

West Kent Leader – LAG Objectives & 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%)

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<p>Encourage innovation and diversification in West Kent's land based sector</p>	<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>
<p>Promote entrepreneurship in rural West Kent</p>	<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>

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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. 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