

3b.1 Terms of reference

Leader 4 Torrridge and North Devon Local Action Group

Terms of Reference - December 2008

Background

The Leader 4 Torrridge and North Devon programme provides funding and support to address rural development challenges within the defined area of North Devon and Torrridge districts. The programme is funded by DEFRA and the European Commission through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). This part of the RDPE known as Axis 4, and called "Local Action" in South West England, is community led and implements the LEADER principles.

The local partnership has been allocated funding of £3.8 million for the period 2008 – 2013 to meet the following aim and objectives:-

"An enlivened and enriched rural environment in transition to a low carbon economy, driven by entrepreneurial growth and a 'can-do' culture".

1. To raise and support growth aspirations of rural micro businesses
2. To improve access to services and employment in deprived rural communities
3. To develop the assets and resources of the high quality environment as an economic driver
4. To improve the environmental performance of communities and businesses to create a low carbon economy
5. To build capacity, leadership and cooperation for sustainable, community led regeneration

The Local Action Group is the overall steering group with representation from a wide range of local stakeholders. It has responsibility for the leadership, management, co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and review of the Programme, and is responsible for taking all major decisions affecting its successful delivery. A major role is the allocation of funding to external or commissioned projects to achieve the stated objectives.

Roles

- Preparing, approving and submitting Annual Delivery Plans
- Agreeing and approving policies and procedures for the operation of the programme
- Formally deciding which projects shall be approved for funding, including those above the delegated limit that need SWRDA approval
- Monitoring and evaluating progress towards meeting the programme Objectives, Milestones and targets set out in the Delivery Plans
- Ensuring that equality and diversity and environmental sustainability are fully reflected at all levels of the programme
- Ensuring the programme is promoted within the area
- Ensuring effective working links are made with other key rural bodies within and outside the area
- Reporting decisions to the Accountable Body, North Devon+.
- Members shall champion the programme and provide two-way communication/reports between the project and the organisation or communities of interest or geography they represent.

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Membership

1. The LAG will comprise members of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, ensuring that it represents a broad range of interests across the area. Membership should reflect both the area's geographical extent and its sectoral composition.
2. Members must live in or work in the area of benefit, namely the districts of Torrington and North Devon. Organisations working across the area but located outside it may join the LAG as "advisors" but without voting rights.
3. There must be more than 50% representation from the private/voluntary sector on the LAG.
4. The number of voting members should not exceed 37, to remain a workable group.
5. Expertise in the following areas should be represented by at least 1 member:
 - Business
 - Tourism
 - Land based industries
 - Food and Drink
 - Environment
 - Renewable Energy
 - Community
 - Voluntary Sector
 - Skills/Training
 - ICT
 - Creative Industries
6. The LAG will include voting representatives from six core public partners, the South West Regional Development Agency and the Accountable Body:-
 - South West Regional Development Agency
 - North Devon Council
 - Torrington District Council
 - Devon County Council
 - Exmoor National Park Authority
 - North Devon AONB
 - North Devon's Biosphere Reserve
 - North Devon+ (the Accountable Body)
7. Members must identify whether they represent themselves, as individuals, or are representing an organisation. If representing an organisation, they may nominate one named substitute who may vote on their behalf.
8. The LAG shall elect a Chairperson and Deputy at its first meeting. The Chairperson must preferably be from the private/community sector.
9. Recruitment to the Panel will be primarily by open advertisement. Co-option of members is permitted to achieve geographical, sectoral or demographic balance in the membership.
10. LAG members shall be appointed for two years. Thereafter, all members will be eligible to re-apply to the LAG, alongside an open recruitment process.
11. Members engaged in activity related to their position on the LAG must comport themselves appropriately and respectfully in relation to other LAG members, programme staff, applicants and members of the public. Inappropriate behaviour may result in exclusion from the LAG at the discretion of the Chairperson. All

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members will be required to sign the Code of Conduct at the beginning of their term.

12. Relevant training and background information related to responsibilities associated with Local Action Group membership will be made available to any members requiring this.
13. Regular attendance at meetings is required. Non attendance for more than 3 consecutive meetings may result in loss of a place on the LAG, at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Working Arrangements

1. The administrative and financial arrangements for the LAG will be undertaken by the programme staff team from North Devon+.
2. The programme staff will circulate the agenda and papers seven days before each meeting, and will record decisions and issue minutes for approval at the next LAG meeting.
3. The programme staff team will attend LAG Meetings to provide information. Information for meetings should be sufficiently detailed to allow informed decisions to be made. Information should include:
 - Details of projects to be approved/rejected/further clarification sought
 - Quarterly financial statement on overall spend on all projects and core cost spend
 - Quarterly statement on achievement of outputs, outcomes, targets, milestones
 - Notification of significant gaps in achievement of objectives, spend or outputs
 - Notification of significant problems on funded projects
4. Late business may be introduced by tabling papers with the approval of the staff team in conjunction with the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Panel.
5. Panel members who are directly involved or have a direct interest in any application submitted will declare an interest and take no part in the consideration of the application unless invited by the Chairperson to respond to questions pertaining to the application. If Panel members represent an organisation which has an involvement in an application, but that organisation will not receive any financial benefit, representatives should declare an interest but can participate fully in the consideration (See also the Code of Conduct).
6. The LAG may appoint sub groups to undertake specific tasks as required (e.g. Delegated Grant Scheme Panels or Commissioning Sub Groups). These groups will report at least quarterly to the LAG.

Meetings

1. Will be held every four to twelve weeks, unless cancelled by the staff team by giving 7 days notice.
2. A calendar of meetings will be agreed each year for the next twelve months.
3. Meetings will be rotated round the whole area and members will be encouraged to visit actual or proposed projects supported by Leader 4.
4. Decisions will be by a majority of those present. The Chairperson or Deputy has a casting vote.

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5. The quorum for meetings will be one third of voting members.
6. Panel members will be entitled to receive travel expenses for public or private transport to attend LAG meetings and any other LAG business required of them. Members will be encouraged to car share and use sustainable transport.

Decisions and Reporting

1. Views and decisions of the LAG will be recorded by the staff team and signed by the Chair at the beginning of the following meeting.
2. The Panel's recommendation as to whether an application should be approved, declined or deferred will be delivered through a show of hands to identify the majority view.
3. Decision notice and offers of grant will be made by the Accountable Body, North Devon+, who will, where appropriate, have the ability to refer a matter, or elements thereof, back to the LAG for further consideration.
4. In exceptional circumstances, the Accountable Body may make a decision between meetings after consulting the staff team, one of the core public Members and at least two non-public members, including the Chairperson or Deputy. Such decisions will be reported to the next meeting.
5. Information on successful Grant Awards will be reported through the Leader 4 website.

Appeals Procedures

Any applicant who has a concern about the way in which their application has been handled should write in the first instance to the General Manager of North Devon+ who will notify the complainant of any action that he proposes to take in relation to the appeal within 10 working days.

Variance to Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the LAG will be reviewed annually by the LAG, and they may vary or add to these Terms of Reference if necessary.

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