



**West Kent
Partnership**

West Kent LEADER

Local Development Strategy

29 January 2008

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1. Executive Summary

During the last 30 years or so a major decline in employment in the land-based sector has been a feature of the West Kent rural economy. The sector is characterised by low profitability, high levels of self employment and the use of short term casual labour. In common with elsewhere in the sub-region, the land-based sector in West Kent is facing intensive pressures from reform of the CAP and the globalisation of agricultural markets. The levels of profitability in West Kent vary, but for many years many farms have been operating at a loss. Low profitability is a major issue in many areas of horticulture and livestock and income generation from existing woodland has been depressed.

The challenge for the future for farmers and foresters is going to be how to continue to survive, with the changing emphasis on sustainability and the withdrawal of the single farm payment subsidy. Over one fifth of the farms in the area are tenanted and it is this sector who will be most at risk from the change in subsidies as they are least able to invest in alternative sources of income, eg, diversification. Many farms have to operate without full-time employed labour as there are insufficient margins to support an additional wage and the cost of living in the West Kent area is extremely high with a lack of affordable housing for farm workers to rent/buy.

Farming, however, plays a significant part in maintaining the quality of life for the people of the West Kent area, providing a diverse range of foods and helping to maintain valued open spaces and countryside of high visual and ecological value. Livestock farming is particularly suffering in West Kent and this type of farming has an inextricable link with the quality of the environment and the landscape. Farming is also the backbone of a thriving rural tourism sector.

In rural West Kent there are some excellent examples of good forestry management but overall many woodland areas are under-managed. There is potential for improvement through initiatives adding value to coppice products, such as fencing and building products, as well as larger sustainable projects for biomass and renewable energy, particularly on a collective basis.

West Kent has a culture of entrepreneurship and a wealth of tourism opportunities. Both of these play a vital role in contributing to the rural economy and vibrant rural communities. Prosperous and balanced rural communities with high levels of rural enterprise and low levels of disadvantage and deprivation will strengthen the rural economy overall.

Large areas of the countryside in West Kent have landscape designations (AONB, Green Belt, Ancient Woodland, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves). Farming and woodland management is essential for maintaining this precious West Kent asset, including its value for leisure and recreation, tourism and quality of life for rural and urban communities.

Rural West Kent, despite some affluent areas, has deprivation issues to address, particularly in relation to low income and high housing costs. There are higher levels of adults with no qualifications or level 1 qualifications and in low income elementary occupations than the average in the South East. The loss of employment land to housing is a significant issue for the rural communities and has also led to a narrowing of employment availability in recent years. Home ownership is often out of the reach of local people with average house prices in West Kent more than double those in East Kent for a similar type of property.

The West Kent Leader Programme has an over arching principle - to promote sustainable business growth within the land based and rural economies in the area. Investment through the Leader Programme is intended to improve the long term viability of businesses and to reduce their reliance on future support funding. Leader will help add value and ensure and enhance sustainable development.

West Kent Leader's key objectives are to

- Improve competitiveness and financial sustainability of West Kent's farming and forestry
- Encourage innovation and diversification in West Kent's land based sector
- Promote entrepreneurship in rural West Kent
- Encourage the development of rural tourism-related businesses
- Address pockets of deprivation and encourage vibrant rural communities
- Ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development

West Kent's main priority is to maximise spending and support for farmers and foresters and these sectors will receive 75% of all available project funding under the Leader programme. There is considerable farmer involvement in the Local Action Group (LAG) and this ratio reflects the funding priorities in West Kent. Membership of the LAG is shown at Annex 8.

Sevenoaks District Council is the accountable body and will employ the programme manager, alongside the West Kent Partnership co-ordinator. The LAG will have strategic management support from the West Kent Partnership with continuity of involvement of organisations and individuals across both the West Kent and LAG partnerships.

2. The West Kent Local Action Group

2.1 Features of the area and its coherence

Geography

The West Kent Leader area lies within the three local authority areas of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells plus those parts of Medway and Gravesham included in the Kent Downs AONB (see below). In total this is an area of approximately 550 square miles and represents some 38% of Kent. West Kent is a cohesive area with many organisations and businesses operating across the area and incorporating West Kent in their names. Local residents also tend to have an affinity with the term ‘West Kent’ as distinct from eastern and northern parts of the County.

Social and economic conditions

Against a range of key economic indicators, West Kent performs better than other Kent sub-regions and is near to the overall South East average. Overall, however, the economy is considered to be small scale, lacks dynamism and lags behind the South East in terms of knowledge driven services. (Kent Economic Report, KCC, 2004). Compared to our near neighbour in East Surrey, the local economy significantly under-performs in a number of key areas (West Kent Area Investment Framework 2006-09).

The future competitiveness and quality of life in rural West Kent is under threat from global, national and regional economic trends. In addition, the area lies outside of the two Kent growth areas in North Kent and Ashford and will thus not benefit directly from this investment. The impact of climate change and the need to address sustainability issues as integral elements of economic growth have also been identified as important issues locally. West Kent recognises the need to address these issues in a positive way and approach them as opportunities for innovation, economic growth and pathways to new markets.

These issues are addressed in the [West Kent Area Investment Framework](#) which provides an agreed action plan for addressing economic and regeneration issues which are common across the West Kent area. A summary of this appears at Annex 3. This is delivered through the West Kent Partnership. There are four AIFs covering the whole of Kent. West Kent receives no devolved funding from SEEDA and so was not required to produce an AIF. However, West Kent has a history of co-operative working across boundaries and involving various agencies and the decision was taken to produce our own AIF to provide a focus for economic activity.

The current version of the AIF was developed through stakeholder consultation and workshops and is closely linked to the shared themes identified in the three sustainable community plans which involved considerable public consultation. The importance of the need for vibrant rural and land-based economies, particularly, the land-based sector emerged as a strong theme from the consultation. *Maximise opportunities for landbased and other rural businesses* is one of the seven strategic objectives for West Kent.

The three West Kent districts are classified by Defra as either Rural (Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling) or semi rural (Tunbridge Wells). The rural population accounts for 35% of Kent's total rural population and as at September 2007 there were 346 enterprises within the Agricultural, Hunting, forestry and Fishing SIC codes (20% Kent and Medway total). West Kent is particularly vulnerable to relative economic decline due to its predominantly rural nature and the high level of constraints on future development in the area such as high quality landscape and metropolitan green belt. The rural areas of West Kent, however, cannot be regarded as 'remote'. They enjoy close linkages with the urban centres across West Kent including the towns of Sevenoaks, Swanley, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and the urban area of Malling.

Large parts of the West Kent rural area can be considered as 'peri-urban'. There is thus considerable economic and social interdependence between urban West Kent and rural West Kent. The close proximity to London and the good transport links facilitating the movement of commuters to the City, is a significant feature of the area. There is potential for landbased and rural businesses to access a vast market, literally on their doorstep and for the nearby urban communities to have access to the beautiful West Kent landscape and enjoy the tourism and leisure opportunities it provides.

During the last 30 years or so a major decline in employment in the land-based sector has been a feature of the West Kent rural economy. It is characterised by low profitability and high levels of self employment and short term casual labour. In common with elsewhere in the sub-region, the land-based sector in West Kent is facing intensive pressures from reform of the CAP and the globalisation of agricultural markets. Given that the land-based sector also provides a vital role in maintaining the high quality landscape in West Kent, it is important that steps are taken to help this sector to thrive including promoting farm diversification initiatives.

Population

Within West Kent, the population of the area to be covered by this bid is just over 134,000 (Census 2001). All rural wards (as defined by Defra) across the West Kent area are included apart from the new community at Kings Hill which is now a predominantly urban ward. In addition, the following areas within West Kent have also been included as we believe these are also rural in character: Hildenborough ward (rural part only), West Malling ward, Speldhurst and Bidborough ward, Ash ward (rural part only), Hartley ward (rural part only).

Of the 32 SEEDA small rural towns in Kent, 12 of these are in West Kent, and 10 are located in rural wards. All of these are small with either an A or B size classification. These small rural towns have a vital role to play in the rural economy providing services and acting as a hub for their rural hinterland. Those who have completed a healthcheck are Cranbrook and Edenbridge. Those currently carrying out a healthcheck are Hawkhurst, Paddock Wood and West Malling. All of these are identified in Kent Prospects as Rural Service Centres and are included in the bid area. The rural parts of Westerham, Borough Green, Kemsing, Otford and Snodland wards have been included in the bid area and the LAG would welcome project applications from these areas. The West Kent Partnership's Priority Communities Study, 2005, identified two of the small rural towns, Edenbridge and Snodland, as priority communities for regeneration as they fall within some of the most deprived wards across West Kent based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Additional areas within the Kent Downs AONB within Aylesford and Blue Bell Hill wards (Tonbridge and Malling) and Dunton Green, St Johns and Kippington wards (Sevenoaks) have also been included to ensure the whole of the Kent Downs AONB (that falls within West Kent) is included. This also means that this bid area is contiguous with the bid area for Kent Downs and Marshes and will facilitate cross LAG working on Kent Downs-wide issues and projects.

Some small areas of the Kent Downs AONB fall in areas outside of the West Kent Partnership area. These are in the wards of Halling/Cuxton (Medway Unitary) and Shorne/Cobham/Luddesdown and Meopham/Vigo (Gravesham Borough). To ensure consistency in the treatment of the Kent Downs AONB, we believe these additional areas should also be included within the proposed West Kent bid area.

Based on population estimates the total population of the entire bid area falls within the 150000 population ceiling.

2.2 Map showing area and border – Annex 1

2.3 Table showing parishes included in the leader area and rural population stats – Annex 2

2.4 SWOT analysis see Annex 4

2.5 List of key issues to be addressed using the Leader approach and a description of how these issues have been identified

***** Evidence to support these issues is shown at annex 5.***

Key Issue 1 – Threats to competitiveness of farming and forestry sectors **

The levels of profitability in West Kent vary, but for many years many farms have been operating at a loss. Low profitability is a major issue in many areas of horticulture and livestock and income generation from existing woodland has been depressed (Land Based

Economy of Kent). Many tenanted farms in particular have found conditions very tough through paying rent whereas owner occupiers often have only a small or no mortgage to fund.

Against this background the phrase 'asset rich, cash poor' summarises many aspects of farming over the last 10 years. With the average age of farmers increasing, many with no pension provision, the need to optimise profits whilst remaining on the farm is a key driver. Keeping the holding both provides a home and also a capital source for the family. In tenant farming, and particularly in West Kent, the value of houses far outstrips the rental value of the land, and there is a tendency for houses to be sold off separately. In addition, pockets of farmland may be sold for development and traditional land management may cease when farmland changes hands.

Key Issue 2 – Need for innovation and diversification in land based sector **

The challenge for the future for the land-based sector is going to be how to continue to survive, with the changing emphasis on sustainability and the withdrawal of the single farm payment subsidy. Over one fifth of the farms in the area are tenanted and it is this sector that will be most at risk from the change in subsidies as they are least able to invest in alternative sources of income, eg, diversification. Many farms have to operate without full time employed labour as there are insufficient margins to support an additional wage and the cost of living in the West Kent area is extremely high with a lack of affordable housing for farm workers to rent/buy. There is thus a need to encourage schemes of diversification within farms to improve cash flow and the profitability of agricultural businesses. Profits raised through new ventures will be important in helping to underpin the overall viability of farm units and thus enable agricultural activities with lower profit margins to continue with extra financial support.

Key Issue 3 – Scope to build on entrepreneurial culture

Despite the decline in the landbased sector (33% reduction since 2006), the rural economy in West Kent accounts for over 40% of the total West Kent business population and over a quarter of all Kent rural businesses. (ref Understanding Business In Kent, Business Link, September 2007). Indeed the majority of rural businesses are rurally-based as opposed to land-based. Most of these are micro or small businesses, many of them built around the knowledge economy.

A recent study by the West Kent Partnership found that the highest proportion of homeworkers in the area lived in rural wards with some rural wards such as Ightham and Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount showing nearly 50% of all self employed as homeworkers. The number of employees in this SME sector is higher than average in Kent in the rural areas of Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling. This is an area of the economy which can be stimulated with appropriate support. Assistance with entrepreneurship and further growth within the SME sector across the rural part of West Kent could therefore have a significant positive impact on the economy as a whole.

Key Issue 4 – Potential to develop tourism to strengthen rural economy

Tourism plays a significant part in the West Kent economy in general (£446M in 2003, 44% of which from Tunbridge Wells Borough) but, with the wealth of historic properties and other key visitor sites in the rural areas, there is scope to develop this sector. The Heart of Kent Strategy 2006-2011 identifies that tourism depends on a high quality environment for its success. Tourism is not only significant in terms of the economy and employment but also in conserving the natural and built environments. Where tourism is popular, it underpins local commercial activity and services and contributes to rural regeneration. Proximity to the newly opened Ebbsfleet Eurostar station and major new housing developments in North Kent present opportunities to increase tourism/leisure take up.

2.6 Specific evidence to identify the areas and types of disadvantage that exist in the LAG area – shown at annex 5**Key Issue 5 – Rural deprivation and quality of life ****

Rural West Kent, despite some affluent areas, has deprivation issues to address particularly in relation to low income and high housing costs. There are higher levels of adults with no qualifications or level 1 qualifications and in low income elementary occupations than the average in the South East. The loss of employment land to housing is a significant issue for the rural communities and has also led to a narrowing of employment availability in recent years. Home ownership is often out of the reach of local people with average house prices in West Kent more than double those in East Kent for a similar type of property.

Key Issue 6 – Need to ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development

West Kent is characterised by a very high quality environment with much of the area comprising Green Belt or designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Medway Valley is a key unifying landscape feature. Even though the South East is densely populated, bisected by congested motorways and dominated by service industries, more than 80% of the region is classified as rural. One third of its countryside is protected for its landscape quality and 10% of UK farms are found there.

Farming plays a significant part in maintaining the quality of life for the people of the West Kent area, providing a diverse range of foods and helping to maintain valued open spaces. Farming is also the backbone of a thriving rural tourism sector. Profitable agriculture is essential to the management of the countryside that all can enjoy. This is because farming has shaped the landscape – landscapes are semi-natural, dependant upon management and grazing by livestock and many of the features, such as hedges, are products of centuries of farming.

3. The Local Development Strategy

3.1 Description of the process and activities undertaken by the LAG to engage their rural communities and businesses in the development of this LDS.

A list at annex 6 shows those involved in the consultation surrounding the Expression of Interest and are being kept informed. Subsequently, a working party has developed the bid and all have been given the opportunity to comment on the draft LDS. Information on engagement with West Kent Leader was available at the West Kent Rural Conference on 27 November attended by 110 delegates (attendance list at annex 7). At a Leader meeting the same afternoon, key objectives/issues for West Kent were discussed and attendees invited to sign up to the LAG.

The LAG executive met on January 8th and the wider LAG on 22nd January.

Editorial was taken in the November issue of SE Farmer inviting farmers and foresters to attend the conference and Leader meeting.

Two press releases have been circulated: one after the successful EOI; and the second prior to the conference and Leader consultation on 27 November. Both resulted in some press coverage including a radio interview on the morning of the conference.

Details on the potential West Kent Leader appear on the West Kent Partnership website. The key themes were endorsed by the West Kent Partnership at its meeting on 1st November and taken back to partners' organisations.

3.2 Description of the main themes and activities that will be addressed in this LAG and the groups you aim to target.

The West Kent Leader Programme has an over arching principle - to promote sustainable business growth within the land based and rural economies in the area. Investment through the Leader Programme is intended to improve the long term viability of businesses and to reduce their reliance on future support funding. Leader will help add value and ensure and enhance sustainable development. This links to Strategic Objective 7 of the West Kent AIF – Maximise opportunities for land based and rural businesses. The programme will:

- Maximise direct support to land based businesses
- Provide ongoing project guidance which will complement business support provided through business Link and provide sustained help for supported projects whilst obtaining monitoring and evaluation information (minimise paperwork for farmers)
- Support activity which complements but does not compete with Business Support Simplification Policy

Outline – Main Themes and Activities

Targeted Groups	Mechanisms	2008-2013 (6 years)	
Direct Support for land based businesses	Facilitation *	In management costs	Support collaborative working/project development
	Feasibility funding support	100,000	Max up to 75% costs – 10 studies
	Project funding support (at least 70% capital funding)	1,000,000	£50K max up to 50% costs – 20+ projects supported
	Business development and training workshops	150,000	C £30K pa
	Joint activity – other LAGs	100,000	C £20K pa
Direct Support to community based organisations		250,000	* Facilitation will also be provided
Management/Accountable Body		400,000	
Total		2,000,000	

3.3 The proposed objectives and priorities for the area

West Kent LAG Objectives	West Kent Issues	Linkage to RDPE* Measures	Indicative local priorities (overall funding share)
<p>Improve competitiveness and financial sustainability of West Kent's farming and forestry</p>	<p>Key Issue 1 - Threats to competitiveness of farming & forestry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low profitability in much of the sector leading to low levels of reinvestment, particularly livestock farming • Average farm incomes below the regional/national average • Future financial difficulty with the ending of the Single Farm Payment • High number of private sector woodland owners • High number of small farms lack economies of scale • Opportunity to add value to agricultural produce • Poor management practices in parts of West Kent's woodland • Many woodland owners unaware of the benefits of management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernisation of Agricultural holdings (121) • Improving the economic value of Forests (122) • Adding value to agriculture and forestry products (123) • Co-operation for the development of new products (124) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the efficiency and sustainability of plant and buildings • On-farm renewable energy e.g. for heating/power • Alternative agriculture: growing alternative crops to include bio-energy crops in appropriate circumstances • Investing in facilities to enable capital equipment machinery sharing • Purchase/hire of machinery to improve woodland habitats/harvesting/in forest processing of wood fuel • Investment in recreational enterprises/environmental interpretation • Woodland co-operatives for development and storage of woodchips for fuel • Processing /packaging • Development of Farmers Markets • Local product branding • Development of new co-operative ventures to develop new agricultural products and processes (25%)

West Kent LAG Objectives	West Kent Issues	Linkage to RDPE Measures	Indicative local priorities (overall funding share)
Encourage innovation and diversification in West Kent's land based sector	<p>KI 2 - Need for innovation and diversification in land based sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunities for farmers/foresters to add significant value in some areas of farming • High proportion of tenant farmers and private sector landlords less willing to invest in diversification • Ageing farming population may be more resistant to change • Local survey of farmers identified need for business information and advice. Business competence is key to successful start-up and ongoing profitability of diversified businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification into non-agricultural activities (311) • <i>Training and information for Micro businesses (331)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of lakes/ponds for fishing, other leisure businesses • Tourism diversification • Farm/forest environmental interpretation for visitors, including schools • On-farm retail developments • Development of Bio-fuels for local residents • Processing facilities for bio-diesel production • Building conversion for alternative workspace • Identification of training requirements and signposting or delivery of training to underpin success <p>(35%)</p>
Promote entrepreneurship in rural West Kent	<p>KI 3 Scope to build on entrepreneurial culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of rural based businesses in West Kent with a high proportion home-based (50% in some rural areas) • These West Kent businesses often address local market needs, have small supply chains and have good survival rates (less dependent on global market fluctuations) • This is an area to build on, to provide additional off-farm income and for rural residents generally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the creation and development of micro-businesses (312) • Training and information for Micro businesses (331) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of business workshops to farmers and rural businesses generally • IT support for rural businesses • Business networking and integrated sustainable development advice <p>(7.5%)</p>

West Kent LAG Objectives	West Kent Issues	Linkage to RDPE Measures	Indicative local priorities (overall funding share)
Encourage the development of rural tourism related businesses	<p>KI 4 Potential to develop tourism to strengthen rural economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism is already an important part of the rural West Kent economy High quality historic and visitor sites are in the rural area (e.g. Chartwell, Sissinghurst, Knole, Ightham Mote, Scotney Castle, Hever Castle, Penshurst Place and picturesque villages) and provide scope for further tourism initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement of tourism (313) <i>Training and information for Micro businesses (331)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of self catering accommodation Marketing and promotion of the area, specific sites, networks Projects promoting local distinctiveness New on-farm tourism facilities <p>(3.75%)</p>
Address pockets of deprivation and encourage vibrant rural communities	<p>KI 5 Rural Deprivation and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> low incomes in the West Kent rural area high proportion of social rented housing relative to rural SE relatively high level of deprivation regarding access to housing and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic services (321) Village renewal and development (322) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support for post office network/village shops Development/enhancement of social facilities Rural housing parish surveys, design statements and parish plans <p>(3.75%)</p>
Ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development	<p>KI 6 Need to ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large area of countryside with landscape designations (AONB, Green Belt, Ancient Woodland, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves) farming and woodland management essential for maintaining this precious West Kent asset, including its value for leisure and recreation, tourism and quality of life for rural and urban communities 	<p>Cross cutting theme, relevant to all the above.</p> <p>Farmers and foresters will be made aware of, and encouraged to apply to Natural England and the Forestry Commission for, Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage (323) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small scale environmental management projects (outside scope of ELS, etc) <p>(2.5%)</p>

NB excludes an additional 2.5% funding for collaborative schemes with other LEADER areas

* RDPE – Rural Development Programme for England

3.4 Indicate how these proposals fit with the RDPE, Regional and National priorities, and how they align with local strategies and initiatives eg LAA's, National Park Plans, AONB management plans, Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy etc.

The table above demonstrates the very clear links to RDPE, which in turn link to Regional and National priorities. At a more local level, there is a significant degree of synergy between AIF strategic objective 7 – *Maximise opportunities for landbased and other rural businesses* and the RDPE measures being addressed by the Leader programme. The West Kent AIF (2006-2009) was developed through input from specific working groups, workshops and stakeholder consultation. In addition, it carries forward common themes identified in the 3 district sustainable community strategies which have benefited from extensive public and stakeholder consultation. The AIF draws its policy context from SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016, The Vision for Kent, The Kent Agreement (in particular Block 8 concerning Economic Development and Sustainable Communities); Kent Prospects 2006-2012 and the Strategic Investment and Policy Framework for Rural Kent.

Annex 6 lists the partners involved in consultation since the EOI development and those partners have had the opportunity to ensure clear links to their own management plans and strategies. The LDS links to the Kent Downs Management Plan for 2004-2009 and High Weald Management Plan 2004 and projects will be required to conform to published guidance from Kent Downs AONB and High Weald AONB where available. *Looking Outwards: Fresh Ideas and Good Practice in Europe's Countryside – towards a stronger identity and greater public commitment for the Kent Downs AONB in the 21st Century (March 2006)* identifies the opportunities through RDPE for the AONB to contribute to the quality of life and social and economic well-being of the wider community.

The West Kent LAG is committed to drawing the links across the 3 axis and will signpost applicants as appropriate to axis 2 support for agri-environment projects. Natural England and Forestry Commission representatives are members of the LAG. Training and skills development opportunities will be identified as part of the appraisal of all projects and applicants will be strongly encouraged to access training via the appropriate training providers under measure 111. For rural businesses appropriate training and information will be built into projects and delivered via Leader under 331. Applicants who are considering more major projects of a value of £100K and above that would more appropriately be delivered via direct SEEDA funding will be referred to SEEDA.

3.5 How you plan to use Leader and other funding streams to address these issues. How you plan to use non-RDPE funding streams to support and add-value to the Leader activities

West Kent's priorities are to maximise spending and support for farmers and foresters, building in an approach to keep a supportive relationship. The farming and forestry sectors will benefit from 65% of all the funding. Project appraisal checklists will ensure that all projects granted funding relate directly to addressing the identified issues for West Kent. All projects will have to demonstrate that they

will be able to become self-sustaining and all commercial projects will need to demonstrate that they will add to the overall financial sustainability of the business of the project applicant.

The LAG will consider the use of other sources of public funding to supplement Leader grants but no such combination of funding will exceed 50% grant funding for commercial projects. There are currently no firm sources of additional funding identified but the LAG will explore this with key partners as the Leader programme develops. This may include working co-operatively with the Small Rural Towns co-ordinator to identify projects which might receive dual funding, especially as we have such a high proportion of small rural towns in West Kent. Business Link will sit on the executive group and on all 3 Kent LAGs and it is anticipated that, as well as being the primary access route for business support services for applicants, its expertise and resources will add value to Leader projects development and delivery. The Forestry Commission at Bedgebury Forest will be approached to consider jointly funding forestry projects. The West Kent Partnership through its economy sub group may be able to identify further match funding opportunities.

3.6 The proposed programme of activities that will deliver the LAG objectives and how facilitation resources will be focused.

Indicative local priorities are shown on page 11 – ***3.3 The proposed objectives and priorities for the area.*** These indicative local priorities are drawn from potential projects already brought to the West Kent LAG. A full list appears at 3.16 on page 23. The programme of proposed activities from which projects might be developed over the duration of the programme is shown below listed under the 6 objectives for West Kent Leader. Facilitation resources will be focused primarily on objectives 1 and 2 which are designed to develop a more sustainable land based sector in West Kent.

Improve competitiveness and financial sustainability of West Kent's farming and forestry

- Co-ordinating advice and support for farmers and foresters
- Increasing ancient woodland understanding and protection
- Improving the competitiveness and profitability of the existing land-based sector
- Identifying appropriate skills and training requirements and signposting to training providers
- Promoting alternative crops including biofuels and biomass initiatives (in appropriate circumstances)
- Adding value to local produce
- Promoting the production, sale and marketing of local produce and products and local branding within the communities of Kent

Encourage innovation and diversification in West Kent's land based sector

- Assistance with farm diversification projects
- Enabling diversification of the significant woodland and forestry resource
- The creation and facilitation of networking opportunities to encourage potential food tourism outlets
- Working with the existing land-based sector to develop new start-up enterprises and reverse the declining revenues in their sector

Promote entrepreneurship in rural West Kent

- Support for rural businesses
- Encouraging the development of SME's in rural areas
- Promoting entrepreneurship
- Facilitating business start-ups, early stage survival and provision of premises
- Responding to the needs of business in the rural communities for enhanced levels of, and access to, locally focussed and delivered business support services, training and technology

Encourage the development of rural tourism related businesses

- Support for rural tourism and leisure businesses
- Making a strong link between local food production, local tourism and the environment
- Promoting links between tourism and the landbased sector

3.7 Specifically how you plan to address disadvantage and economic regeneration in this area

Address pockets of deprivation and encourage vibrant rural communities

- Working with community groups to encourage and support the creation of rural wealth, improve social exclusion and reduce the numbers of rural economically inactive through enhancing entrepreneurship and increasing the formation of new start-up enterprises, both commercial and social.
- Working in partnership to address pockets of rural worklessness

- Encouraging the sustainable exchange of goods and services between the rural areas and the near urban and growth areas.
- Working across LAGs to share best practice and develop business networks and network/supply chain cluster opportunities
- Addressing rural deprivation and barriers to housing and services in rural communities
- Exploiting the peri-urban nature of West Kent and encouraging a positive, sustainable exchange with urban settlements, London and Northern Europe
- Supporting village plans and design statements and maintaining their distinctiveness

3.8 Commitment to sustainability and how this will be delivered

Ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development (cross cutting theme, relevant to all the above)

- Ensuring that the integrity of sensitive landscapes such as AONB are conserved and enhanced through appropriate management
- Promoting adaptation to the environmental challenges of climate change and sustainability
- Promotion and support of renewables
- Promotion and support of landscape and biodiversity enhancement
- Working with farms and land managers to minimize environmental impact
- Reconnecting farmers with their local markets to improve the efficiency of the food chain and reduce carbon emissions.
- Working with businesses in the rural areas to reduce their environmental impact by developing better work-life balance practices
- Encouraging the use of technology to reduce business travel and support home-working
- Encouraging access to good practice guidance on land management (where available)
- Addressing resource management and protection (soils and water), energy efficiency and renewables, waste and recycling within the landbased sector
- Ensuring all projects conform to the SEEDA sustainability checklist.

When developing its Local Development Strategy, the LAG has worked with local and regional stakeholders in embracing environmental sustainability as part of the strategy. A key concern in West Kent is the impact on the local environment of a depressed land based sector, with knock-on implications for tourism and quality of life issues. Any project brought to the LAG will need to address environmental sustainability and will need to include a supporting environmental appraisal. Applicants from within the Kent Downs AONB area will be expected to comply with the guidance in the Landscape Design Handbook. Within the High

Weald AONB applicants should contact the High Weald AONB Unit for further information and guidance. The LAG will use their overview/co-ordinating position to signpost applicants to environmental initiatives at a local level where projects can work together to address environmental sustainability and thus benefit from economies of scale. Defra's *Every Action Counts* programme will be an integral part of the Strategy. The LAG will take advice from Kent-based environmental bodies such as CEN on the further development of the West Kent Leader programme.

There is also the issue of financial sustainability and the West Kent Leader Programme has an over-arching principle - to promote sustainable business growth within the land based and rural economies in the area. Investment through the Leader Programme is intended to improve the viability of businesses to reduce reliance on future support funding.

3.9 Breakdown of projects by type and sector with reference to the spreadsheet showing investment profiles and outputs

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	%
Axis 1		0	75,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	80,000	500,000	25%
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings								
122	Improving the economic value of forests								
123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products								
124	Co-operation for the development of new products								
Axis 3									
311	Diversification into non agricultural activities	120,000	120,000	120,000	115,000	115,000	110,000	700,000	35%
312	Support the creation and development micro bus	7,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	13,000	75,000	3.75%
313	Encourage the development of tourism	7,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	13,000	75,000	3.75%
321 & 322	Basic services/village renewal & development	7,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	13,000	75,000	3.75%
323	Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage	4,000	7,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	9,000	50,000	2.50%
331	Training and information for micro businesses	7,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	13,000	75,000	3.75%
Axis 4									
421	Co-operation with other LAGs		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	50,000	2.50%
431	Accountable body etc	36,229	69,412	70,614	74,036	74,791	74,918	400,000	20%
Total		188,229	321,412	385,614	384,036	384,791	335,918	2,000,000	100%

Notes

- £1,200,000 direct support to farmers and foresters 60%
- £275,000 includes support to farmers and foresters but not exclusively 13.75%
- N+2 to be utilised in axis 3
- This is a summary only – a full breakdown is given in spreadsheet submitted separately with application.
- 421 – joint projects are also anticipated within other measures

As a new Leader area, and one particularly rich in agricultural and forestry land, with a high percentage of rural micro businesses and with a population of close to the 150K maximum, we anticipate that our funding requirement will be towards the high end of what is available. Our programme is based on £2M but with the entrepreneurial culture in West Kent, and the high take up among farmers of previous funding, we anticipate that plenty of viable projects will be brought forward and that we would have the capacity to deliver a larger programme should the funds be available.

3.10 Profile of facilitation activities and costs

The main focus of activity for the LAG during the second half of 2008 and into 2009 will be to facilitate projects being brought forward. This will include:

- Liaison with all those who have submitted potential project ideas during the development phase, assisting with completion of EOIs and bringing early potential projects to appraisal stage during late 2008. Funded from management costs.
- Enabling LAG members to begin to draw in project ideas from the wider community. Funded from management costs.
- Consideration of developing facilitation projects built around a specialist area and supported by an outside organisation. There may be scope to do this on a cross LAG basis both within Kent and with Surrey Hills and Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership (WARR). As such facilitation projects would be drawing on project funding they will have to demonstrate that they will deliver activities that will help achieve the LAG objectives and one of the key result indicators will be the submission of a specified number of Leader project applications from rural business and communities. Such potential cross LAG facilitation projects are listed under 3.16 and it is anticipated that the two facilitation projects proposed by the Kent Downs AONB/BLK/PinK consortium will be brought forward for appraisal to all 3 Kent LAGs at an early stage and if approved will stimulate farm diversification project applications in particular. Costs will be met from project funding but will be shared across the 3 Kent LAGs.

3.11 The funding resources needed to deliver the programme and the profile of funding required.

Projected accountable body/management costs

Calendar year basis

Cost excludes SDC contribution of office space, IT/telecoms support, line management for appraisal/pastoral purposes, SDC training and development

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Programme Manager	18,229	45,062	46,414	47,806	49,241	50,718	257,470
Assumes 25% on costs and 3% inflation pa							
Travel 5000 miles pa	1,000	2,250	2,500	2,750	2,750	2,800	14,050
Marketing and Events	5,000	3,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,000	15,000
Recruitment costs	2,000						2,000
Financial control/ accountable body (28 days pa @ £350 per day SDC)	5,000	10,100	10,400	10,700	11,000	10,400	57,600
							0
							0
Support/monitoring/facilitation/appraisal	3,500	9,000	9,300	9,600	9,800	10,000	51,200
							0
Laptop/training	1,500			1,180			2,680
	36,229	69,412	70,614	74,036	74,791	74,918	400,000

3.12 How the LAG partnership will work with their constituency of rural business and communities to market the Leader programme and achieve submission of good projects. How they plan to facilitate and develop projects and the resources required. How they plan to ensure value for money.

The West Kent LAG is committed to making full use of the opportunities to foster projects in rural communities through Leader funding. There is a high level of interest in the LAG and marketing by word of mouth is anticipated. Additionally, the programme manager will spend much of the first year working on facilitation and building up potential.

The LAG partners will be key drivers in working with their rural communities to identify and bring forward projects for LEADER funding. The high percentage of farmers on the LAG should ensure that sufficient farming projects are brought forward. Hadlow College, one of the RBAT providers, are members of the LAG and close links will be maintained. The LAG will engage with rural communities through a series of workshops and through networking both at community level in concert with consultation on the sustainable community plans but also with rural businesses through the auspices of business support organisations, in particular, Business Link Kent who are active members of the WKP and its various subgroups. The Forestry Commission Woodland Officer on the LAG will signpost potential applicants to the Leader programme and establish links between the LAG and organisations such as CEN, TV Energy and Woodland Fuels Group. Kent Downs AONB will promote the programme through the *Orchid* Newspaper and on their website and it is anticipated that other partners will provide similar signposting.

A Voice for Business Group is being developed in West Kent, run for and by local businesses. The predominance of SMEs in West Kent will be reflected in the constituency of this group and many of these are rural based businesses. The specific issues for rural businesses are likely to be a major strand of this group's activity and a dedicated website is under development for businesses to contribute to.

The West Kent Partnership, through its partners and wide-ranging subgroup membership, is already engaged at various levels with rural communities and businesses. For example, the Kent Association of Local Councils sit on the WKP and there is a rural task group. The WKP is closely linked to the sustainable community plans of the 3 districts which involve in-depth community consultation, for example, with rural parish councils.

The support of rural businesses falls within the remit of one of the West Kent Partnership's sub groups which is addressing ***sustaining and supporting the local economy*** and members of this group are on the LAG executive and will work jointly with the LAG in developing and maintaining an appropriate route to engagement with rural businesses.

Innovation will be encouraged and best practice identified and adopted. Training needs within all projects will be identified and for axis one projects applicants will be signposted to training providers who are delivering training direct on behalf of SEEDA.

Value for money will be ensured by encouraging maximum input from applicants. It is unlikely that community projects will be funded at 100% and there will be a requirement to address community involvement either in kind or through community fundraising. Commercial projects will be assessed on a needs basis and where an applicant can reasonably fund all or most of the project, this must be taken into consideration when assessing the application.

3.13 The LAG plans for co-operation and networking

It is intended that the West Kent LAG will become involved in some pan Kent projects as many organisations are represented on all 3 Kent LAGs. Additionally, a Kent wide group is to be established which will draw the links between the various programmes. Opportunities will be explored to develop projects across the Kent Downs AONB in collaboration with Kent Downs and Marshes LAG. Projects, including facilitation projects, sharing specialist area project facilitators, are anticipated with the other 2 Kent LAGs and opportunities to extend these and/or other projects to West Kent's adjacent LAGs – WARR and Surrey Hills will be explored. Such facilitation projects, which may be around specialist areas such as rural tourism and farm diversification, will be designed to bring forward viable Leader applications and the use of the shared resource will ensure best value for money.

The West Kent LAG will participate actively in SEEDA organised networking activities for Programme Managers and LAGs and seek to learn from best practice from other Leader programmes.

3.14 How the LAG plans to deliver value for money outcomes using Leader funding

Administration and management processes will be as streamlined as possible, with shared use of resources so that maximum time can be spent by the programme manager on supporting the facilitation and development of projects. Cross LAG working to deliver projects will result in savings in administration costs – only one LAG needs to monitor/support.

A robust project appraisal process will ensure that projects that secure funding satisfy criteria requiring commercial projects to be of high quality at low cost and an ongoing performance monitoring of the project delivery will keep projects on track. Applicants will need to demonstrate a need for the funding and value for money. The emphasis will be on lower financial input for highest outcomes. This will be achieved through provision of pump-priming funding and an emphasis on capital rather than revenue projects and

demonstrable efficiencies in delivery. All projects will have to demonstrate long term financial sustainability to ensure that projects supported by Leader have a long term legacy beyond the end of the programme.

3.15 Complementarity with other programmes

Links will be identified with other programmes to ensure that programmes complement each other and to identify potential savings, efficiencies and benefits to the rural community and ensure against duplication. Close working relationships will be maintained with the Small Rural Towns programme to ensure, for example, that projects coming forward under that programme, make the right references and links to the rural hinterland of those towns. Similar links will be identified for other areas with potential complementarity such as Big Lottery funding.

3.16 List of potential projects already identified (There has been no filtering of projects received to date.)

Outline project ideas have been received from the following. It is anticipated that many of these can be developed into EOIs at an early stage and a proportion will continue to full application which if successful will have anticipated delivery commencing late 2008 and into 2009.

- AIF in partnership with West Kent College – IT support to rural businesses
- Medway Valley Countryside Park
 - project to provide a sustainable outdoor programme to enable all to participate in outdoor activities and pursuits using the natural environment
 - Project around countryside management and enhancement projects, 3 areas – habitat focused, sustainable resources focused and access focused
 - Project around river Len. – enhance the corridor for biodiversity, access/landscape and communities.
 - Green tourism project around provision of network of green cycle routes
 - Business and Biodiversity project
- Burgess Stores Goudhurst – local food in village shops
- Foxbury Farm, Stone Street, Sevenoaks – fruit farm actively seeking to diversify
- Commonwork, Bore Place – aiming to become zero fossil energy site on dairy farm; various projects including updating buildings and replacing methane digester

- Alastair Jessel, owner of Taywell farm shop seeking to construct lake for fruit irrigation purposes, stock with fish, get fishermen to fish and sell fish to local outlets. Already make fruit sorbets and ice cream, and looking to do tours of farm, corporate fishing and clay pigeon days etc. (irrigation element will need to be discussed with SEEDA)
- NT farm at Sissinghurst – project to become self contained, organic basis
- Horsenden village hall upgrade – could be used as match funding as part of an application for County Village Hall funding
- Barnfield Oast self catering holidays – expand, transform and develop a sustainable tourism business – planning permission obtained for 3 holiday units
- Twig Trading Ltd, landscape and countryside management business – creation of office and file store
- ESUS Forestry and Woodlands
 - Consortium to own and manage logging and harvesting equipment
 - Apprenticeship support scheme
- Kent High Weald – various projects
 - Footprints across the Weald – delivering educational programme in partnership with schools
 - Help the High Weald – promoting access to the countryside, including from the urban fringe and encouraging under-represented groups
 - Help the High Weald – package expert lead advice delivered across 4 groups which will potentially encompass the majority of landowners and sites within West Kent
- Chalkfoot professional arts organisation helping rural communities tap into new cultural, social and – through transferred skills – potential business opportunities
- Small rural towns programme – projects to serve hinterlands of small rural towns
- New Park Farm – development of business through farm shop to promote own and others local produce
- Weald Granary, farmers controlled co-operative – facilities to help processing and adding value to grain
- Williamsons Butchers - mobile abattoir facility
- Heart of Kent Partnership -Tourism projects
- Shoreham - Biofuels project – pulling together local coppiced woodland and residents wanting to use sustainable fuel
- North West Kent Countryside Park – many potential projects including:
 - Marketing the Darent Valley as a sustainable tourist destination. Investigating and implementing sustainable transport opportunities. Encouraging dispersive access – encouraging access further afield than just ‘honey-pot’ sites
 - Developing the Darent Valley Path as a key tourism attraction and co-ordinating access, promotion and interpretation.
 - Promotion of the countryside as a destination for healthy lifestyles.
 - Village plans and maintaining local distinctiveness.

- Exploiting new Thames Gateway developments as a market for local produce. Premium brand products from the Kent Downs/High Weald/Darent Valley etc.
- Accessibility for non-traditional visitors to the countryside (particularly from urban areas)
- Addressing urban-fringe pressures on rural areas (around Sevenoaks, Swanley and Kent Thameside)
- Revealing and interpreting the rich heritage of the countryside around Sevenoaks as well as the conservation of specific features (e.g. Farningham Cattle Screen)
- Developing management of small woodlands and associated markets for products – investigating new markets in the Thames Gateway region.
- Mitchell and Peach – farm diversification creating farm-based luxury toiletries brand from own lavender crop
- James Denning, Hussey Estates - wood chip production – managing coppiceland and utilizing redundant farm buildings
- Arena Pursuits – remote control model tank driving – farm diversification project
- Arena Pursuits – Aerial runway and abseiling – farm diversification project
- Ben Bower and Sam Bower – charcoal making and green wood products bringing neglected woodland back into proper management
- Court Farm, Upper Halling – farm diversification project linked to local produce
- Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton – development of rural tourism activities/possible woodland projects

Whilst some of the projects listed above might well be deliverable in collaboration with the 2 other Kent LAGs or with WARR or Surrey Hills, the following projects have been specifically identified as cross LAG projects:

- Produced in Kent – across all 3 Kent LAGs
 - Project around production, sale and marketing of local produce and products
 - Creation of food tourism network of local food producers to offer visitors food experiences
- Business Link in Kent – across all 3 Kent LAGs - business development projects
- South East Wood Fuels – across all 3 Kent LAGs - development of wood heating and the wood chip industry – project ideas around scoping advice, promoting installation of biomass boilers, creation of wood fuel hubs, investment in capital equipment and temporary wood fuel storage
- Kent Farmers Markets Association – projects to support and stimulate markets across all 3 Kent LAGs
 - Market research and marketing and training activity
 - Pilot schemes around ‘home-shopping’ to extend reach of farmers markets
 - Project to establish central pool of market equipment in support of start-ups
 - Project around establishing standards and branding

- Project to assess opportunities to establish 2 or more rural abattoirs to improve capacity
- Kent & Sussex Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group – possible joint projects with WARR around linking farms together (routes, trails, themes) around local food production, tourism and the environment

Two specific project facilitation projects have been proposed

- Kent Downs/BLK/PinK partnership – across all 3 Kent LAGs
 - Diversification advice – delivering training workshops to rural businesses and landowners promoting use of Integrated Diversification Tool Kit developed from the Kent Downs Rural Advice Service and providing advice through workshops and events to planning authorities private sector consultants in land management
 - Sustainable rural tourism – provision and support of a sustainable tourism networking and business support forum for businesses leading to conservation and enhancement of the environment and the countryside, improved quality of life in rural areas and encouragement of farm diversification.

4. The LAG Partnership

4.1 Composition, structure, roles & responsibilities and key positions

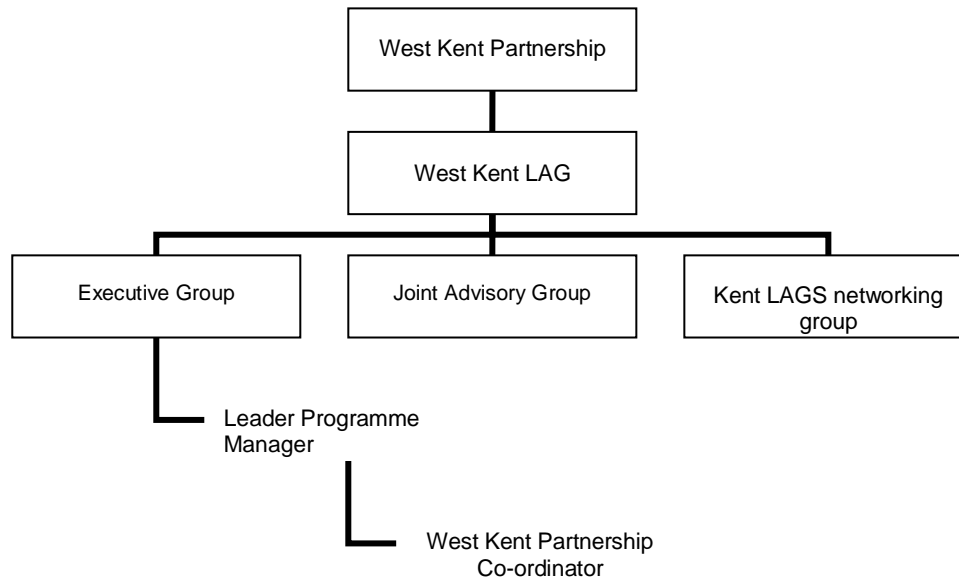
Membership of the West Kent LAG is shown at Annex 8. There is considerable farmer involvement and the private/public sector ratio, on both the wider LAG and LAG executive exceeds 50%. The wider LAG is very representative of the area and reflects the funding priorities in West Kent which is to largely support the landbased sector. This group will meet once or twice a year and be kept informed of the work within the Executive Group and JAG. This group has strong links back into the rural communities and will play a key role in bringing forward projects and ensuring ongoing engagement. The wider LAG will be consulted in drawing up and rolling forward the development plan to ensure it continues to meet local priorities.

It is proposed that the West Kent Partnership will have a strategic management role with regard to the West Kent Leader programme in the same way as it oversees the West Kent AIF. Member organisations of the main West Kent Partnership number 11 private, community and voluntary sector organisations and 10 public sector organisations. When required, the executive group of the LAG will report to the WKP on the Leader programme to ensure all key agencies across West Kent are engaged and informed.

In order to enhance the role and influence of private sector organisations, it is proposed that a small joint advisory group (JAG) is formed which is wholly private sector based and with an independent private sector chairman. The JAG will be consulted on key matters related to the Leader Programme and its development and will assist both the proposed Executive Group and the wider West Kent LAG itself in understanding and appreciating issues from the local business and farming community. Membership of the JAG has not yet been confirmed but it is anticipated it will be drawn from the wider LAG. It will be for the LAG to decide once the programme is underway, if they wish to form the JAG.

An Executive Group has been identified from within the LAG comprising people who are able to give an enhanced time commitment to the development of the LAG, give additional support to the programme manager and help co-ordinate and deliver the programme. This Executive Group will be the main decision making body. Support to the Executive Group will be available from lead officers from the three district councils and Kent County Council mirroring arrangements already in place for the West Kent Partnership. The Executive Group will report both to the wider LAG and the West Kent Partnership. An outline of the areas of responsibility of this Executive Group, along with Sevenoaks District Council as the accountable body are shown at annex 9. Both of these will be developed more fully during April-June 08 as shown on the Action plan at 4.6 on page 31.

The proposed organisational structure for the West Kent Leader programme is therefore as follows.



4.2 Staffing and other resources, eg office. Plans for recruiting staff

A dedicated Leader Programme Manager will be appointed to service the above groups and work with partners to develop local projects. This person will work alongside the existing, well established post of West Kent Partnership Co-ordinator and will seek to link and work with programme managers from other successful LAGs both within Kent and across the South East. It is proposed that there will be a Kent LAGS networking group which will meet regularly and identify opportunities for joint working across Kent.

The Action Plan shown below shows the timeline for recruiting the programme manager. It will be essential to get a suitably experienced person in post at the outset of the programme. In the interim the West Kent Partnership co-ordinator will continue to manage all aspects of West Kent Leader and will continue to be available to mentor and support the new post holder. The job specification and person specification requirements will be drawn up by the West Kent Partnership co-ordinator in consultation with the LAG and at least one LAG representative from the land based sector will be on the interview panel along with the West Kent Partnership co-ordinator, the Chair of the LAG and a representative from the Accountable Body.

4.3 Administration processes including project appraisal and selection, project management, ensuring compliance, monitoring and reporting, professional inputs (eg accountancy and legal)

The three Kent LAGs anticipate that they will share the appraisal function between them, with the programme manager from another Kent LAG appraising projects on a reciprocal basis and reporting to the LAG appraisal panel. This will save on costs and also help to promote awareness between programme managers of potentially complementary/best practice projects underway in neighbouring LAGs.

The appraisal panel will be drawn from the Executive Group and will receive relevant training. Confidentiality will be a key issue for commercial projects and appropriate guidelines will be adopted including the involvement of only a small core of people in the appraisal process. All financial information provided by applicants will be treated as very sensitive and be kept confidential.

There will be a closely managed project administration process to ensure compliance with the programme rules, to encourage high quality projects which are supported in their development and deliver sustainable and enduring outcomes. The LAG will develop procedures for ensuring that projects contribute towards equal opportunities objectives and ensuring sustainable development. The Programme Manager will co-ordinate all aspects of project management which are shown at annex 10.

4.4 Costs of running the LAG partnership for facilitation, administration and reporting

The costs of running the LAG partnership are shown at ***3.11 The funding resources needed to deliver the programme and the profile of funding required*** on page 20. Most facilitation, administration and reporting functions will be delivered by the Programme Manager whose responsibilities are outlined at annex 9. Tasks will be separated as appropriate, through cross-LAG exchange of services, or additional resource to ensure that the integrity of project management is maintained. The programme manager will not appraise any projects. A monitoring/facilitation/appraisal resource is budgeted for to provide additional support.

A financial services resource will be provided by the accountable body and charged back as an administration cost. This is budgeted for at £10,000 pa (pro rata) for 2008 and then an inflation uplift of 3% pa. The accountable body will also provide office accommodation, IT support, internal training and development and line management support which will not be charged back.

Additionally, the West Kent Partnership is experienced in sub group and task group working and allocating responsibilities to various individuals to share the load. As the area of the LAG is a cohesive area and many working relationships are already in place with

business plans aligned, this will provide opportunities for minimising operating costs. As the West Kent Leader application has been validated and endorsed by the West Kent Partnership, its high profile will be maintained at a senior level. Several partner organisations on the West Kent Partnership are prepared to provide officer time to the ongoing support of the Programme.

The WKP Co-ordinator is effectively a West Kent Partnership employee but hosted at Sevenoaks District Council and working on the development of Leader falls within her remit. The Programme Manager will be recruited and accommodated in the same way and alongside the WKP co-ordinator saving on overhead costs for that post and providing a supported working environment.

Opportunities will also be explored to share administration and other back-office resources with other successful LAGs within and adjacent to Kent. This will probably be achieved through cross LAG projects which can be managed on a cost-effective basis by only one LAG having responsibility for facilitating, monitoring and reporting on the project. Cross LAG working, particularly pan Kent, will also be explored on specialist facilitation projects, resulting in a greater number of facilitated projects coming forwards.

4.5 Skills needed by the LAG and plans for developing skills

This LAG executive along with the Leader Programme Manager will require in-depth training in the delivery of a LEADER programme, including compliance and monitoring. They will also require an understanding of the role of the accountable body and how they can support that body to deliver its responsibilities in an efficient and timely manner.

There will also be a requirement for more general training for the wider LAG group in the LEADER programme but also in partnership working as the LAG is a big group and it will be important to retain a strong focus.

Consideration is being given to linking LAG meetings to workshops around particular areas of interest to the land based and rural sectors so that time spent in attending a LAG meeting can also deliver professional development opportunities to members of the LAG.

Access to information on and support from best practice elsewhere on Leader+ programmes and later, Leader programmes within the South East, nationally and within Europe. The programme manager will be responsible for keeping abreast of opportunities to learn from other programmes and bring these considerations to the attention of the LAG. Equal opportunities training will be provided as part of the overall training strategy for the LAG.

4.6 Timetable for Establishing the LAG and for getting LAG Operational ACTION PLAN	Apr-Jun 08	Jul-Sep 08	Oct-Dec 08	Jan-Mar 09	Apr-Jun 09	Jul-Sep 09	Oct-Dec 09
Approval of bid	•						
Develop and agree detailed terms of reference for LAG/LAG Executive and protocols for the Accountable Body including establishing a Risk Register	•						
Training/support for LAG members	•						
Advertise and appoint Programme Manager	•	•					
Programme Manager induction		•					
Establish Project Application, Appraisal and Approval procedures, forms and guidance notes		•					
Initial call for applications		•					
Project Appraisal			•				
First grants awarded for projects to commence 09			•		Project delivery		
Review of initial round of applications/amend procedures, etc. as necessary			•				
Second/ongoing call for applications, appraisal and approval				•	Project delivery		
LAG to review priorities and allocations for 09/10				•			
Monitoring commences							

5. The Accountable Body

5.1 Full details of the accountable body and how they meet the requirements of Leader

Sevenoaks District Council will undertake the accountable body role. Sevenoaks District Council has experience of running the Swanley SRB programme and is currently acting as accountable body for Big Lottery funding. Sevenoaks District Council is also the accountable body for the West Kent Partnership, employs the co-ordinator and holds the budget. This same close working will be possible between the accountable body and the programme manager in the Leader programme. The West Kent Partnership has given its full support to West Kent Leader and to SDC as the accountable body and are keen to see ownership of the programme held within West Kent. West Kent Partnership working is well established and can support the development of the West Kent LAG and accountable body relationship which is the key relationship in the programme.

5.2 Functions that the accountable body will perform

As accountable body SDC will be responsible via the West Kent LAG for a number of functions:

- Ensuring compliance with RDPE operating procedures
- Appraising, selecting and approving (issuing grant offers) for individual projects, and making subsequent payments against approved claims
- Maintaining records of each project to provide an audit trail
- Monitoring the progress of the projects regularly and carrying out physical checks on project expenditure
- Annually rolling forward their Implementation Plan and submitting it to SEEDA for approval of activities and funding for the financial year ahead.

SDC will also provide the following functions for the support of the programme and its staff:

- Nominate a manager to line manage the programme manager for appraisal/pastoral purposes and be a member of the LAG executive
- Provision of office space, IT/telecoms support, internal training and development opportunities for programme manager

- Access to financial management and project management skills
- Provide the legal platform for LAG activities such as employing staff
- Provide help with the procurement of some services and activities
- Involvement in delivery of complementary activities and initiatives.

5.3 Costs for delivering the accountable body functions

Some of the accountable body functions will be delivered by the Programme Manager and some by the officer designated to provide financial services to the Programme. Breakdown of costs are shown on page 20 – ***3.11 The funding resources needed to deliver the programme and the profile of funding required***

5.4 Forward Funding arrangements

SDC will consider providing a bank-rolling facility for some project funding against an agreed set of criteria. It is noted that specialist facilitation projects, intended to bring forward further applications, may require some element of bank rolling.

6. Risks

A risk register will be drawn up for the Leader Programme to identify risk areas, both strategic and operational and risks to achievements. Strategies will be identified to mitigate against these risks. This is scheduled in the timetable for becoming operational by June 2008 as shown at 4.6 on page 31. Risks to be considered will include:

- Inability to attract and retain staff
- Loss of key staff
- Staff resources insufficient to meet programme timeframes/ineffective use of resources
- New Government guidance which has a significant impact on policy direction
- Insufficient high quality project applications within given timeframe
- Problems arising from relationships with partners
- LAG lacks direction strategy and forward planning
- Failure to achieve objectives within LDS
- Lack of skills/commitment within LAG
- Ineffective organisational structure
- Conflicts of interest preventing good decision making
- Severe adverse publicity
- Imposition of additional responsibilities without funding
- Changes of policy from Accountable Body and/or SEEDA

7. Publicity and communications

The Programme Manager will be responsible for the development and implementation of a marketing strategy for the Programme and ensuring communications.

The following activities will take place outside of the marketing budget throughout the life of the programme:

- Creation and maintenance of a Leader website
- Press releases using the same procedure as West Kent Partnership, with facilitation by Communications Manager at SDC and distribution via all West Kent local authorities
- Regular updates to the LAG including regular newsletter
- Facilitation of networking opportunities for LAG and project applicants, especially to share best practice
- Email 'mailshots' through partners organisations on the LAG
- Publicising successes through case histories
- Publicity through Kent Downs AONB publication the *Orchid* and on their website
- Ensuring participation in National Rural Development Network and other such initiatives
- Engaging with network to support programme in South East
- Participation in land based and rural networks operating in West Kent
- Networking through partner organisations on Executive LAG to bring forward projects – for example
 - ESUS Forestry and Woodlands
 - Forestry Commission woodlands officer
 - CLA
 - NFU
 - Institute of Directors – (160,000 businesses through Kent Network)
 - Training providers, notably, Hadlow College, within West Kent

To maximise opportunities for West Kent businesses, the West Kent Leader programme will also signpost to other funding available to landbased and rural businesses through RDPE outside of the Leader programme, including to grant support available direct from

SEEDA for larger/collaborative projects and the agri-environment schemes managed by Natural England the Forestry Commission under Axis 2.

A marketing budget of £15,000 over the life of the programme has been budgeted for. This is front-loaded with £5,000 anticipated spend in the first year. However, it is anticipated that this budget will be supplemented by additional sponsorship from members of the LAG and the provision of activities at cost.

A stand is to be taken at Kent 20/20 on April 3 at the Detling Showground. This will be shared with the West Kent Partnership and will be used as an opportunity to maintain interest in the potential Leader programme during the period between submission of bid and the decision on the bid being advised.

A launch event is planned for summer 08. The three Kent LAGs are considering a joint event, possibly around a breakfast meeting, at the Kent Show in July. It is anticipated that as well as sharing the cost between the 3 LAGs, additional sponsorship may be available from The Kent Rural Board.

Throughout the life of the programme targeted marketing activities will take place, to include:

- mailshots, on a Kent-wide basis and using existing networks, promoting all 3 Kent Leader programmes, is planned through CLA (1,100 members owning half the rural acreage of Kent)
- Mailshots through NFU
- Mailshots at cost through DEFRA
- Annual event for LAG to incorporate workshops and ongoing training
- Attendance at relevant trade and business events to include:
 - Woodfair (September)
 - Fruit Show, Detling
 - Edenbridge Show
 - Heathfield Show
 - Ploughing matches
 - Livestock markets
 - Kent Show
 - Kent 20/20

- Advertising and editorial in relevant trade publications to include
 - Forestry and British Timber
 - South East Farmer
 - Fruit Focus
 - Woodlots

Facilitation Projects

Facilitation activities and projects will be an important part of the development strategy in the early part of the programme to bring project applications forward to deliver against specific measures. Further detail is given at 3.10 on page 19.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The LAG will be required to monitor progress on a regular basis. At the time of writing it is anticipated that budgets will need to be monitored monthly whilst outputs and strategic performance can be dealt with quarterly.

The LAG will follow EU and SEEDA guidance, and any mechanisms employed by the accountable body which interpret that guidance legally.

Projects will be monitored and evaluated in line with SEEDA guidance; it is anticipated that basic requirements for this will be set out in contract letters issued to successful project applicants but the Programme Staff will also have a responsibility to remind project operators of their responsibilities so that monitoring and evaluation can be made as efficient a process as possible.

There will be an ongoing evaluation of the programme. The LAG will evaluate its own work and the progress of the Programme against objectives on an annual basis.

9. Equal opportunities and diversity

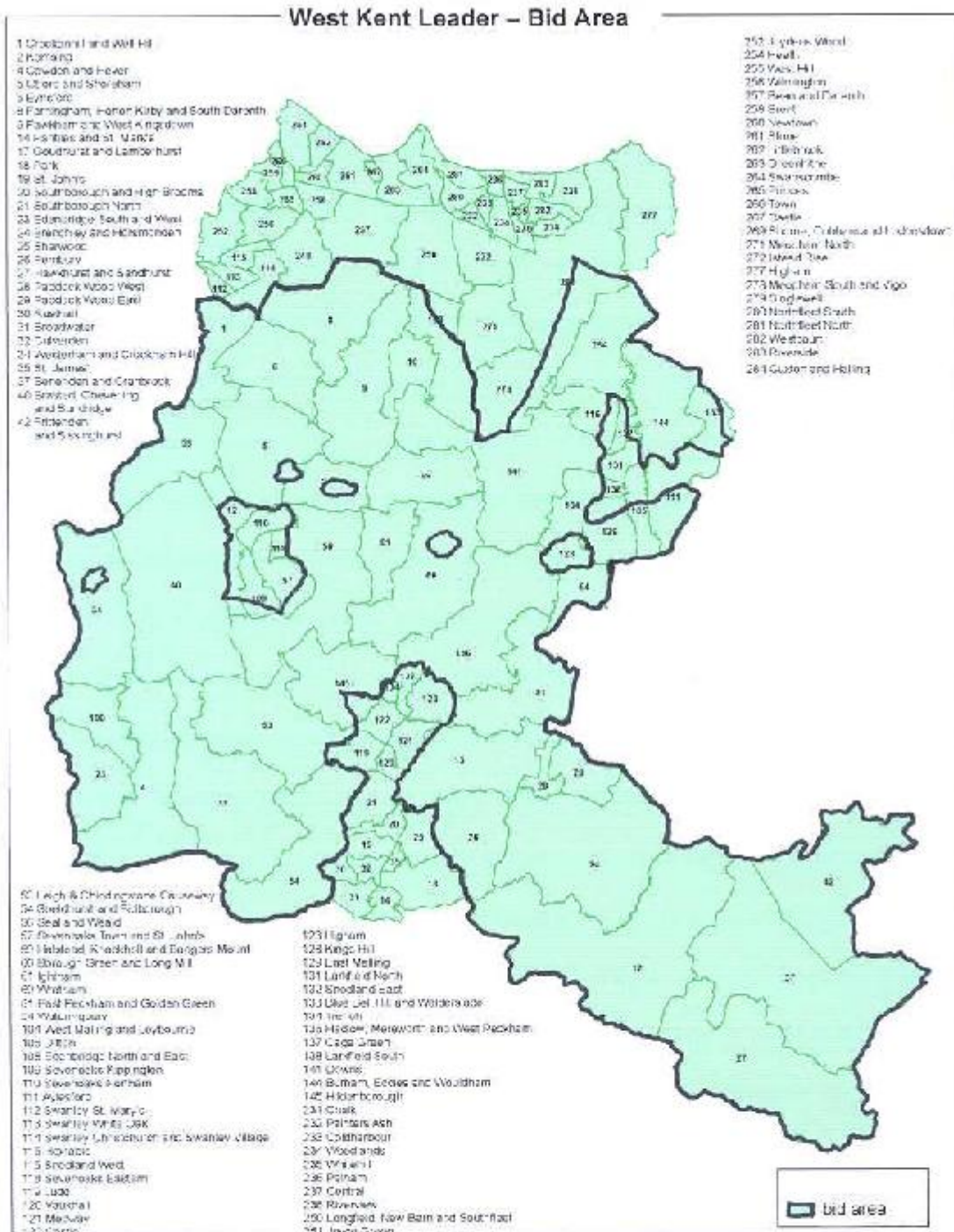
In accordance with the guiding principle for equal opportunities under the RDPE LEADER Programme, the West Kent Leader Local Development Strategy promotes equality of opportunity within the local action group area, irrespective of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age. The West Kent Leader LAG will ensure there is no discrimination and deal proactively with barriers to participation in the RDPE Leader Programme. This will involve the systematic consideration and integration of equal opportunities in all aspects of the planning and implementation of the LAG's development plans and promoting good practice in equal opportunities through an appropriate equal opportunities strategy. The West Kent LAG will adopt the same Equal Opportunities guidelines as those followed by Sevenoaks District Council as the accountable body and will have access to training and trained officers for this purpose.

In addition, equal opportunities strategies are woven into all aspects of the LDS and the LAG will ensure that good practice identified through implementation of the LAG development plan is shared. The LAG executive will include a member with knowledge and expertise in equal opportunities so that key decision makers can take full account of equal opportunities when making decisions.

10. Self scoring the application

Appropriateness of the Partnership	4	
Coherence of the Area	3	Kent Downs and High Weald AONB's run across more than one Leader area – effective cross LAG working will be required with adjacent LAGs - Kent Downs and Marshes and WARR
Quality of the Local Development Strategy	4	
Financial and administrative capacity	4	
Fit with National Programme Objectives	4	
Integration of sustainable development principles	3	Culture of grant support may be barrier to sustainable development approach in some applications
Commitment to integration across the three axes	3	Working protocols with other parties delivering across axes yet to be developed
Commitment to co-operation	4	
Alignment with regional and national strategies	4	
The RDPE funding addresses the needs of the area	4	
Skills	3	Delivery process for skills to LAG still to be fully developed. Dependence on applicants being prepared to fund 30% of training identified under Measure 111
Maintaining momentum/exit strategy	3	Forward strategy still to be fully developed

Annex 1 – Map showing area and border



Produced by the AGC Analysis & Internal as Team (AIT)
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Annex 2 – List of Parishes

Parish	2001 Population	Comment
Tonbridge and Malling Borough		
Addington	733	
Aylesford	1580	AONB part only
Birling	430	
Borough Green	3472	
Burham	1251	
Ditton	450	Rural part only
East Malling	500	Rural part only
East Peckham	3140	
Hadlow	3908	
Hildenborough	950	Rural part only
Ightham	1940	
Leybourne	3235	
Mereworth	1111	
Offham	732	
Platt	1420	
Plaxtol	969	
Ryarsh	617	
Shipbourne	456	
Snodland	650	Rural part only
Stansted	473	
Trottscliffe	490	
Wateringbury	2015	
West Peckham	327	
West Malling	2383	
Wouldham	957	
Wrotham	1815	
Total`	36004	

Tunbridge Wells Borough		
Benenden	2230	
Brenchley	2715	
Bidborough	958	
Capel	2312	
Cranbrook	6603	
Frittenden	867	
Goudhurst	3204	
Hawkhurst	4360	
Horsmonden	2169	
Lamberhurst	1491	
Paddock Wood	8263	
Pembury	6005	
Sandhurst	1329	
Speldhurst	4759	
Total	47265	
Parish	2001 Population	Comment
Sevenoaks District		
Ash cum Ridley	700	Rural part only
Brasted	1321	
Chevening	2762	
Chiddingstone	1127	
Cowden	765	
Crockenhill	1603	
Dunton Green	550	Rural part only
Edenbridge	7808	
Eynsford	1744	
Farningham	1289	
Fawkham	539	
Halstead	1494	
Hartley	560	Rural part only

Hever	1136	
Horton Kirby/SDarenth	2942	
Kemsing	450	Rural Part only
Knockholt	1166	
Leigh	1689	
Otford	500	Rural part only
Penshurst	1479	
Riverhead	2342	
Seal	2491	
Sevenoaks Weald	1153	
Shoreham	1979	
Sundridge	1837	
Westerham	600	Rural part only
West Kingsdown	5243	
Total	47269	
Other Parishes		
Cobham	599	AONB part only
Cuxton	88	AONB part only
Halling	221	AONB part only
Luddesdown	198	AONB part only
Meopham	212	AONB part only
Vigo	2201	
Total	3519	

Total – 134057

Annex 3 – West Kent Area Investment Framework - Background and rural emphasis

[The West Kent Area Investment Framework](#) provides an agreed action plan for addressing economic and regeneration issues which are common across the West Kent area. There are four AIFs covering the whole of Kent. West Kent receives no devolved funding from SEEDA and so was not required to produce an AIF. However, West Kent has a history of co-operative working across boundaries and involving various agencies and the decision was taken to create our own AIF to provide a focus for economic activity. The current version of the AIF was developed through stakeholder consultation and workshops and is closely linked to the shared themes identified in the three sustainable community plans which involved considerable public consultation. The importance of the need for vibrant rural and land-based economies, particularly, the land-based sector emerged as a strong theme from the consultation.

The West Kent Partnership owns the West Kent Area Investment Framework Action Plan 2006-2009. One of the seven strategic objectives identified is to **maximise opportunities for land based and other rural businesses**. The rural economy is a significant part of the West Kent economy and the AIF seeks to provide the support to encourage innovative economic regeneration, encouraging the growth of small and micro home based businesses and promoting farm diversification. There is a need in West Kent to develop a thriving rural economy which complements the outstanding natural landscape yet provides a route for West Kent to continue to compete economically with neighbouring growth areas.

There is a significant degree of synergy between the adopted AIF actions and the Axis and Measures being addressed by the Leader programme. Linkages between the AIF actions and Leader measures are indicated in the table on page under section 6.

The AIF, although an economic strategy, recognises the close interface between community and economy and also includes the strategic objective (4) to **improve the quality of life for residents, particularly in the Priority Community areas**.

The strategic objective (7) to **maximise opportunities for land based and other rural businesses** includes but is not limited to the priority actions identified in the AIF and which impact on rural West Kent:

- Maximise opportunities for West Kent businesses to benefit from Produced in Kent initiatives
- Co-ordinate provision of integrated advice and bespoke support for farmers
- Promote farm diversification including production of bio-fuels
- Explore potential for rural business incubator initiatives
- Raise tourism offer in West Kent
- Develop specific proposals to enhance skills provision in line with business needs including land based activities, logistics and leadership and management
- Ensure adequate support for small businesses, in particular the home-based sector
- Promote policies that seek the retention of employment land

- Encourage planning policies that assist farm diversification and support appropriate rural development
- Support the development and economic enhancement of small rural towns
- Support entrepreneurship generally and develop bespoke support for particular groups including 50+, economically inactive and women
- Develop innovative solutions for rural transport options to reflect accessibility planning

The West Kent AIF was developed through input from specific working groups, workshops and stakeholder consultation. In addition, it carries forward common themes identified in the 3 district sustainable community strategies which have benefited from extensive public and stakeholder consultation. The AIF draws its policy context from SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016, The Vision for Kent, The Kent Agreement (in particular Block 8 concerning Economic Development and Sustainable Communities); Kent Prospects 2006-2012 and the Strategic Investment and Policy Framework for Rural Kent.

Access to LEADER funding will enable the West Kent LAG to provide project funding in addition to other support initiatives and will expedite delivery of AIF Strategic Objective 7 to the West Kent Community through the Leader approach of endogenous local development, improving governance and encouraging innovation. The AIF itself is due for full review in 2009 and the action planning is designed to be rolling to take account of a changing economic, environmental and social context translated into its local relevance. During its preparation the AIF Action Plan recognised the issues that were emerging from both the latest RES and Kent Prospects. Additionally further county objectives have emerged since the publication of the AIF including Towards 2010 and The Kent Rural Framework, both of which are taken into consideration in the preparation of this EOI and will be embedded in the emerging priorities to the rolling West Kent AIF action plan and the progression of the Local Development Strategy.

2.4 SWOT analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape designations – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt • Large area of woodland (broadleaved and coniferous, providing 16% and 15% of land cover respectively in Western Weald) • Affluent, high spending peri-urban population • Accessible markets - proximity to London, M25 and Europe • Strong ‘Garden of England’, ‘Produced in Kent’ brands • Increasing direct sales to public, and farmers’ markets adding vibrancy to rural towns 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weald farms are small, almost half farm holdings less than 20 ha • Higher proportion of rented farms than other parts of Kent (mostly in private ownership) • Declining number of employed and self employed workers in agriculture • Relatively low numbers of young people entering the sector or succeeding to family business • Ageing demographic profile of farmers (ave. age 59) • Misconception that West Kent is uniformly prosperous • Low incomes in West Kent rural area –high proportion of social renting households and lone pensioners receiving benefits • Green belt/planning restricting diversification • <i>Average farm income has declined to £8,000 per FT person at 2000</i>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing public awareness of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ health benefits of fully traceable fresh food ○ climate change and sustainability ○ local purchasing ○ benefits of exercise and recreation • Build on the local entrepreneurial culture and longstanding West Kent farming tradition to diversify and develop new business opportunities • Provide facilitation to aid the development of collective activities and ongoing support to farmers • Development of alternative energy sources • Widen quiet access to the countryside • Encourage good environmental management to conserve landscape features, woodland, and habitats • New markets – Thames Gateway, 2012 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctance of landlords to put resources into diversification • Low profitability giving rise to low levels of reinvestment • Limited opportunities for income generation from existing woodland • Dependence on seasonal migrant workers • Dominance of supermarkets in market further depressing prices • Outbreaks of Foot and Mouth and other diseases • High cost of housing • Competition from lower cost producers in enlarged EU • Impact of climate change/water shortages • Declining sector

Annex 5 – Evidence Base - 2.5 List of key issues to be addressed using the Leader approach

Key Issue 1 – Threats to competitiveness of farming and forestry sectors

The West Kent LAG area has several soil types which have determined the evolution of farming systems. Farming on the North Downs has traditionally been in larger farms than on the Weald. North Downs holdings are generally arable with livestock and are often owner occupied. Farm holdings on the Weald tend to focus on top fruit, hops and livestock. They are generally smaller farms and are often tenanted. 45% are less than 20 ha in size and represent the smallest holdings in Kent (The Land Based Economy of Kent, 2002).

Broadleaved and coniferous woodland represent 15.6% and 14.7% respectively of the land cover in the Western Weald, with Tunbridge Wells having one of the highest covers of semi-natural woodland (The Land Based Economy of Kent, 2002). The West Kent leader area is one of England's most wooded regions, with trees and woodlands playing an important part in the quality of life, environment and local economies. Over 70% of the woodlands in the area can be classified as Ancient Woodlands many of which are also Sites of Special Scientific Interest/within a protected landscape (AONB/SLA) and/ or a Local Nature Reserve. Forestry businesses are important to the rural areas both economically, in retaining asset value, local employment and skills and socially for the recreation and public health benefits to the adjoining communities both rural and urban.

There are approximately 415 land-based businesses in the rural West Kent area employing 1,880 people (IBDR Local Unit Data, 2005). The businesses are concerned with agriculture, hunting, forestry or fishing and represent 6.6% of the total number of businesses in rural West Kent and 4.1% of the workforce. Census data identifies 1,537 people in agricultural employment in 2001 in rural West Kent, the difference with the IBDR data is probably explained by the inclusion of some self employed people in the sector in the IBDR data. In terms of holdings, there are approximately 750 holdings with an average size of holding (over 5ha) of 67ha (June Agricultural Survey, 2004).

There has been a decline in employment in farming and forestry over many years. DEFRA Agricultural Survey Data June Census figures for 2006 highlight a reduction in full time working by Kent farmers, farm managers and full time employees since 1999 across Kent as a whole and an increase in part time working by farmers/spouses. In West Kent, employment in primary industries declined by 31% between 1995-2005, in comparison with 18% for Kent and Medway as a whole (Annual Employment Survey 1995, Annual Business Inquiry, 2005).

Casual labour and migrant workers continue to make up the bulk of the workforce. The average age of farmers in England and Wales is 59 (DEFRA Census) and there are few young people entering the sector.

As well as declining employment in agriculture and forestry, changes from traditional production have occurred over recent years in West Kent as a result of technological change and economic pressures. These include:

- Specialisation of farming e.g. mixed arable and livestock to just arable

- Individual farmers taking on more land (consolidating) through renting, farm business tenancies, contract or share farming arrangements or other private arrangements.
- Diversification to add value to products e.g. retailing meat or utilise unused assets e.g. renting out offices, workshops etc.

The levels of profitability in West Kent vary, but for many years many farms have been operating at a loss. Low profitability is a major issue in many areas of horticulture and livestock and income generation from existing woodland has been depressed (Land Based Economy of Kent). Many tenanted farms in particular have found conditions very tough through paying rent versus owner occupiers who have a small or no mortgage to fund.

In real terms, data available at a London and South East level (Table 1) shows that for many years the level of management and investment income produced through farming has been in the negative, and where positive, it is largely insufficient to meet business needs (n.b. figures include an imputed rent for owner occupiers).

Table 1 Management and investment income (£'s) produced through farming

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
All farm types	-6,825	-7,800	-6,792	-4,975	8,635	2,543	3,460
Cereals	-4,456	-11,214	-10,257	-9,950	15,752	-3,395	-8,382
Dairy	-5,038	-7,052	-9,072	-13,062	-2,871	725	13,224
Cattle & Sheep	-14,285	-10,068	-16,106	-12,109	-7,241	-6,422	-8,229
General Cropping	-17,432	-5,977	-19,736	6,321	16,968	9,062	na

Source: Defra: Farm Business Survey (table 7) 1999-2005

In West Kent, average farm incomes are reported to be below the regional and national average.

The current breakout of foot and mouth disease and blue tongue is having further serious financial consequences for farmers in the West Kent area. Restrictions on livestock movement are preventing the movement of animals to market/slaughter with serious cash flow implications for farmers. Even before the recent outbreak, abattoir facilities had closed in West Kent. Opportunities exist to look at the development of additional abattoir capacity and even the possibility of mobile facilities.

Against this background the phrase 'asset rich, cash poor' summarises many aspects of farming over the last 10 years. With the average age of farmers increasing, many with no pension provision, the need to optimise profits but try to remain on the farm is a key driver. Keeping the holding both provides a home and also a capital source for the family. In tenant farming, and particularly in West Kent, the value of houses far outstrips the rental value of the land, and there is a tendency for houses to be sold off separately. In addition, pockets of farmland may be sold for development and traditional land management may cease when farmland changes hands.

Key Issue 2 – Need for innovation and diversification in land based sector

The challenge for the future is going to be how to continue to survive, with the changing emphasis on sustainability and the withdrawal of the single farm payment subsidy. Over one fifth of the farms in the area are tenanted and it is this sector who will be most at risk from the change in subsidies as they are least able to invest in alternative sources of income, eg, diversification. Many farms have to operate without full time employed labour as there are insufficient margins to support an additional income and the cost of living in the West Kent area is extremely high with a lack of affordable housing for farm workers to rent/buy

It is generally maintained that the single most important factor in encouraging farmers to diversify is thought to be pressure on farm incomes¹.

Diversification includes:

- off-farm gainful activities e.g. agricultural contracting/ hire work,
- non-conventional farming e.g. specialist products (livestock, crop and organic)
- food processing and direct marketing
- agri-environmental and woodland planting
- non-farming activity e.g. sports/leisure facilities, accommodation

The decision to diversify relates to two sets of factors according to research (insert ref). External factors to the farm include overall policy context, market opportunities and location and internal factors include farm size, farm type, family structure, and attitudes to non-traditional farming activities.

National research (above) has identified that:

- diversification is mostly undertaken by larger farms (more than 80% are 50 ha+ in size)
- most diversification was undertaken to exploit economies of scale and/or economies of scope
- wholly tenanted farms are the least likely to diversify
- there is limited investment in farm diversification by landlord

In West Kent, with high levels of tenant farming, many landlords have been reluctant to fund diversification but are keen to take some of the benefits, through rent, that the schemes have provided, which acts as a further disincentive. West Kent also has a large proportion of relatively small farms.

Reasons given in the national survey for diversification being non-viable include:

- lack of time
- lack of finance
- not being suited to certain diversification activities

¹statistics.defra.gov.uk/.../CAP%20Reform,%20Tenancy%20and%20Farm%20Diversification_Executive%20Summary.pdf

- an already saturated market
- poor location/lack of passing trade
- a type of farming that does not lend itself to adding value through processing or retailing

Diversification does make a significant financial contribution to the farm income. DEFRA data on income and expenditure for 2005 (Table 2) shows that the level of diversification profit is an important adjunct to farming and thus survivability.

Table 2 All Farm Types: Income and Costs 2005 (£'s)

	Agriculture	Agri-environment	Diversification	SFP Schemes	Total
Output	183,002	3,625	25,248	23,616	235,491
Variable costs	97,617	24	2,707	0	100,348
Fixed Costs	101,549	223	7,017	16	108,804
Interest charges	4,479	-20	391		4,850
Profit	-13,196	3,399	15,133	23,600	21,489

Source: DEFRA, 2005

Many farmers are looking to raise profits to both catch up with reinvestment but, in many cases, provide a retirement income source that can be used to allow children to take over the business without the burden of parents living off the business.

A Business Link Kent Survey of Kent Farmers: The Future of Farming, 2002 identified the proportion of farmers with specific business information needs as follows:

- 47% marketing
- 41% diversification planning
- 38% sales
- 33% managing subsidy claims/grants
- 33% running a diversified business
- 31% tourism and leisure opportunities

As outlined in a recent DEFRA report, 'competence in business skills is key both to successful start-up of diversified businesses and ongoing profitability. These skills also impact positively on the planning and management of the mainstream agricultural enterprises so that their acquisition provides a double benefit. Few farmers can now rely solely on their knowledge of basic commodity production. Many have already diversified or

added value to produce, and need the skills required to run new businesses, including dealing directly with customers, marketing their products, and selecting and managing staff².

This highlights that in order to diversify many farmers will need help to discuss the need and opportunities, validate business plans, help with planning applications and look to see if grants might be applicable.

Many of the above issues also apply to foresters. In rural West Kent there are some excellent examples of good forestry management but overall it is perceived that many woodland areas are under-managed. There is potential for improvement through initiatives adding value to coppice products, such as fencing and building products, as well as larger sustainable projects for biomass and renewable energy, particularly on a collective basis.

Many of the farmers with whom we have consulted have identified a number of activities that would use renewable water or energy sources either as single farm holdings or on a collective basis. Such actions are vital, given long term climate trends and possible future water shortages.

Key Issue 5 – Rural deprivation and quality of life

The loss of employment land to housing is a significant issue for the rural communities and has also led to a narrowing of employment availability in recent years. Home ownership is often out of the reach of local people with average house prices in West Kent more than double those in East Kent for a similar type of property. A lack of affordable housing is both stifling rural enterprise as lower paid workers cannot afford to live locally and leads to increased commuting distances contrary to sustainability objectives.

A detailed analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and other data sources for West Kent was undertaken in a 2005 study. The report³ identified that over one third of West Kent SOAs are ranked as falling within the worst 30% *nationally* according to the barriers to housing and services IMD domain. Amongst the worst 10% nationally are rural SOAs in Cowden and Hever, Goudhurst and Lamberhurst, Benenden and Cranbrook. This finding is reinforced by the relatively high level of social rented housing, identified below.

West Kent also has an ageing rural population in common with the rest of Kent. This trend has implications for community activities and organisations, sheltered housing, social care and health provision in the rural area.

Rural West Kent (ie the Leader area), despite some affluent areas, has particular issues in relation to low income. According to OCSI⁴

² Barriers to Farm Diversification, DEFRA, 2007

³ Priority Communities in West Kent, Elizabeth Haggart Associates, 2005

⁴ The Rural Share of Deprivation in the South East: Kent Version 2, OCSI, July 2007

- 41% of all of Kent's social rented households, (7,495) are in the rural West Kent area. The percentage of these households is particularly high in rural Tunbridge Wells (15.3%) and Tonbridge and Malling (14.7%) and is well above rural South East average (11.9%)
- The percentage of children in out of work families is higher across rural West Kent than the South East generally
- The proportion of people working in low income elementary occupations in rural West Kent (particularly Tonbridge and Malling – 11.3%) is again higher than rural South East (9%). This accounts for 6,563 people in rural West Kent
- There are 27,120 adults with no qualifications in rural West Kent and a further 16,194 with Level 1 qualifications, representing a higher proportion of low qualified people than in rural South East generally
- 57% of West Kent's pensioners living alone are in rural areas and 3,355 of all pensioners in rural West Kent are in receipt of the pension credit guarantee, proportionately a much higher level than in rural South East generally.

Annex 5 – Expression of Interest Consultation

West Kent Partnership comprising - Sevenoaks District Council; Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; Business Link Kent, Kent County Council; Aylesford Newsprint; AXA-PPP; Federation of Small Businesses; Town & Country Housing; West Kent PCT; West Kent Police; Kent Learning Partnership; Learning & Skills Council; West Kent College; Voluntary Action West Kent; HomeStart West Kent; Sevenoaks Volunteers; Age Concern Malling; Sevenoaks Churches Together; Kent Association of Parish Councils; West Kent Civic Trust. (Observers – SEEDA and GOSE)

Kent or Regional organisations supporting bid - Action with Communities in Rural Kent, National Farmers Union South East Region; Kent & Sussex FWAG; CLA South East; Kent Downs AONB; High Weald AONB; Produced in Kent; Barnfield Oast; Forestry Commission; Natural England; Kent Community Foundation; Judith Norris Ltd; Hadlow College; The National Trust; Locate in Kent; Kent Wildlife Trust; The Environment Agency; English Heritage; The Prince's Trust; Kent Farmers Market Association; Kent High Weald Project

Additional organisations supporting bid: - Heart of Kent Tourism Partnership; Medway Valley Countryside Partnership; Penshurst Place; Westerham Brewery; Lamberhurst Vineyard;; North West Kent Countryside Project; KI Lingham & Son; TROT; Gravesham Council; Williamsons Butchers; Hever Castle; Medway Council, Weald Granary; John Bovington: Duramen Consulting Limited (Chartered Foresters); Jonathan R Webb Woodland Management Consultant; Giles Dadd Associates (Agricultural Consultants); Churches in Society; Sarah Ward (Court Lodge Farm)

Annex 6 - List of delegates at West Kent Rural Conference – 27 November 2007

Adams	Jason Adams	Kent High Weald Project
Alexander	William Alexander	Castle Farm
Badley	Nigel Badley	Kentdown Mushroom Farm
Baker	Janet Baker	Sevenoaks District Council
Balfour	Cllr Matthew Balfour	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Barker	Iain Barker	Environment Agency
Bartlett	Tony Bartlett	Business Link Kent
Batchelor	Howard Batchelor	Crouch Farm
Bate	Jenny Bate	Kent Downs AONB
Bearne	Mandy Bearne	Locate in Kent
Beer	Sue Beer	Kent Small Rural Towns
Bennett	Teresa Bennett	Natural Values
Bourne	Michael Bourne	New Park Farm
Bradfield	Terry Bradfield	SEEDA
Buckingham-Warner	Leah Buckingham-Warner	West Kent College
Campbell	Angus Campbell	RAMSAC
Cane	Stephen Cane	DEFRA
Christensen	Poul Christensen	Natural England
Clark	Cllr Carol Clark	Sevenoaks District Council
Clayton	Frances Clayton	Kent Downs AONB
Cobb	Paul Cobb	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Cockerill	Dennis Cockerill	Landowner
Conley	Stephen Conley	Business Link Kent
Cooper	Chris Cooper	Okehurst Farm
Crebbin	Gill Crebbin	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Cuthbert	Graham Cuthbert	Palace Farm
Dadd	Giles Dadd	Farm Adviser
Danahar	Dan Danahar	Dorothy Springer Environmental Partnership
Davison	Jill Davison	SDC
Dent	Benjamin Dent	Kent Farmers Market Association
Ely	Chris Ely	Farmer
Evans	John Evans	Surrey Enterprise
Eyre	Veronica Eyre	Barnfield Oast/ Hoathly Farms Ltd

Eyre	David Eyre	Twig Trading
Fallmann	Susan Fallmann	Commonwork
Flanagan	Sally Flanagan	Hadlow College
Fleming	Cllr Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council
Flory	Loic Flory	Kent County Council
Frampton	Vanessa Frampton	Spratsbourne Farm
Girt	Rachel Girt	Kent County Council
Green	Richard Green	Business Link Kent
Greenaway	Kate Greenaway	SEEDA
Gutteridge	Dr Colin Gutteridge	East Malling Research
Hales	Robin Hales	Sevenoaks District Council
Hannan	Paul Hannan	Hadlow College
Harrison	Liz Harrison	Kent County Council
Hewitt	Jo Hewitt	White Ash Farm
Hipps	Dr Neil Hipps	East Malling Research
Horner	Douglas Horner	Deputy Lieutenant
Hughes	David Hughes	Chief Exec.TMBC
Jessel	Alastair Jessel	Taywell Farm
Johannsen	Nick Johannsen	Kent Downs AONB
Jones	Daryl Jones	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Knight	David Knight	Knight Tustian/Weald Granary
Leach	Jacqueline Leach	Commonwork
Lingham	Roger Lingham	Faulkners Hill Farm
Lingham	Caroline Lingham	Sevenoaks District Council
Lister	Robert Lister	Rural & Business Specialist
Lott	Mick Lott	Living Forest Ltd
Lukehurst	Dr Clare Lukehurst	Crown Estates/Cluttons
Mackenzie	Kent Mackenzie	Hadlow College
Marchant	Andrew Marchant	Dorothy Springer Environmental Partnership
Maxwell Jones	John Maxwell Jones	Burgess Butchers
McGibbon	Sue McGibbon	Kent County Council
Meer	Gillian vd Meer	Year of Food & Farming
Merricks	Philip Merricks	Farmer
Mitchell	Ian Mitchell	Foxbury Farm
Mitchell	Chris Mitchell	Foxbury Farm

Mullins	Ursula Mullins	West Kent College
Older	Chris Older	Romney Marsh Farms
Panaite	Marilena Asbury	Blue Mountain Recruitment
Panaite	Marius Cezar	Blue Mountain Recruitment
Perez	Valerie Perez	MJ Perez Partnership
Phillips	Tom Phillips	Kent County Council
Piper	Tim Piper	Owley Farm
Powell	Nick Powell	The Portable Business School
Powell	Richard Powell	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Raymond	Mark Raymond	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Redfern	Vaughan Redfern	Rural Development Consultant
Reeves	Peter Reeves	Arena Pursuits
Rice	Debi Rice	Sevenoaks District Council
Salisbury	Mark Salisbury	Kent Police
Scott	Ian Scott	Penshurst Place
Shrubsole	Louise Shrubsole	Sevenoaks District Council
Simpson	Rachel Simpson	Tourism South East
Smith	Pat Smith	Sevenoaks District Council
Smith	James Smith	Waddington Farm
Spencer	Trisha Spencer	TWBC
Stainton	Lucy Stainton	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Steinmetz	Juliet Steinmetz	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Strang	Ian Strang	Little Scotney Farm
Tarttelin	Jonathen Tarttelin	SEEDA
Taylor	Bob Taylor	Kent Farmers Market Association
Taylor	Christine Taylor	Mid Kent Leader+
Taylor	Jen Taylor	Brogdate Horticultural Trust
Teacher	Harry Teacher	Hadlow Estate
Thomas	Cllr Elizabeth Thomas	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Toms	David Toms	Ashes Plantation
Turley	Nigel Turley	Action for Communities in Rural Kent
Vickery	Keith Vickery	Mil Farm
Waldock	Peter Waldock	Mack Multiples
Waller	Samantha Waller	Environment Agency
Ward	Mrs Sarah Ward	Court Lodge

Wickham	Nigel Wickham	Hallwood Farm Oast
Wicks	Robert Wicks	Westerham Brewery
Wood	Wendy Wood	West Kent Partnership
Wooldridge	Michael Wooldridge	Cluttons
Wooldridge	Richard Wooldridge	Yotes Court Farm
Worrall	Cllr Mark Worrall	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
York	Peter York	West Kent Civic Trust
	?	Blue Mountain Recruitment

Annex 7 – West Kent LAG membership and West Kent Executive LAG membership (as of 27 November, 2007, liable to additions)

			private	public	Exec private	Exec public	
Alexander	William Alexander	Castle Farm	1		1		
Barker	Iain Barker	Environment Agency		1			
Bartlett	Tony Bartlett	Business Link Kent CIC	1		1		pan kent
Bourne	Michael Bourne	New Park Farm	1				
Campbell	Angus Campbell	RAMSAC	1				
Candlin	David Candlin	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council		1			1
Chapman	Mick Chapman	Forester & PAWS officer		1			1
Cobb	Paul Cobb	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	1		1		pan kent
Cooper	Chris Cooper	Ockhams Farm (NFU)	1		1		
Dadd	Giles Dadd	Farm Adviser	1				
Davison	Jill Davison	Councillor, Sevenoaks District Council		1			
Dent	Benjamin Dent	Kent Farmers Market Association	1				pan kent
Fallmann	Susan Fallmann	Commonwork	1				
Flanagan	Sally Flanagan	Hadlow College		1			
Harrison	Keith Harrison (or nominee)	Action Communities Rural Kent	1		1		pan kent
Hewitt	Jo Hewitt	White Ash Farm	1				
Jessel	Alastair Jessel	Taywell Farm	1				
Johannsen	Nick Johannsen	Kent Downs AONB		1			1
Knight	David Knight	Knight Tustian/Weald Granary	1				
Leach	Jacqueline Leach	Commonwork	1				
Lingham	Caroline Lingham	Sevenoaks District Council		1			1
Lingham	Roger Lingham	Faulkners Hill Farm	1				
Mackenzie	Kent Mackenzie	Hadlow College		1			1 pan kent
Maxwell Jones	John Maxwell Jones	Burgess Stopres, Goudhurst	1				
Mitchell	Chris Mitchell	Foxbury Farm	1				
Older	Chris Older	Romney Marsh Farms (NFU)	1				
Oliver	Mick Oliver	Natural England		1			1
Raymond	Mark Raymond	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council		1			1

			private	public	Exec private	Exec public	
Reeves	Peter Reeves	Arena Pursuits	1		1		
Rice	Debi Rice	Heart of Kent Partnership		1			
Rossney	Dave Rossney	ESUS Forestry and Woodlands	1		1		
Scott	Ian Scott	Penshurst Place	1		1		
Smith	Catherine Smith	Medway Council		1			
Strang	Ian Strang	Little Scotney Farm	1				
Taylor	Bob Taylor	Kent Farmers Market Association	1				pan kent
Teacher	Harry Teacher	Hadlow Estate (CLA)	1		1		
Toms	David Toms	Ashes Plantation	1				
Ward	Mrs Sarah Ward	Court Lodge	1				
Wicks	Robert Wicks	Westerham Brewery	1				
			27	12	9	7	

Annex 8

Programme Delivery - Areas of Responsibility

LAG Executive Group

- the delegated budget;
- appraising and approving projects (appraisal panel will be drawn from executive LAG)
- issuing offer letters
- paying subsequent claims
- routine monitoring of projects.
- Identifying appropriate action where projects are under-performing including considering processes for the recovery of grant
- Ensuring participation in National Rural Development Network which will be used to disseminate best practice
- Identifying additional sources of project funding
- Co-operating with other Kent LAGs via the formal Kent group and informally
- Identifying and realising project opportunities with other Kent LAGs, WARR and Surrey Hills LAGs and other LAGs in South East

No LAG member can be involved in any decision making process which is in anyway connected to a project in which that member has a vested interest. The LAG executive group will meet on a quarterly basis. The Executive Group will include members with knowledge and expertise in equal opportunities and sustainability so that key decision makers can take full account of these issues when making decisions.

Leader Programme Manager

- day to day administrative support for the running of the LAG
- the management of the budget including identifying, facilitating and providing some monitoring and support to projects.
- Facilitating and developing projects
- regularly updating progress in the achievement of project performance and outputs and, where applicable, the Action Plan and reporting this to the LAG Executive Group including identifying projects which are failing to perform adequately.
- Ensuring adequate records are kept of all LAG decisions

Annex 9

Project Management Process – Programme Manager

- Facilitating the submission of Expression of Interest forms and encouraging applicants to consider innovative approaches
- Initial assessment of project viability against checklist to ensure fit with West Kent objectives and compliance with programme requirements
- Referral to project appraiser to liaise with appraisal panel for decision to proceed, refuse or amend EOI and refer to SEEDA
- Liaison with project applicant to facilitate full application including ensuring applicant is aware of what further is required before full application (ie planning consents obtained)
- Initial assessment of full project application against checklist to ensure fit with West Kent objectives, necessary consents obtained, fit with sustainability checklist (to be supplied by SEEDA) and compliance with programme requirements. Liaison as appropriate with accountable body to ensure compliance and to schedule anticipated payment
- Referral to project appraiser and ensuring appraiser's comments and recommendations are considered by appraisal panel in a timely fashion
- Recording appraisal panel recommendations and referring to the Executive Group for decision to refuse, proceed or amend application
- Progressing LAG decision with applicant
- Liaison/support of project applicant in delivery of project, including monitoring and identifying ongoing mentoring and training requirements
- Ongoing liaison with accountable body on monitoring and reporting
- Regular reporting on project progression to LAG executive
- Facilitation of assessment of completed project
- Liaison with applicant and accountable body in processing payment claim on completion of project
- Ongoing monitoring of completed project and identification of possible training/mentoring interventions
- Linking project applicant to network of other project applicants to act as a mentor/support to other applicants and benefit from networking opportunities