

## Appendix 1 - Expression of Interest Proforma

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The completed form and required additional information must be returned by post or email no later than 17:00 on Monday 31st December 2007 to:

Bruce Douglas  
 Rural Operations and Delivery Manager  
 South West of England Regional Development Agency  
 Sterling House  
 Dix's Field  
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This form is available electronically from the Local Action webpage on the South West RDA website <http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/local-action>.

**Important:** Please read the notes for applicants before completing this form.

### Applicant details

#### 1. Name of Local Action Group

Working title of 'Chase & Downs LAG'

#### 2. Contact details

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## Coherence of the area

### 3. Target area

The Chase and Downs Local Action area is that covered by the boundaries of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In developing the full bid, we may wish to adjust the boundary to include areas currently outside that may be key to delivering the priorities or through working co-operatively with neighbouring Local Action areas.

The landscape of the area has had a profound influence on the history of human activity, particularly influencing patterns of agriculture and settlement. Its distinctive character arises from the landscape, its tranquillity and sense of remoteness, its unrivalled prehistoric sites, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century parklands and estates and vast ecological wealth. This has resulted in a clearly defined rural area held together by common traditions, a local identity, common needs and expectations, a sense of belonging and a common pride in the area. Local strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities can be easily identified and actions can be tailored to suit real needs and improve local competitiveness.

The area has an exceptionally high landscape quality, environmental and historical interests. It forms part of an extensive belt of chalkland which stretches across Southern England and also abuts the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is covered by two 'Natural Areas' identified by the former English Nature. These areas are subdivisions of England identified as being unique on the basis of their physical, wildlife, land use and cultural attributes. The South Wessex Downs Natural Area covers the vast majority of the AONB and is strongly characterised by the underlying chalk. It is internationally renowned for its chalk grassland, chalk rivers and many notable and often rare species associated with these habitats. The Wessex Vales Natural Area is found in the north west corner and supports a variety of habitats from wet woodland, acid woodland to both calcareous and neutral meadows.

The AONB is a large, sparsely populated rural area bounded by a necklace of towns. It extends across the rolling plateau of Cranborne Chase in the south, to the steep chalk escarpments that lead down into the lush valleys of the Vale of Wardour. It then runs up again onto the West Wiltshire Downs to the Wyllye Valley that forms its northern boundary.

Although a well defined and cohesive single geographic and social area predicated on the villages and hamlets that typically nestle in the valley bottoms, it suffers the disadvantage of lack of recognition. The area is often regarded as being on the "edge" of places and as a result is rarely "central" to anywhere. The AONB covers the administrative areas of eleven Local Authorities: four County Councils - Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and seven District Councils – Salisbury, West Wiltshire (both of which will disappear when Wiltshire becomes a unitary authority in 2009), East Dorset, North Dorset, New Forest, Mendip and South Somerset. The AONB comprises all or part of 104 parishes (a very small section of a further 10 parishes fall within the boundary) and has a resident population of 33,100. The majority of the AONB falls within the South West region, however 6.8% of the AONB (the Hampshire section) falls within the South East region. This Local Action programme provides a major opportunity, alongside the work of the AONB Partnership, to provide the refocus that the area both warrants and deserves.

The deeply rural, agricultural character is emphasised by a sparse population scattered widely through the landscape in small hamlets and villages. There are no towns within the AONB but the settlements of Warminster, Frome, Mere, Shaftesbury, Blandford Forum, Wimborne Minster, Fordingbridge, Downton and the city of Salisbury are within easy reach of the boundary. This proposal would seek to build on relationships with the market towns and work in close partnership on any schemes or initiatives forthcoming from their community plans.

As a primarily rural area, agriculture and forestry have, historically, been important economic drivers. Although 89% of the AONB is classed as farmland, current employment figures suggest agriculture is not the major employer within the area. It is however; a fundamental component of the local economy providing the basis for related jobs, such as in the food processing, retailing,

catering and transport sectors. Whilst there is a concentration of agricultural activity in the central part of the AONB, the majority of employment in most wards is in public administration 38% (of the economically active population), hotels and catering 23% and manufacturing 14%, while agriculture forms 8.7% and tourism 2.5%. The proximity of the surrounding towns, together with regional centres of economic activity such as Southampton, Exeter and even London, results in an 'out-ward' looking economy. Currently only 5 – 20% of employment is located in the rural heartland.

The concentration of employment in public administration suggests a potential vulnerability should a large employer withdraw. For example, due to changes in policy at national level, there is a possibility that the Royal School of Signals at Blandford Army Camp will relocate with repercussions for civilians employed there and local businesses.

Low value added manufacturing occurs in the rural areas. Production is sold at only a fraction above the cost of production resulting in income levels remaining low. Workplace –based earnings are significantly below the English average and average household incomes within the AONB are below the average for England and rural England. Start up rates for new business is low<sup>1</sup>.

There has been a steady increase in the population within the AONB, particularly around the southern perimeter. Twenty six percent of the population is over 60 years and that figure rises to 32% in the southern half of the AONB. In-migration appears to be more from those retiring rather than people moving to the area to work, resulting in an imbalance in the age structure of most communities. Within the AONB there are few facilities and services aimed at the young or elderly. This can lead to the isolation of elderly, infirmed or disadvantaged people.

The AONB is ranked amongst the most deprived parts of the country in relation to the "barriers to housing and services" deprivation domain. 34 of the 38 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the AONB are ranked in the worst 25% of LSOA nationally on the barriers to housing and services domain. It also scores poorly in relation to the indoor living environment. According to the Indices of Deprivation 2004: Barriers to Housing and Services, the Salisbury Super Output Areas are in the 5% most deprived nationally. Mere LOSA's is ranked amongst the most deprived 10% nationally on the skills and training domain.

• <sup>1</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Economic Assessment (May 2006) School of the Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University. The results for the AONB are calculated from ward level data, using South West Protected Landscapes Forum weightings.

#### 4. Population of the area

The population was 33,100 at the time of the 2001 Census. Salisbury and North Dorset Districts account for almost 70% of AONB residents. Population density within the AONB is very low, at 34 persons per square kilometre. This compares with an average of 129 persons per sq km for rural England (figures based on 2001 Census data). This low population density reflects the settlement pattern within the AONB. 93% of the population live within villages, hamlets or dispersed dwellings.

5. Please mark with an X to confirm that you are enclosing a clearly defined boundary map for your proposed area: x

6. Please mark with an X to confirm that you are enclosing a list of the wards/parishes which have been included (or partially included) within your proposed area: x

## Appropriateness of the partnership

### 7. Members of the partnership

Name of Organisation	Contact Name	Letter of Support (mark with an X if supplied)	Type of Organisation (public/private)
Euroforest	Tim Leavers		private
Cranborne Estate	Gavin Fauvel		private
Futurefarms	Janet Richards	X	private
De-Liz Delicatessen	Liz Crossley	X	private
Britford Farm Shop	Gale Gould	X	private
Rushmore Estate	Ruth Mason	X	private
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	Giles Aspinall		charity
Age Concern Wiltshire	Alan Truscott	X	charity
The National Trust	Simon Ford	X	charity
Life Academy	Stuart Royston	X	charity
Charities Information Bureau South West	Rosemary Hopgood	X	charity
Wiltshire Community Transport Community First	Liam Tatton- Bennett	X	charity
Wiltshire County Council Youth Development Service	Jaki Farrell	X	public
Dorset County Council	David Walsh		public
Wiltshire College	Sue Dredge	X	public
Bournemouth University	Nigel Hemmington	X	public
West Wiltshire District Council	Cllr Mounde	X	public
East Dorset District Council	Kevin Poulton	X	public

#### 8. How long has the partnership been established and for what purpose?

The AONB is currently managed through a partnership of Local Authorities, government, voluntary and community agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and a wide range of interest groups. It was initially formed in 2002 and a legally binding Memorandum of Agreement was signed by all the partners in April 2004.

A Partnership Panel made up of a wide range of representatives guides the implementation of the AONB Management Plan; Topic Groups meet regularly to progress work set out in the Action Plans for each year and a Technical Advice Group offers advice and support to the AONB team, whose task it is to ensure targets in the Management Plan are met. An annual AONB Forum brings together the widest range of interested people to discuss and debate topical issues.

We propose to widen the existing successful AONB Partnership representation and build on successful local networks to develop the Chase and Downs LAG. We will place invitations to join the LAG in the AONB twice yearly newsletter, 'The Hart', which goes to every AONB household, the AONB web site, in local newspapers, on local radio and on village and shop notice boards. This will enable anyone living or working in the area to have a role on the LAG. We will also seek to develop the LAG in such a way as to specifically encompass and welcome young members, as many of the teenagers of 2008 will be the creative entrepreneurs of 2014 onwards.

There would be opportunities for anyone interested to sit on the LAG, assess applications, monitor projects or act as mentors etc. No body would be turned away and the provision of appropriate training, out of pocket expenses such as childcare/transport costs and the provision of transport (if applicable) would ensure that every one had the opportunity to participate. Invitations to take part would be widely advertised and promoted. People would be encouraged to join for as long as they felt able. A key outcome of the Implementation Plan would be the up-skilling of the LAG members. We have already had interest from a considerable number of potential LAG members leading to a potentially large LAG. We feel that the LAG should decide how it will work in practice but that the management of the LAG and the roles and responsibilities need to be determined early on in the process.

We have already seen enormous support for the potential development of the LAG after speaking with several local groups, businesses and organisations, for example Tisbury Chamber of Commerce, several rural community councils and local Higher Education providers.

#### 9. What experience does the partnership have of delivering EU or other public funds?

Members of the AONB Partnership Panel e.g. the partnership local authorities have considerable experience of managing a range of public funds from the EU, central government and regional agencies. These include the European Social Fund, Leader +, Rural Renaissance, Modernising Rural Delivery and the Rural, Social and Community Fund.

In addition, The Sustainable Development Research Group at Bournemouth University, a potential LAG member, have considerable experience of delivering EU programmes and funds. Since its inception core members, plus colleagues and associates, have undertaken a range of activities in terms of research, consultancy and training. One important focus has been the challenges of agricultural reform and rural development in the countries of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe. These projects have been funded by the British Council and by the European Union both under its research programmes, Inco Copernicus, Framework V and development programmes such as LEADER, PHARE and TEMPUS. More recently the Group has undertaken a project to develop a Centre for Tourism and the Environment for the Central Asian country of Turkmenistan.

The AONB team manages an annual budget of £300,000 comprising contributions from Natural England and the partnership local authorities. The team currently manages and distributes a

Sustainable Development Fund in the region of £80,000 annually and a small Local Action Fund of £3,000 per year. The team also recently won and managed a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of just under £50,000.

### Proposed Local Development Strategy

#### 10. Rationale for the application of the Leader Approach in your proposed area.

The Chase and Downs Local Action area covers the administrative areas of eleven Local Authorities: four County Councils and seven District Councils and as mentioned earlier, is often regarded as being on *the “edge” of places and as a result is rarely “central” to anywhere*. As such, it sometimes appears to be treated as back water on the outskirts of administrative areas. This Local Action programme provides a major opportunity, alongside and integrated with the work of the AONB Partnership, to provide the area with both the focus and targeted resources it warrants and deserves.

The AONB Management Plan was created using a bottom up approach that enabled some 2,000 people to input to it. This process has been quoted by Natural England, as one of the best consultative process of all 41 AONB management plans. The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) assessment panel are recruited through local advertising. The programme has seen very creative solutions to local problems and is hugely over subscribed every year. We have seen evidence of creativity and innovation across the area and we know from experience that the leader approach would be easily understood and taken up.

This programme would build on the AONB's existing 'bottom up' approach as used in the management plan preparation process and its management of the SDF and Local Action Fund. It would enable local people to come up with solutions to local problems and ensure they were actively involved in the decision making. It would utilise the high quality environment as a catalyst for community led development and economic prosperity; it would seek to increase the provision of and access to services and would tackle identified skills and training needs in order to facilitate economic growth.

Below is a synopsis of the economy, access to services, the environmental quality and local governance issues of this nationally designated rural landscape.

#### Profile of the AONB Economy

- GVA (Gross Value Added) for the LAG area is only available at the broad geographic level, nevertheless, figures for 2003 indicates that average levels per head in Dorset County Council (£11,600) and Wiltshire County Council (£14,700) are well below the national average (£16,500).
- Average household incomes within the AONB were estimated at £522 per week (for 2001/2002). This is 6% below the average for England (£555) and rural England (£556). Those for Salisbury District Council were the lowest in the area with £492 per week.
- Workplace –based earnings are significantly below the English average in all of the AONB districts.
- These findings suggest that earnings for those working within the AONB are likely to be below the national average; they also imply that commuting by AONB residents to higher

paid employment in adjacent towns is a significant factor of the local economy.

- Levels of self employment amongst AONB residents are high (25% of those in work), even when compared to other rural economies (17%).
- The agricultural sector is an important employer in the AONB and more so than in other rural economies. Over 8% of AONB residents are employed directly in the sector, compared with an average of only 3.5% for rural England as a whole.
- Employment in public administration and defence is also important; 16% of AONB residents work in this sector, compared with only 6% across rural England.
- The proportion of AONB employment in creative industries and knowledge intensive business activities also appears to be below the average for rural areas.
- Compared with the average for rural England, the AONB contains a higher proportion of very small businesses - 76% of AONB businesses employ less than five employees compared with 72% in rural England and 67% in England as a whole.
- Only one in ten businesses in the AONB (11%) has ten or more employees.
- Over one quarter 26% of VAT registered businesses in the AONB are in the agricultural sector, this is twice the average for rural England (13%) and compares with a figure of only 5% for England as a whole.
- Agricultural land accounts for 89% of the total area covered by the designation.
- Compared with the regional and national averages, the AONB contains a relatively high proportion of larger holdings. However, around 40% of agricultural holdings in the AONB are less than 5 hectares in size. The most numerous types of holdings in the AONB are specialist livestock farms (23%) and farms specialising in cereal production (21%).
- The number of second and vacant homes in the AONB is above the average for rural England, but well below the levels found in other protected landscapes.
- Compared to other rural areas, AONB residents are more likely to work at home and less likely to travel to work by car or public transport.
- Housing tenure in the AONB is significantly different from the patterns found in rural areas. Levels of owner occupation are relatively low (accounting for only 63% of AONB households, compared to 75% in rural England). There is more use of private rented and tied accommodation (25% of AONB households, compared with 11% in rural England).
- There are about 1,650 households in social rented accommodation in the AONB, representing 12.4% of the total; this is slightly below the average for rural England.

### **Provision and Access to Services**

- The Indices of Deprivation 2004 reveal that the AONB is ranked amongst the most deprived parts of the country in relation to its relatively poor geographical access to key services; it also scores poorly in relation to the indoor living environment (34 of the 38 LSOA's in the AONB are ranked in the worst 25% of the LSOA's nationally on the barriers to housing and services domain). According to the Indices of Deprivation 2004: Barriers to Housing and Services, the Salisbury Super Output Areas are in the 5% most deprived nationally.
- The proximity of AONB residents to a number of key services has deteriorated since 2000. These services include primary and secondary schools, banks and building societies, GP surgeries and post offices.
- There is evidence from the Rural Community Councils that there are isolated and significant pockets of deprivation. There are three examples of projects set up to address some of these issues. The South Wiltshire Healthy Living Project is a partnership of

voluntary and statutory organisations working specifically in the western wards of Salisbury District Council, from Barford St Martin across to Zeals. This project was set up because the area has some of the greatest social deprivation in the South West region. The Wiltshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre is working to help the estimated 800 households in this area out of fuel poverty. While the Sunshine Healthy Living Project was set up under the New Opportunities Fund to address health inequalities. It operates in the parishes of Weston and Mere, Knoyle, Fonthill and Nadder, Tisbury and Fovant and Donhead and Chalke Valley, all of which lie within the AONB.

### **Environmental Economy**

The area has an exceptionally high environmental quality and historical interest.

The archaeology and history of the area encompassing the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB offers not only a wealth of nationally important historical and archaeological features but a landscape which has been relatively untouched by modern development.

The prehistoric archaeology of the area is of national importance though has not received the same attention as other comparable prehistoric ceremonial complexes. The Dorset Cursus which runs for approximately six miles between Thickthorn Down and Martin Down is over three times longer than the archetypical Stonehenge Cursus and is associated with a plethora of contemporary and later earthworks including long barrows; henges; round barrows; prehistoric enclosures and field systems; and finally a series of imposing prehistoric dykes.

The later history of the AONB is just as impressive. Part of the area forms the ancient Cranborne Chase, an area that from the medieval times onwards was subject to Chase Hunting Law. This area was not disenfranchised until 1829. The special character of the area and the long duree of many of the features of the landscape such as the survival of large tracks of ancient woodland and ancient trackways, are all directly related to the former importance of the Chase.

The historic importance of the AONB can also be demonstrated by the over thirty medieval deer parks documented in the area. Few remain intact today but the evidence for them is still fossilised in the modern landscape. Many of these were transformed into 17<sup>th</sup> century landscape parks, 16 of which are of national importance including Stourhead, Longleat, and Rushmore Park. These are also associated with several grade one listed buildings. The rich architectural heritage of the AONB also boasts over 2,000 listed buildings. This is a staggering number for such a rural area.

The AONB exhibits exceptionally rich and diverse habitats including:

- five Special Areas of Conservation
- three National Nature Reserves
- 57 Sites of Special Scientific Interest covering an area of 3329ha (3.3% of the AONB).
- 8,316 ha of non-statutory designation (SNCI and County Wildlife Sites) which amounts to 8.5% of the AONB.
- 14% of the remaining UK chalk grassland - a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- Internationally important chalk rivers supporting rare wildlife
- extensive tracts of arable land supporting some rare and important arable weeds
- much of the area falls within the original South Wessex Downs EAS
- substantial tracts of ancient woodland (7,201ha) of high ecological value

### **Key Issue**

- Lack of and / or inappropriate management of habitats especially grasslands and

woodlands

### **Local Governance**

The AONB Management Plan was created using a bottom up approach that enabled some 2,000 people to input to it. This process has been quoted by Natural England, as one of the best consultative process of all 41 AONB management plans. During the 'listening and learning' phase of Management Plan preparation, a central issue was the desire for more 'local governance'.

The key issues and/or opportunities highlighted in the AONB Management Plan fall into three main areas namely: training, education/awareness raising and promotion and marketing.

#### Training

- Service provision and access to services and facilities, local employment and training opportunities are crucial issues. This was the second most highly rated issue in the freepost survey after agriculture
- Small business and marketing training needed
- Need for training opportunities locally
- Encourage maximum uptake of appropriate grant schemes
- Support farm diversification
- Promote current and new farm gate/local produce sales
- Seek to maintain traditional agriculture/rural activities and skills that assist in enhancing the landscape, such as hedge-laying and the training required
- Encourage and support traditional woodland activities and skills, such as coppicing/charcoal burning and the training requirements of newcomers
- Low value added manufacturing – the area needs 'higher value-added' businesses
- Relatively weak new business start up
- Poor infrastructure
- Support to local village shops
- TIC staff have lack of information about the area

#### Education/Awareness raising

- More education and awareness is required to reconnect farming and consumers
- Farmers need to be more aware of what local people and visitors expect and desire from the countryside.
- The viability of coppice management in providing local employment, ecological value and commercial benefit is not properly understood
- Meeting local energy needs – community led renewable schemes
- Appropriate and sensitive re-use of redundant agricultural buildings

#### Promotion/Marketing

- Undertake study to determine the need and viability of an AONB branding initiative
- Better promotion of agricultural and woodland local produce
- Support local products and services
- Marketing of woodland products is vital
- Few schemes promoting local food and drink
- Lack of public/schools information/interpretation both off site and on site
- Increase appreciation and understanding of the historic, archaeological and cultural landscape by land managers, communities and visitors alike
- Sustainable tourism development would be important in diversifying local economy

- The area has a wealth of 'undiscovered' natural, historic and cultural features
- Many opportunities exist for development of sustainable tourism focusing on the high quality environment, natural and historic features
- There is an opportunity to record, link and integrate the Rights of Way network to reflect the needs of local and visitor use.
- Investigate a quiet lanes/Greenlink project
- Promote Rights of Way as main recreational resource
- Recreational opportunities are not socially inclusive
- Substantial areas of open access exist
- Many areas are without opportunities for overnight stays
- Information, maps and interpretation are hard to find
- Develop market towns as gateways to the AONB
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The Chase and Downs local development strategy would address the identified needs of the area in terms of the training, awareness raising, marketing and promotional requirements of local rural businesses and in improving the quality of life for everyone. The environmental resources of the area have not, as yet, been fully utilised. This programme would use the distinctive character and highest quality natural, historic and cultural environment as a key driver of a burgeoning rural economy that, would in turn, safeguard the very qualities that make it special.

11. What are the main objectives and priorities of the LAG? How do these fit with existing sub-regional and local strategies?

The Chase and Downs LAG has not yet formally met to agree priorities (a meeting is planned towards the end of January 2008). However, the local development strategy would take as its starting point, the main issues that have been raised in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan (2004 – 2009) and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Economic Assessment (May 2006).

The AONB Management Plan was created using a bottom up approach. Those living and working within the AONB originally raised the issues. Each of the 14,567 households received a questionnaire asking them to rank their top 6 most important issues for the AONB. Almost 1,500 were completed, representing a 10% return rate. A quarter of all respondents felt that agriculture and its future was the most important issues within the area, closely followed by local services and conservation. Additional comments explained that the loss of village services and facilities often led to a breakdown in community spirit and left many in isolation, especially the elderly and those without access to transport. In addition, Local Ideas Forums and an Issues Conference were held bringing the total of over 2,000 peoples input to the process. This included representation from many of the 104 Parish Councils and over 100 other local organisations.

Access is a high score in indices of deprivation and lack of transport/access to facilities and services is identified as a high priority issue in many community areas. All the districts within the AONB identified an increased role for ICT, the production of local quality produce and sustainable tourism as a means to regenerate the local economy. The top three priorities of nearly every Parish Plan are access to services, lifelong learning and activities for youth.

Support for the prime objectives of sustaining local rural businesses, improving the quality of life for everyone and conserving and enhancing the environment is supported by any number of local plans and strategies, a selection of the relevant policies are listed below under each objective.

## OBJECTIVES

### 1. To support existing and new sustainable businesses and services which contribute to the AONB's economic well-being, environmental quality and special character, and use local knowledge, expertise and resources to create more AONB based work opportunities. This would be achieved through:

- the provision and promotion of tailored and targeted training opportunities provided locally
- the promotion and marketing of local products and services
- support for businesses that demonstrate innovative solutions to problems especially where others can learn from them
- identifying and developing local food supply chains including local food distribution infrastructure
- providing support for businesses that make good use of redundant rural buildings
- local food sector projects that demonstrate networking, sharing of best practice and collaborative working
- promoting opportunities to link food and farming sectors to public procurement
- promoting awareness and consumption of local food
- the development of social enterprises
- support for locally appropriate sustainable tourism projects such as the promotion of rural historic churches and camping barns

#### Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004 - 2009

- *Support initiatives and mechanisms that encourage a mixed land-based economy with long term management objective that benefit natural beauty and quiet enjoyment*
- *Promote the principles of sustainable development through co-ordinated information and advice for businesses*
- *Explore and support current opportunities for more locally based training and education services.*

Salisbury District Council comprises almost half of the area covered by the AONB. The Salisbury District and South Wiltshire Economic Development Strategy (2004) has taken as a priority 'to stabilise the rural economy by supporting rural based industries including agriculture'

#### East Dorset Community Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy "Building Communities Together" Draft Oct 2007

- *A place where enterprise is valued and encouraged where we invest in the future through skills and training*

#### Regenerating the Local Economy – Working with the Mendip Strategic Partnership, 2005 (Somerset Strategic Economic Development Strategy)

- Main issues included under 'regeneration of the local economy'
  - *Creating and encouraging local quality produce (not just food produce)*
  - *The current fragmented approach to tourism*

#### The Shaftesbury Area Community Action Plan 2005 – 2020

- *Encourage initiatives that enable farmers, or those with mixed economies, to*

*acquire additional skills to increase their incomes*

- *Support the farming community in undertaking diversification initiatives and schemes, in particular the re-use of redundant buildings for rural businesses, including tourism.*
- *Promote the development of a green and cultural tourism in the area that celebrates the rich heritage and natural environment*

#### Wiltshire County Council

Strategic Issue 2 Capacity for growth within the Wiltshire economy is constrained.

- *Sub-outcome 2.5: More Robust and competitive businesses within the food and farming sector*
- *Sub-outcome 2.6 More competitive tourism businesses balancing the environment, communities, industry and visitor satisfaction while realising long term economic and social benefit for Wiltshire*
- *Sub-outcome 3.2 To develop a local work force with the right skills base for the economy*
- *Sub-outcome 3.3 Increase the number and range of skilled workers available to local employers by supporting the economically inactive and under-represented groups to join the work force*

#### Wiltshire and Swindon Workspace Strategy (2005)

- *First objective 'to create the right conditions for rural enterprise to start-up, grow, and be sustainable in the rural areas of Wiltshire'*
- *Key workspace priority given as 'the promotion of the conversion of rural buildings'*

#### The Community Strategy for Dorset 2007 – 2016 Dorset Strategic Partnership

- *Use the international quality of the environment..... as a driver for economic development and quality of life within environmental limits.*
- *Increase support for environmental based sectors of the economy.*
- *Efficient use of natural resources and a prosperous local food and farming industry working within environmental limits.*
- *Improve access to employment and training and address issues regarding recruitment and retention of employees in rural areas*

An agreed priority of Raising the Game, the shared strategy and action plan for the sub-region (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Economic Development Strategy 2005 -2016) is 'Improved skills base, development and employability of the work force'.

#### A Community Strategy for Hampshire 2004 -2007

Priority Area for Development: *Support the Hampshire Economy – develop learning and skills programme to reflect the needs of employers and maximize the workforce potential/support voluntary and community sectors and develop social enterprises.*

### **2. Increasing the well being of the AONB residents, workforce and visitors through projects that:**

- support inclusive community development in its broadest sense
- enrich individuals lives, strengthen community cohesion and improve places where people live and work

- encourage people to volunteer their time, skills and expertise
- provide creative and innovative solutions for improving access to services and facilities that take account of the differing needs of individuals and communities
- support the expansion of existing services and encourage the creation of new ones
- support local culture and traditions
- create more facilities and opportunities for young people e.g. training to become a representative of the parish council
- provide opportunities to learn new skills
- increase inclusion of older people
- 

Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004 - 2009

- *Encourage and facilitate community capacity building - giving communities the confidence to develop solutions to issues themselves*
- *Encourage a sense of pride by directly involving local communities in caring and making decisions about the AONB*
- *Support initiatives to improve or enhance delivery of local services and multiuse facilities where appropriate*
- *Support the provision of an infrastructure that enables and encourages more home and locally based work opportunities, in harmony with the special qualities of the AONB*
- *Demonstrate best practice through promotion of recreation, tourism and other business initiatives that focus on the special qualities of the area and benefit local communities and the economy.*
- *Help to identify, sustain and encourage local traditions, customs and artistic expression that add to local identity*

East Dorset Community Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy "Building Communities Together" Draft Oct 2007

- *A strong community with a thriving well supported voluntary sector*
- *improving access to services and facilities for young people*

Wiltshire Local Area Agreement 2007 -2010

- *Improved access to services and facilities in rural areas for those without private transport or where transport is not an option*
- *Increase social inclusion of older people in communities (especially amongst marginalised groups including older men)*

A Community Strategy for Hampshire 2004 -2007

Priority Area for Development: *Improve accessibility in the broadest sense*

The priority outcomes of the Dorset Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership are to ensure that young people : *can take part in activities they enjoy, have opportunities to make a positive contribution to their communities and are well-provided for, enjoying social and economic well-being*

The Community Strategy for Dorset 2007 – 2016 Dorset Strategic Partnership

- *Improved access to services including shared service provision and the*

*development of delivery points within the community.*

- *Develop and support solutions to transport difficulties encountered by young people and others who experience access difficulties*
- *Support introductory learning to ensure people have the confidence and skills to access both learning and other opportunities on line.*
- *Sustainable and accessible community development support across Dorset*
- *Develop community facilities ..... as connected community hubs with potential for shared service delivery.*

• South Tarrant Parish Plan 2005, Lower Winterbourne Parish Plan 2004, Ashmore Parish Plan 2006, Pimperne Parish Plan 2003. .

### **3. Conserving, enhancing and take full advantage of the high quality environment through projects that:**

- provide opportunities for the non farming community to learn about and engage in farming, land management and conservation encouraging them to support local producers and products
- encourage access to the countryside and safer routes to services and facilities
- promote the use of sustainable energy sources and / or promote energy efficiency
- increase the understanding and appreciation of the area
- 

#### Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004 - 2009

- *Develop and promote greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity and link to Quality of Life issues*
- *Increase residents' and visitors' understanding and appreciation of what makes Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs a special place.*
- *Strengthen the profile of the AONB to the widest audience, by highlighting the area's unique landscape character, natural beauty and sense of place*

East Dorset Community Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy “Building Communities Together” Draft Oct 2007

- *A community in which all development is sustainable and carbon emissions are reduced*
- *A district that supports and enhances its environment*

The Community Strategy for Dorset 2007 – 2016 Dorset Strategic Partnership

- *Use the international quality of the environment..... as a driver for economic development and quality of life within environmental limits.*

A Community Strategy for Hampshire 2004 -2007

Priority Area for Development: *Protect and enhance the Hampshire environment*

Shroton Parish Plan, Durweston Parish plan 2005, Pimperne Parish Plan 2003, South Tarrant Parish Plan 2005, Tarrant Monkton and Launceston Parish Plan 2005

## 12. Fit with National Programme objectives

The Chase and Downs LAG would prepare its Local Development Strategy as a matter of priority. With its inherently cross-cutting themes of environment, economy and community the AONB Management Plan (2004-9) may provide one of the initial springboards from which the Development Strategy is prepared. It is currently in the process of being reviewed and revised. The seven aims of the current AONB Plan, albeit necessarily broad, demonstrate support for and a vision of the inter-connectivity of a sustainable environment, economy and community.

- **Aim 1 - Natural Environment**
  - *Conserve and enhance the landscape character, habitats, species and tranquillity of the AONB*
- **Aim 2 - Historic Environment**
  - *Conserve and enhance the historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape settings*
- **Aim 3 - Built Environment**
  - *Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment within its historic, cultural and landscape setting*
- **Aim 4 - Roads, Traffic and Rights of Way**
  - *Promote the management of the impact of traffic on the AONB*
- **Aim 5 - Rural Economy**
  - *Support the rural economy in ways that are sustainable*
- **Aim 6 - Sustainable Rural Communities**
  - *Support and influence innovative ways of maintaining and providing access to community facilities and services*
- **Aim 7 - Awareness and Understanding**
  - *Increase levels of awareness and understanding of the AONB*

The inter-relationships between profitable and competitive agricultural, forestry, food and other land based sectors, a high quality, valued environment and dynamic, engaged local communities have been promoted throughout the AONB to date. The highly participative nature of the initial AONB Plan preparation through listening to local communities would be echoed in the groundwork for the Local Development Strategy. Local communities show a strong sense of identity and deep sense of belonging to this nationally designated area and no doubt exists as to their determination, enthusiasm and commitment to research and prepare a Local Development

Strategy for this deeply rural area.

The LAG would be encouraged to focus on the issues, evidenced needs and the economic development potential for this area, over the next decade. We would confidently expect the Plan to contribute to the overall national objectives of the Rural Development Plan for England (RDPE).

The Local Development Strategy would also operate within the context of wider AONB management across the area. Whilst incorporating and ameliorating relevant objectives from the widest range of regional, sub-regional and local plans and strategies, the AONB aims to promote the highest shared aspirations for all those with an interest in the AONB, offering a culture of vibrant yet sustainable, integrated rural development.

A small selection of the many priorities for action, agreed with local communities, in the AONB Plan (2004 -9) are listed below and are set against the objectives within the axes in the RDPE, as an example of how the newly prepared Local Development Strategy would be expected to similarly and inherently integrate with axes 1, 2 and 3.

Selection of AONB Plan objectives	RDPE Axes / objectives
A viable land based sector employs an appropriately skilled rural workforce and provides the basis for businesses adding value to primary products through local markets and branding	1 / 3 / 4
Assimilate training, skills and advice gaps for the land based sectors	1 / 3 / 4
Encourage the uptake of agri-environment and forestry schemes	2
Input to the targeting of the above schemes	2
Promote a landscape scale approach to environmental enhancement: landscape, agriculture, forestry, natural resources, biodiversity, climate change	2
Agriculture and forestry management conserves and enhances the valued characteristics, features, species and habitats of the area	2 / 3 / 4
Agriculture is acknowledged and promoted as a key activity that conserves natural beauty	2 / 3 / 4
Sustainable woodland management maximizes its contribution to the AONB through integration of landscape, wildlife and socio-economic aims	1 / 2 / 3 / 4
A sustainable, integrated transport network takes full account of local community needs	3 / 4
Sustainable recreation and tourism initiatives contribute to strong local economies	3 / 4
Training courses close to home optimise opportunities for local communities	1 / 3 / 4
Existing and new businesses incorporate sustainable development principles into programmes of work	3 / 4
Land managers, residents and visitors understand and help sustain the historic and cultural heritage	2 / 3 / 4
Tourism has a positive effect on the local economy providing employment and opportunity for business development	2 / 3 / 4
Encourage and facilitate community capacity building to give communities the confidence to develop solutions to issues themselves	3 / 4

### 13. Linkages to other initiatives

Support for the prime objectives of sustaining local rural businesses, improving the quality of life for everyone and conserving and enhancing the environment is supported by any number of local plans and strategies, a selection of the relevant policies are listed in question 11.

Access is a high score in indices of deprivation and lack of transport/access to facilities and services is identified as a high priority issue in many community areas. All the districts within the AONB identified an increased role for ICT, the production of local quality produce and sustainable tourism as a means to regenerate the local economy. The top three priorities of nearly every Parish Plan are access to services, lifelong learning and activities for youth.

This proposal does not seek to duplicate any existing programmes, services etc but rather to build on them and attempt to fill any identified gaps. Through the process of setting up the LAG and writing the Local Development Strategy, existing or proposed schemes will emerge.

Linkages have already been established with Bournemouth University, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Dorset Centre for Rural Studies, Learning Curve, Salisbury College, Wheels to Work, Rural Community Councils and local agricultural colleges.

### 14. Commitment to co-operation

We would look to create and support specific joint projects to resolve common problems or add value to local resources e.g. joint marketing.

With regard to the six priorities for the south west region, linkages and co-operation would be positively encouraged to assist in achieving those priority targets. Projects, for example, aimed at developing strong and inclusive communities or developing and adding value to supply chains may be significantly enhanced by collaboration across LAGS and/or the region, achieving multiple outcomes, by maximising opportunities and effectiveness.

Collaboration and co-operation between delivery partners, resources and funding streams would also be sought wherever feasible, to augment and strengthen outcomes, whilst avoiding duplication.

The Chase and Downs LAG would also be willing to share the management, administration and/or monitoring with successful local LAGs. We have spoken informally to existing Leader + programmes namely Chalk and Cheese and Sustain the Plain and the Chase and Downs LAG would be very keen to collaborate in this way.

A potential LAG member, Bournemouth University has worked with a number of countries across Europe on a variety of projects and a link/links could be created with appropriate projects. The AONB team has links with Romania and Northern Ireland which could also be explored.

## 15. Integration of sustainable development principles

The principles of sustainable development will be applied by ensuring that:

- Landscape, nature conservation, economic and local communities interests are taken into consideration in the production of the local development strategy. Representatives of these interests would be asked to sit on a working group to produce and review the draft strategy (Natural England, Forestry Commission, Rural Community Councils, community groups, local businesses, farmers and landowners and Local Authority Economic Development officers etc).
- The development of sustainability criteria to ensure that all projects have considered and minimized their environmental impact.
- The draft strategy is to be circulated widely and reviewed in light of comments received.

Project applicants will have to demonstrate that resources will be used in such a way that options available to future generations are not impaired.

## 16. Integration with the other axes of the RDPE

The Chase & Downs Local Development Strategy will focus on a fully integrated approach to rural development, seeking to link improvements and investment in economic, environmental and social spheres. The target area proposed is nationally designated for its landscape qualities, fashioned and changed by man's activities over time. The process of change continues today and the dynamic nature of the environment and the prosperity and well being of its local communities are inextricably interlinked. The LAG will take forward and expand the role currently played by the AONB Partnership through developing and promoting a self determined, vibrant and sustainable local economy.

Actions funded through the LAG to diversify and strengthen the economic base and quality of life for local communities would be integrated with those actions undertaken under Axes 1, 2 and 3 through the continued close working relationship the AONB has with DEFRA, Natural England and the Forestry Commission and through recognition of the opportunities offered by activities under the other axes.

The real opportunities exist to promote and market locally produced food and other produce, together with the promotion of co-operative and collaborative working by the agricultural and forestry sectors to reduce costs and increase competitiveness including the public procurement provision of locally produced, nutritious food in addition to, community centres, catering outlets, public houses and accommodation providers. Healthy-eating and low food miles marketing message could add immense value to essential commodities.

Significant moves have also already taken place within this area to stimulate interest in, and demand for, wood fuel. Using DEFRA's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), administered through NE, the AONB has funded innovative wood fuel initiatives both throughout the south west and specifically within this area. Public demonstration events have been held with the aim of promoting the increased use of wood fuel and hence encouraging improved woodland management. A local briquette production company has proved very successful, using local wood waste, after an enabling grant from the SDF.

A very well attended Cranborne Chase Wood Fair in October 2007 encouraged further networking amongst local woodland managers, workers and consumers, whilst promoting all

aspects of woodland produce and crafts. The Wood Fair brought together public, private and voluntary interests within the local woodland industry and further similar events are planned.

The Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Schemes are designed to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscape, historical features and potentially help mitigate climate change through increased carbon stores via increased planting for wood fuel, for example. All such measures improve and enhance the natural, historic and cultural environment of the area. These all provide tremendous opportunities for developing specialist and/or short break recreation and tourism, improved destination management potential, off-season breaks for specialist wildlife enthusiasts and an opportunity to promote an exceptionally high quality environment to those markets that are currently known to exist for walking, cycling and horse riding excursions of various durations. There are many opportunities for villages along visitor routes to work together to provide en route accommodation, local transport, overnight stabling, cycle repair services, local guides, meals and provisions.

Short, medium and long distance historic trails have also been suggested to utilise the remarkable breadth and depth of archaeological, historic and cultural assets of the area, maximising the potential for improved education and tourism.

As part of the 38% of the south west that is nationally designated, this AONB area has extremely low visitor numbers. The undisputed environmental treasures in this area are often overlooked and 'on the edge' of well promoted, more commonly known recreation / tourism destinations such as the New Forest National Park, Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral and the Dorset Jurassic Coast. High quality, distinctive destination management within this area would bring undoubted economic and social benefits whilst providing the evidence, if needed, that the high quality environment can indeed be a key driver and catalyst for a lively and vibrant rural economy.

Scheme incentives to improve the landscape, such as hedging or maintenance of locally characteristic boundary features (estate gates, railings) and the potential to re-use redundant farm buildings, would offer prospects for local craftsmen and provide demand for country skills such as walling, hedge laying, coppicing or hurdle making. The current SDF, for example, has provided funding for the BTCV to offer young carers the chance to undertake conservation work within the area, as temporary respite from their usual responsibilities. Apart from the physical outcomes suggested, health and well being benefits can be exceptional.

The objectives of raising skill levels and encouraging enterprise, collaboration and innovation to improve agricultural and forestry competitiveness would be likely to raise earnings and facilitate increased numbers of sector workers to remain in the area. As with most communities, this area would thrive with well balanced communities in terms of age, skills acquisition and equality of opportunity. With a buoyant rural economy, the provision of and access to facilities and services is likely to be in even greater demand, stimulating further community led investment and development.

## 17. Community participation

The Chase and Downs LAG would build on the existing AONB partnership. The partnership fully believes in engaging people not merely consulting them. The current AONB Management Plan was created using a bottom up approach. Those living and working within the AONB originally raised the issues.

A key component of the Local Development Strategy would be to provide the opportunity for anyone living, working in or for the benefit of the AONB, to have the opportunity to be involved in the Chase and Downs LAG. There would be opportunities for anyone interested to be involved in writing the local development strategy, to sit on the LAG, assess applications, monitor projects or act as mentors etc. Nobody would be turned away and the provision of appropriate training, out of pocket expenses such as childcare/transport costs and the provision of transport (if applicable) would ensure that every one had the opportunity to participate. Invitations to take part would be widely advertised and promoted through local press and radio, through the AONB newsletter, which goes out to every household in the AONB, through parish notice boards and village shops. People would be encouraged to join for as long as they felt able. A key outcome of the Implementation Plan would be the up-skilling of the LAG members.

A sample of existing and potential partners have been contacted to gauge support for the development of a bid and a number have come forward as potential LAG members, grant assessors, project monitors and bid writers.

## 18. What type of activities and projects do you envisage being developed and delivered within your chosen area as part of the implementation of your local development strategy?

It is envisaged that the Chase and Downs LAG would develop at least one major project around training needs as the AONB Management Plan and sub-regional and local strategies/plans have identified this as a priority. To determine how best to deliver this, we have requested funding (see Question 20) to establish the current training provision in the area, identify gaps and determine how these can best be addressed.

It is not possible at this stage to anticipate the split between revenue and capital expenditure. It is however likely that the majority of the money requested would be allocated to a dedicated small grant scheme and a large grant scheme.

The following list indicates the type of projects the LAG may wish to encourage to deliver the objectives of support to rural businesses, improve the quality of life for residents, visitors and workforce and conserve, enhance and take full advantage of the high quality environment.

- the provision and promotion of tailored and targeted training opportunities provided locally
- the promotion and marketing of local products and services
- support for businesses that demonstrate innovative solutions to problems especially where others can learn from them
- identifying and developing local food supply chains including local food distribution infrastructure
- providing support for businesses that make good use of redundant rural buildings
- local food sector projects that demonstrate networking, sharing of best practice and collaborative working
- promoting opportunities to link food and farming sectors to public procurement

- promoting awareness and consumption of local food
- the development of social enterprises
- support inclusive community development in its broadest sense
- enrich individuals lives, strengthen community cohesion and improve places where people live and work
- encourage people to volunteer their time, skills and expertise
- provide creative and innovative solutions for improving access to services and facilities that take account of the differing needs of individuals and communities
- support the expansion of existing services and encourage the creation of new ones
- support local culture and traditions
- create more facilities and opportunities for young people e.g. training to become a representative of the parish council
- provide opportunities to learn new skills
- increase inclusion of older people
- encourage access to the countryside and safer routes to services and facilities
- promote the use of sustainable energy sources and / or promote energy efficiency
- increase the understanding and appreciation of the area

## 19. Funding Profile

	Year 1 (£)	Total All Years (£)	Notes
Total estimated RDPE contribution:	250,000	1,750,000	We feel that this amount would have a significant, demonstrable effect across the Local Action area
Estimated private sector funding required:	80,000	560,000	We would negotiate with businesses and companies to provide help in kind, subsidised services and financial contributions. We would target known and potential rural businesses and would expect the uptake of grants, and therefore the contributions from them, to be significant.
Estimated other public funding (please specify source):	120,000 Local Authority, Natural England	• 840,000	• The partnership local authorities and government bodies have agreed in principle to support this application and could contribute, through

appropriate budgets, to projects that achieved their priorities. We would also use the Sustainable Development Fund to match fund (while in existence) were appropriate

Grand total (all sources):	450,000	3,150,000
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20. What resources do you think you will need to prepare your Local Development Strategy e.g. skills, training, studies of the area?

Chase and Downs LAG seeks £5,000 towards the development of the Local Development Strategy. This would be make up of the following:

The AONB Management Plan, AONB Economic Assessment and a number of community plans clearly identified a lack of appropriate local training opportunities and we would like to address this issue through this programme. We would therefore like to undertake a survey of current training provision in the area to clearly identify gaps and needs and how these might best be addressed - approximately £1,500

Sustainable Tourism has been identified in the AONB Management Plan, AONB Economic Assessment and in the majority of community plans e.g. Dorset Community Strategy and Shaftesbury Area Community Plan as having major potential for improving the local rural economy. We would like to undertake a study of the current provision to identify gaps and opportunities - approximately £1,500

In order to put the Strategy together the LAG would like to hold informal meetings across the AONB area and a more formal meeting in a central location to gain the views and support of as many people as possible. The funding would cover publicity costs, hire of village halls, refreshments, travel/care costs/ interpreters for hard of hearing or people for whom English is a second language (where appropriate) - approximately £750

Training needs of the LAG would be identified and addressed to enable everyone to participate in developing the Strategy.

In order to promote the concept further, the Chase and Downs LAG would like to create a web presence, initially this would be in the form of additional pages to the AONB website. An insert would also be created to go out with the AONB newsletter the Hart, which goes to every house hold in the area. We would also like to engage the services of a consultant to facilitate as wide a community engagement initiative as possible -approximately £650

The bid writers would like to visit other Leader projects in the UK with a view to collaboration and sharing good practice and would seek funding to cover travel expenses - approximately £100

#### Financial and administrative capacity

21. Name of the Lead Organisation

Cranborne Chase and West Wilshire Downs AONB

22. Please mark with an X your chosen type of financial and administrative structure for the LAG

Legally constituted common structure the constitution of which guarantees the satisfactory operation of the partnership •

**or**

An administrative and financially accountable body • X

If your preferred option is an administrative and financially accountable body, provide the information requested in 24-26.

23. Details of your chosen Accountable Body

Organisation Name: Wiltshire County Council
Contact Name: Tim Martienssen
Address: Economy, Regeneration & Intelligence Wiltshire County Council County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 8JN
T: 01225 713000 ex 3291
E: <a href="mailto:timmartienssen@wiltshire.gov.uk">timmartienssen@wiltshire.gov.uk</a>

24. Please mark with an X to confirm that you have enclosed a letter of support from your chosen Accountable Body. • X

25. What experience does the Accountable Body have of managing EU or other public funds?

Wilshire County Council has considerable experience in managing a range of public funds from the EU, central government and regional agencies. WCC currently acts as the Accountable Body through a Programme Secretariat based in the Economy & Intelligence group the following programmes: Co-financed European Social Fund, Leader+ Sustain the Plain, Rural Renaissance, Modernising Rural Delivery and the Rural Social and Community Fund.

The current Programme Manager has experience of working with a diverse range of organisations from the community and voluntary sector, the private sector and the public sector delivering a wide range of projects and audit experience including audits for EU funding.

26. Provide details of how you will ensure that you secure value for money in the administration of the Local Action Group and implementation of the Local Development Strategy.

The Chase and Downs LAG will endeavour to secure value for money by:-

- working within the total budget
- agreeing realistic expectations and targets
- seeking to share the administration, management and monitoring costs with an adjoining LAG
- co-operating on joint projects with other LAGs and/or integrating with other funding streams wherever possible
- through effective training of LAG members to enable them to fully understand the mechanisms of the programme, keep track of project spend and monitor progress
- keep bureaucracy to a minimum by ensuring all paperwork and monitoring systems are as easy to complete as possible, kept to a minimum and are transparent in their purpose. This would be achieved by using existing best practice templates / systems / admin arrangements where possible
- making effective use of the resources of the AONB office and partner organisations

## Expression of Interest – notes for applicants

The following notes are numbered to correspond with the questions in the proforma i.e. note 1 refers to question 1 in the proforma.

1. **Name of Local Action Group** – This may be indicative at this stage and can be changed later.
2. **Contact details** – The contact name should be someone who has been involved in the development of the bid, who is able to answer any questions that may arise.
3. **Target area** – Describe the geographical area covered by this bid. The area should be a defined and coherent sub-regional territory from a geographical, economic and social point of view.
4. **Population** - The target rural area should contain a rural population of between 5,000 and 150,000 people. A case will need to be made to the European Commission for any area with a population outside these limits.
5. **Map** – Enclose a map, which clearly delineates the boundaries of the geographic area covered by the bid. Urban areas, apart from market towns that are included in the bid, should be excluded.
6. **List of wards/parishes** - Indicate which wards and parishes are covered by the target area.
7. **Members of the partnership** – Name the partners organisations, indicating whether the partner is a public or private sector organisation. For each partner indicate the extent of their commitment as follows: NYA (not yet approached), E (endorsed, but no firm commitment) or CC (commitment confirmed). If the level of commitment does not fall into these three categories then describe it in other terms.
8. **How long has the partnership been established and for what purpose?** – Background details on the partnership.
9. **What experience does the partnership have of delivering EU or other public funds?** This should include the experience of the partnership as a whole, if it is an existing partnership, or the experience of members of the partnership, if it is a new partnership.
10. **Rationale** - Rationale for the application of the Leader Approach in your proposed area. This should be based on a socio-economic and environmental analysis of the target area, with objectives and proposed actions that follow clearly from the evidence. The analysis should be made in the context of the 'regional fit' selection criteria, with needs and opportunities clearly identified.
11. **Main objectives of the LAG** – This must include a clear explanation of the objectives of the bid and how they link with the objectives of the South West Regional Implementation Plan and priorities for Community Led Development and the way in which this will impact on rural development in the area. This section should also contain details of any linkages between sub-regional strategies and Programmes.

**12. Fit with National Programme objectives** - Partnerships must show how their development plan contributes to the overall objectives of the Rural Development Programme for England.

**13. Linkages to other initiatives** – Links to other regional and sub-regional plans and programmes, including the linkages with local authority community plans, MCTi community strategic plans and parish plans should be highlighted. This section should also include the relationship of this bid to Local Area Agreements.

**14. Commitment to co-operation** - It is expected that all LAGs will incorporate some inter-territorial or transnational co-operation/ networking activity (which will be used to disseminate best practice across all Local Action Groups). Co-operation could be with another group in England, in another part of the UK or in another Member State. Co-operation may take the form of a specific project, or complementary actions such as joint marketing by Leader groups that share a common interest. The National Rural Network and EU network will be able to assist groups in finding partners. Priority will be given to the selection of local action groups which have integrated co-operation into their Local Development Strategies.”

**15. Sustainability** – Partnerships need to explain how they will apply the principles of sustainable development within their local development strategies. Proposed strategies should take account of the need to:

- Support and enhance the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the area to be covered
- Ensure that resources will be used in such a way that options available to future generations are not impaired: strategies supported must demonstrate that they do not have any significant negative environmental impact.

**16. Integration with other Axes** - Local Action will focus on delivering Axis 3 of the RDPE in the South West. However, it is important that activities funded through Local Action are integrated with activities funded through Axis 1, 2 and 3. It is expected that integration will focus on how LAGs use what is being done under Axis 2 and the activities proposed under Axis 1 and 3 to achieve the aims and objectives of the Community-led Development in their areas. Further information on the activities being funded under Axis 2 is available from Natural England and the Forestry Commission websites. Information on the proposed activities that will be funded under Axis 1 and 3 is available from <http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/rdpe>.

**17. Community participation** – Partnerships must explain how local communities and the voluntary sector have been involved in devising and developing the bid, and what role they will have in implementing the scheme. Links to Local Authority community plans, MCTi community strategic plans and parish plans should also be highlighted.

**18. Activities and projects** – What activities and projects do you envisage being developed and delivered within your chosen area? Indicate the anticipated split between revenue and capital expenditure and please specify if you have particular capital projects in mind?

**19. Funding profile** – Bids for funding should cover the period July 2008 to March 2014. We recognise that funding figures may be estimates at the Expression of Interest stage. However, large deviations from the figures given at the EOI stage will be questioned. So bidders should ensure that the estimates are as accurate as possible.

**20. Resources required to prepare your Local Development Strategy** – Some funding will be available for the skills, training and development of local development strategies to accompany full bids. Please indicate if support is needed and if it is what it is required for and how much funding will be required. A total of £105,000 has been budgeted to support the development of Local Development Strategies in the region. What form the support takes is to be agreed.

**21. Name of the Lead Organisation** – The lead organisation is the one responsible for submitting the bid. This does not imply that this same organisation will take the lead in implementing the bid, should the second stage 'final bid' be successful in being awarded funding.

**22. Financial and administrative structure** - Indicate which type of financial and administrative structure the LAG has chosen.

**23. Details of the Accountable Body** - Details of your chosen Accountable Body, which should include the contact details (name, address, phone number and email address) of a representative of the Accountable Body, who has been involved in the development of the bid and who is able to answer any questions that may arise.

**24. Accountable Body** – Please confirm that you have enclosed a letter of support from your Accountable Body with this proforma.

**25. Managing public funds** - What experience does the Accountable Body have of managing EU or other public funds?

**26. Securing value for money** - Details of how you will ensure that you secure value for money in the administration of the Local Action Group and implementation of the Local Development Strategy