

Leicestershire Strategic Senior Officer Group

3rd January 2007

Report On Rural Proofing the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement

Report of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership

Purpose of Report

1. To inform SSOG of the outcomes following the rural proofing exercise undertaken on the LAA, and make recommendations for how the Rural Partnership could work with block delivery leads to improve outcomes for rural areas.

Background

2. In December 2005, the Leicestershire Rural Partnership agreed to undertake a 'rural proofing' exercise of the emerging Leicestershire LAA, on behalf of Leicestershire Together. Due to the constrained time frames (for agreeing the LAA with the Government Office for East Midlands) the rural proofing approach was delayed until autumn 2006. Officers have been working to embed the rural proofing process in order to inform and guide the LAA and its six month refresh.

Rural Proofing Process

3. A 'Rural Proofing Framework' (see appendix 1) has been devised, based upon the key objectives emanating from the East Midlands Rural Action Plan, LRP 20 year Vision and the Leicestershire Rural Strategy. Undertaking the rural proofing process aims to ensure that rural delivery is being considered within the LAA, and that rural issues are being identified and addressed for the remaining duration of the LAA. The completion of this process will potentially lead to three options:
 - a. Support the rural impact of the delivery plans of the 7 LAA blocks
 - b. Creation of new rural indicators within LAA blocks
 - c. Seek to develop a new rural outcome
4. The LAA has been rural-proofed through a two stage process utilising the framework attached as appendix one. This process is outlined below:
 - 'First filter' stage undertaken by internal (LRP and LCC) officers to highlight areas of impact, improvement/amendment and any issues arising for consideration.
 - Stage two required the involvement of a small representative group comprised of rural advocates from the community, environmental and economic sectors.

Key Conclusions of the Rural Proofing Exercise

5. The rural proofing assessment demonstrates that there are good prospects for positive outcomes in rural areas in the majority of elements within the LAA as evidenced in the LAA itself and associated delivery plans.
6. It is not proposed to add rural outcomes or indicators for the current refresh process but it is felt that positive collaborative working could be beneficial around LAA delivery activity.
7. Therefore through the assessment the Rural Partnership has identified a 'key rural priority' for each block which it believes provides a useful focus for block delivery leads and Rural Partnership Members to work together to ensure an optimum outcomes for rural areas (see appendix 2).
8. The rural proofing exercise has identified rural transport and accessibility as a major cross-cutting issue impacting on the prospects for improved outcomes in rural communities. The Rural Partnership is recommending to SSOG that further work be undertaken during the lifetime of this LAA exploring the case for a rural outcome in a future LAA around these issues.

Next Steps

9. Subject to the approval of SSOG the intention is that LRP members and their support officers contact block leads to explore how they work together to ensure positive outcomes for rural areas particularly focusing on the priority rural issues identified through the rural proofing exercise.
10. It is also the intention of the LRP to work towards incorporating a rural outcome within the next LAA (in two years time) which will cover the period of 2007-2009. The continuation of the rural proofing process will ensure rural issues are being addressed and inform the development of a new rural outcome.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that SSOG:
 - a. Notes the key issues identified during the process of "rural proofing" the LAA, and agrees to amend the LAA to highlight the focus on the 7 key rural priorities.

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Leicestershire Rural Partnership Rural Proofing Checklist.

1. Does this (*outcome*) encourage inclusive community involvement in rural areas?
2. Does this (*outcome*) support the VCS, Parish and Town Councils to develop rural communities?
3. Does this (*outcome*) enable the development of social capital and community assets, influencing the activities of service providers and allowing access to training and development?
4. Does this (*outcome*) address issues of social exclusion and disadvantage within rural areas?
5. Does this (*outcome*) ensure that everyone who lives in a rural community is able to access key services facilities and information including education, work, leisure and social opportunities?
6. Does this (*outcome*) enable the retention of new and existing services and facilities within rural communities?
7. Does this (*outcome*) facilitate thriving and sustainable, safe and secure, communities, towns and villages, each of which will have at least one key community resource (e.g. school, church, pub, shop, post office, village hall)?
8. Does this (*outcome*) support the development and creation of enterprise in rural Leicestershire, including social and youth enterprise?
9. Does this (*outcome*) enable rural business development and diversification within rural areas?
10. Does this (*outcome*) remove the rural barriers to economic participation?
11. Does this (*outcome*) support sustainable access to the countryside?
12. Does this (*outcome*) enable the essential contact between people and nature, encourage enjoyment and create a focus for social inclusion, education, training health, and wellbeing?
13. Does this (*outcome*) maximise the environmental resources of Leicestershire through the promotion of energy efficiency, agri-environment schemes, land management/diversification, protection of landscape and heritage resources and the creation of new wildlife sites?

Key Rural Priorities within the 7 LAA blocks identified through Rural Proofing

Older People

Outcome 1.3 – To set up new services to recruit volunteers for older people to have access to low level support e.g. gardening, cleaning, shopping and good neighbours/befriending

Healthier Communities

Outcome 1 – Increase participation in physical activity

Children and Young People

Outcome 7 – Improved personal and social development and enjoyment of culture and recreation. (Indicators: 1) Increased take up of youth service activities by vulnerable groups e.g. disabled, BME and young carers. 2) Increased numbers of a. LAC and b. vulnerable groups accessing free/subsidised cultural services. 3) Increased numbers of disabled children enabled to use inclusive play and cultural services)

Safer Communities

Outcome 5 – To provide improved life chances and better opportunities for young people in order to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people, including the prevention of future prolific offenders

Stronger Communities

Outcome 4 – Vital and thriving market towns and village centres, which act as (hubs) for surrounding communities.

Cleaner and Greener

Outcome 5.2 – Work towards 90% of schools and half of all major employers having travel plans by 2011

Economic Development

Outcome 4a – Increase the number of businesses starting up within the County