

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Section 4.1

Work to date has been at the strategic level, in association with key partnersⁱ to identify the opportunity to extend LEADER coverage in the County in recognition of the need to support sustainable rural growth activity informed, driven and delivered at the local level.

Arguably, the rural economy has, during the recession, been partly overlooked nationally and regionally in terms of the focus of limited resources being on employment concentrations and urban areas – ostensibly in order to have the greatest impact and to reactively address priority economic needs.

However, the government's current agenda to encourage growth in rural areas (as a key contributor to GVA and the national economic recovery) has strong resonance in Nottinghamshire and in key local areas.

Further, with the new European and Growth Plan Programmes approaching, partners are now in the best possible position to support the rural economy.

Any new LAG in Nottinghamshire will effectively be developing from a standing start but with the advantage of a large body of diverse and committed partners available to support its development and a willingness to take on board lessons learned from other LAGs and LEADER activity.

The rural economy of Nottinghamshire holds the potential to contribute significantly to the wider economic performance of the County and is essential to realising the ambitions of the D2N2 LEP – including key sector development in Food and Drink and Tourism as well as cross cutting themes such as innovation and micro and SME start-up support. Rural activity will also be critical to delivering environmental improvements that at the local level fit with the wider Natural Environment White Paper and the work of the Local Nature Partnerships.

In terms of activity in Ashfield, the District Council is aware of the need to support its rural economy and is keen to do this in a logical, planned manner with activity driven by the community.

On this basis, the opportunity to bid for LEADER Preparatory funds has been a timely catalyst to help galvanise activity and is critical if rural ambitions and opportunities are to be realised – particularly at a time where public funding pressures remain acute.

ⁱ D2N2 LEP, Defra, Mansfield and Ashfield District Councils, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council, Gedling Borough Council and Broxtowe Borough Council, RCAN, NFU, CLA, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire lowlands LNP, One-em etc. North Notts LEADER LAG, Nottinghamshire County Council.