EOIs submitted from the Vale of Usk region has to be verified by the LAG that it meets the aspirations of our LDS.

The Big Lottery has announced its Rural Programme which is due to be launched this summer, I can supply information if required. An interesting aspect of this grant fund is that service centres will be eligible to apply for grants.

People and Communities capital grant scheme principally for supporting community facilities with up to £500k in support.

### **Funding Support**

Monmouthshire has employed Andy Smith as Strategic Investment and Funding Manager to partly support the RDP programme with potential sources of capital and revenue funds.

*Michael Powell Rural Programmes Manager February 2016*